Social Welfare Around the World

GENERATIONAL TENSIONS AND SOLIDARITY WITHIN ADVANCED WELFARE STATES

Edited by
Asgeir Falch-Eriksen, Marianne Takle, and
Britt Slagsvold

ROUTLEDGE

Generational Tensions and Solidarity Within Advanced Welfare States

This book explores generation as both a reference to family or kinship structures and a reference to cohorts or age sets. The principal objective is branching out this two-part concept through studies of tensions and solidarity within and between generations of advanced and robust welfare states.

Answering key questions using multiple disciplinary approaches, the book considers how generations challenge advanced and robust welfare states; how new and young generations are affected by living in an advanced welfare state with older generations; how tensions or solidarity is understood when facing challenges; and what the key characteristics are of certain generation types. It contributes to the development of a more comprehensive generation approach within social sciences by developing the concept of generation by exploring different challenges to the welfare state such as migration, digitalization, environmental damages, demands for sustainability, and marginalization. Highlighting the escalating tensions and altered versions of solidarity between generations, this book shows how a comprehensive concept of a generation can create new insights into how we collectively coordinate and resolve challenges through the welfare state.

This book will be of interest to all scholars and students of social policy, sociology, political science, and social anthropology.

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Preface

This volume is the product of a concerted effort to elevate a generation perspective in researching social change and the tensions it causes towards and within the welfare state. The book's team comprises predominantly senior researchers at Norwegian Social Research, at Oslo Metropolitan University, and represents different academic disciplines across the social sciences. The institute has had and will continue to have a considerable effort of research dedicated to developing new knowledge at the intersection between life courses, the family, and the welfare state. The institute has dedicated departments researching childhood, youth, ageing, and life course. It also has a department devoted to health and social services, which are key services to any welfare state.

Generation is sought to capture the different dimensions of time and how it affects social reality within generations, between generations, and between generations and the type of welfare state they reside in. The Norwegian welfare state is dominating as an empirical case. Nevertheless, the purpose is not to have narrow empirical discussions, but to use the Norwegian case as it provides stability as a welfare state and leaves a clearer focus on a generation perspective.

The editors are grateful to Iver Neumann, the previous director at Norwegian Social Research, who gave the green signal to pursue this book. The editors are also grateful to the current director, Guro Ødegaard, for seeing this book through. Without the financial support and the priority to develop the book, the project would not have come about.

Note to future generations: This book was developed almost exclusively during the COVID-19 pandemic. Developing a book about generational shifts and social change during the most significant crisis in all our lives has been challenging. Although it is too early to say anything about this global event's social outcomes, we can safely assume that the impact of the crisis will have effects on generations.

Asgeir Falch-Eriksen, Marianne Takle & Britt Slagsvold
Oslo, April 2021

1 Generational tensions and solidarity within advanced welfare states

Asgeir Falch-Eriksen, Marianne Takle, and Britt Slagsvold

Introduction

An advanced welfare state democracy is an institutionalized collective agreement on solving social problems and coordinating actions. Although welfare state democracies have different shapes, the scope of government is comprehensive, and citizens meet the welfare state services according to their needs and interests as customers, user groups, or clients (Goodin, 1988; Kumlin, 2002). An advanced welfare state penetrates its citizens' private realm and creates dependencies and expectations that "gives the state its paramount significance" across the social system it governs (Kaase & Newton, 1995). Its paramount significance is a result of processes of democratic law-making, policy development, and budget-making, and leaves hallmarks such as welfare rights, universality, and solidarity. Through time, moulded by popular opinion and civic engagement, the welfare state has established an intrinsic connection to how citizens live their lives and how it secures each citizen's essential wellbeing and mitigate socio-economic hardships and health complications (Svallfors, 2012a).

According to Baldwin, a welfare state democracy as an innovation has brought about state systems that can carry "the possibility of solidarity" (1990). It alludes to a link between the solidarity of a social system on the one hand and a formal political-normative-embedded concept of solidarity enforced through a welfare state system on the other. Maintaining social solidarity within a functioning welfare state democracy can thereby be understood as the result of transferring mutual trust, a conception of legitimacy that carries collective support, and establish a type of moral obligation into the system of government itself, that is, establishing a type of political solidarity that draws upon the existing social solidarity between peers (Bayertz, 1999). Through democratic procedures of self-government, social solidarity is invested in the welfare state through time and across generations, where enduring political solidarity is necessary to secure a level of fundamental and universal wellbeing through different election cycles, political turmoil, crisis, and societal tensions (Banting & Kymlicka, 2017).

This volume seeks to contribute to this problem-complex, namely, what lessons can be drawn from using a multifaceted concept of generation for generational analysis of the welfare state. By utilizing empirical data to study societal

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tensions between generations and towards the welfare state, we can elaborate on the type of solidarity that the welfare state carries; it depends upon and ultimately needs to persist across generations. It will, in particular, focus on critical challenges to solidarity confronting the welfare state, such as education, distributional justice, migration, education, and climate changes. The purpose is thereby to conduct generational analysis as a key to open up an understanding of how the welfare state develops, how tensions arise, how they are dealt with, or how they continuously are there to challenge the status quo of the welfare state. Our main goal is to understand tensions and solidarity between generations and between generations within advanced welfare states.

The importance of having a generational approach to the welfare state is more important today than ever. Following only the past decades, significant challenges have confronted welfare states across the world, as economic challenges leaving austerity measures and increasing costs, social and demographic developments with an ageing population and increased migration, rise in poverty levels after the financial crisis, and political developments such as a neoliberal agenda that is instilled to cut public spending, and the climate crisis and a deadly pandemic, are all examples of challenges that threaten the wellbeing of each individual within society, social solidarity itself, and the efficacy of welfare state.

With each following generation, challenges affect differently and pose a multitude of questions. For instance, will the welfare state be able to provide wellbeing for all? Will the rate of young manage to secure the welfare state as the relative amount of elderly increase? Will younger generations and future generations be left with covering the problems and costs of climate change? The challenges have sparked tensions within the social system regarding how different generations are affected by and respond to the challenges and how they become prioritized. Eventually, other large-scale challenges can cause changes in the composition of solidarity or the lack thereof. As tensions arise that can harm the welfare state, it becomes an ongoing task to keep political solidarity operative in the welfare state and aligned with social solidarity across generations.

Generation as a multifaceted concept

Karl Mannheim's seminal work on generations, "The Problem of Generations", published first in German in 1923, is still considered the canon for generational analysis. Although his outline is contested (See McCourt, 2012), it is still a fruitful point of departure for our attempt to raise conceptual clarity for how this volume will apply the concept of generation. In his conceptual discussions, Mannheim operates with several different concepts simultaneously. He began with the nuts-and-bolts for such a concept. He argued that a generational concept could not by itself ignore the biological rhythm of birth cohorts: "sociological phenomenon of generations is ultimately based on the biological rhythm of birth and death" (Mannheim, 1952). However, although this is the point of departure, using such a positivistic approach to unveiling historical change and the potential of prediction of social change is both simplistic and fallible. Any potential for explaining social

change had to develop the concept of generation from the biological rhythm but embed it in a sociological and a temporally spatially delimited space, something he referred to as the generation's "particular type of social location" (Mannheim, 1952). As Mannheim argued, the youth generation in Prussia at the beginning of the 19th century did not share the exact generational *location* as the youth generation in China (Mannheim, 1952). Although we can observe an emerging new "global generation" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2009), and global events like COVID-19, challenge the idea of shared generational location analytically, partially dissolving contextual belonging and identity formation, generational location, and the heterogeneity it produces will continue to be a hallmark of social interaction and foundational for conducting generational analysis (Bristow, 2016).

Jane Pilcher (1994) correctly assumes that Mannheim's exposition of generation harbour many different generational concepts that each can lead to different types of analysis. Mannheim admits this himself as he argues the need for a differentiated concept that can maintain distinctions and provide clear-cut explanations (1952). Pilcher points out that generational location can internally stratify individuals into two main concepts of generation: social generation and kinship generation. While the former refers to the individual's insertion into the social and cultural currents of time, the latter refers to a geographical and cultural location. Furthermore, we will borrow from Bristow (2016), add a third concept dubbed historical and ascriptive generations. This type is about labelling what can be referred to as generational styles to describe certain key generational traits. The fourth is future generations, which increasingly has become a part of generational studies since the early 1970s (Tremmel, 2009).

(1) Social generations

Social generations refer to cohort-related phenomena, where individuals are born similar years and are age homogenous (Eisenstadt, 1971; Pilcher, 1994). This is what Mannheim refers to as the historical community of "actual generations". This means that the year you are born, you are also introduced to the world in line with all others born that year and inserted into what Mannheim refers to as the currents of social and cultural forces (Mannheim, 1952). Within each social generation, every member can influence and infuse the rest of the generation wittingly or not. Age and how it progresses reflexively with the social and cultural forces become a significant indicator for who you are as a historically embedded individual. Once your life is on the move through time, your life-course meets the larger sociopolitical environment together with all of your age cohorts. As Mannheim argued, the generational location relative to the historical time carries "certain feelings of behaviour, feeling and thought" (Mannheim, 1952).

However, since Mannheim wrote his essay a hundred years ago, society has changed, particularly with regard to mass democracies, rights, and advanced welfare states. On the one hand, the welfare state has become all-encompassing and intervenes in people's lives from birth to death. It has taken over many previously solved tasks in families, such as childcare and elderly care. This puts constraints

on all generations, particularly young people who do not fill key positions in society and the state administration. The welfare state schemes have made young people less dependent on their parents, but they have become more exposed to the state bureaucracy's anonymous constraints (Elias, 2013).

On the other hand, the degree to which social integrations have brought citizens together in self-governing, that is, democratic, social communities have no historical counterpart. In democratic welfare states, the norm of civic engagement links each citizen to become architects of what needs and what interests the welfare state is set to meet (Goodin, 1988). Hence, an advanced welfare state democracy, where citizens enjoy rights and benefits, cannot assume there will always be passive members of different cohorts. As people move through time, as citizens within a welfare state democracy, they are not passive bystanders who, in a deterministic fashion, become conditioned by the welfare state but are actively engaged in social change. Each citizen can participate actively and reflexively in modernizing and shaping the welfare state to fit new needs in line with modern demands (Rothstein, 1998).

(2) Kinship generations

Kinship generations are depicting the membership in the same historical community and with "certain definite modes of behaviour, feeling and thought" (Mannheim, 1952). Kinship as a generational location is the immediate social context. It does not necessarily involve shared geographic location, but it denotes a social network tied together through thick relationships of trust, i.e. by familiarity (Luhmann, 2000). Generation becomes a matter of particularistic role-understanding, where a person understands who it is relative to age and position in the life cycle and what is expected of them from what generation they belong to within the immediate social context. Kinship generation is also hierarchical and asymmetrical, especially between parents and children and throughout the local community, where individuals carry distinct generational roles. This generation concept is often related to a biological perception of a generation because some type of descent is involved. The mother is in one generation, and the next one is her child. However, the key issue is how such role patterns work across generations as they are embedded as a social type in kinships.

Although every individual belongs to both a social generation and a kinship generation, the two generational concepts have different connections of belonging within the social system – one horizontal and intra-generational, and the other vertical and intergenerational. Whereas social generations are connected to the social roles and phenomena pertaining to birth cohorts, kinship generations have community belonging combined with thick trust relationships (Baier, 1986; Luhmann, 2000). Also, common to both concepts is that generations are reflexively reacting to and contribute to shaping societal circumstances as individuals age, but they do so differently. In social generations, each individual remains the same generation as time goes by, growing older. In kinship, they shift roles and identities across generations as they grow older, and they replace

generations, and new expectations are bestowed upon them in new roles. The generational shifts can, for instance, be between child and youth, youth and young adult, young adult and parent, parent and grandparent, and so on. The length of each of these generations can vary through time (Krishnamoorthy, 1980).

As each individual simultaneously belongs to kinship and a social generation, it also tells us how generational norms and expectations shape the individuals, their identity, and how they are inserted and belong in a social system. As social generations go through life simultaneously, each generation unconsciously becomes a unit that can be expected to carry certain norms and that can have different challenges as time goes by. In contrast, each individual's kinship generation depicts personal roles and thick social bonds, and a sense of intergenerational solidarity.

(3) Historical and ascriptive generations

Historical and ascriptive generations are meant to capture those generation types that, for some reason, are labelled. Those providing such a label usually seek out conjoined birth cohorts labelled according to a particular historical period, depicting strong characteristics of the current time or social change. Locating and capturing generations that reflect cultural expressions, an identity or a conflict that has been a driving force of social change, a political mobilization, and so on has long been imperative to generational analysis (Bristow, 2016; Frith, 2005). To Mannheim, those within a social generation identifying with such a label not only belonged to the same generational unit but also belonged to the generational unit that realized its "potentialities" for social change or carried the cultural or social currents of the time. To Mannheim, a generational unit like this carried a new generational style that "creates new collective impulses and formative principles original to itself" (Mannheim, 1952).

In this volume, we will denote historical generations as generational styles that qualify the test of a generational self-definition (Bristow, 2016). This self-definition is anchored to distinct social generations reflective of a generational style embedded in social change or phenomena through historic time, "on the trigger action of the social and cultural process" (Mannheim, 1952). Ascriptive generation is also a label and depicts a widespread use of generational analysis. The ascriptive generations are rather brought together, not by the belonging to a social generation and a matter of social change or phenomenon but rather by accidental commonalities (Bristow, 2016).

Whereas historical generations can be illustrated through, e.g. the boomer generation and the digital generation, ascriptive generations, on the other hand, are more undefined and uncoupled from social generations, such as generation Z or Y or millennials or other dubious terms (Bristow, 2016). As will become clear later Chapter 10, the popular use of ascriptive generation has blurred the field of research-based generation analysis with its popular use.

(4) Future generations

Future generations are defined as all generations that come after those living. The main reason for including this fourth concept is the realization that today's generations can affect the future more than ever before and in a great variety of ways. Most prominent is the increasing recognition of the finite nature of the planet's natural environment, including the atmosphere, the ozone layer, the global system cycles, the climate system, genetic and species diversity, etc. In parallel with recognizing the finite nature of the planet's natural environment, the concern for future generations has increasingly been included in legislation and policy, but also in generational studies (Tremmel 2009). Behind this attention is a common concern about highly problematic consequences if present generations transfer irreversible environmental damages to individuals born in the future. There is a broad global agreement that environmental resources need to be sustained for individuals born in the future. As such, the natural environment is increasingly understood as the world's shared heritage for both current and future generations.

This volume will utilize all the four concepts to conduct a generational analysis of the welfare state to answer many questions. How are tensions between generations challenging an advanced and robust welfare state? How are tensions or solidarity understood when the young and old generations face the common welfare state challenges differently? How can stability prevail as some generations define the politics and composure of a costly welfare state's polity and others have no voice or representation? The different contributors have explored different ways to study tensions and solidarity between generations within the welfare state by discussing such questions. Hence, this book seeks to unravel causes of change and motivations for change across time, unveil tensions that cause change and de-stabilization.

Reaffirmation of solidarity in advanced welfare states

The democratic and advanced welfare state is a legal-administrative type of government construct that can harbour a normative conception of justice containing mutual trust, democratic solidarity, and redistributive solidarity (Banting & Kymlicka, 2017). The development of the advanced welfare state has gone in tandem with an increased division of labour and specialization. It has historically led welfare benefits to become a matter of welfare rights and public provision of, e.g., elder- and childcare, medical treatment, unemployment benefits, pensions, and education (Goodin, 1986). As they live their lives, citizens interact with everything from street-level bureaucracies in health care services to libraries, to public transport, as customers, users, and clients. Through budgets, letters of assignment, guidelines and routines, and street-level practices, the government is meant to seek out and meet its citizens' needs. The welfare state must also be understood as a response to a prevalent need for collective coordination and problem-solving, striving for a sense of justice, mutual trust, and solidarity (Habermas, 1996).

Hence, an advanced welfare state can easily be referred to as the most complex expression of social coordination and problem-solving designed through history. Its complexity has further escalated through system differentiation, division of labour, development of new knowledge and technology, and steadily incorporating an ever-expanding pluralism on ways to live life (Giddens, 1990). Today, advanced welfare states include everything from public schools, health and social services, kindergartens, child welfare services, and even communication infrastructure – it is a complete and self-sustained system governed through democratic politics and public spending. Across Europe today, there is vast support for this type of state-construct (Meuleman et al., 2018).

Citizens being motivated towards, or acting in solidarity towards, the welfare state has maintained and enforced the welfare state throughout generations. Since maintaining a welfare state scheme has been on the agenda, efforts have been rather successful in overcoming past tensions and past conflicts. However, the welfare state is a product of each generation as they run their course throughout life. New generations have impacted the welfare state's design differently, but generations are also shaped by the societal norms they are embedded in. Hence, the welfare state has developed to fit the new needs of new citizens.

One of the most significant challenges for the general support and prevalence of the welfare state is that it is constituted by a stable set of rules, procedures, and decision-making, while the social system it governs is in constant flux. Each generation is constantly on the move, through time, and as their age preferences are altered and new generations are met by a welfare state designed to fit others' needs. In this way, for a democratic welfare state to maintain its underlying principles, it needs to reinvent itself to fit the changing needs and expectations of the fluctuating social system.

Tensions in the advanced welfare states

All living generations are affected simultaneously by social forces, cultural shifts, challenges, significant events, and crises. This creates tensions depending on different generational locations, as different generations carry different interests and needs that they might want a welfare state to contribute solving. Also, a welfare state is a stabilized set of norms through legislation and government procedures, which creates tensions towards the continuously moving interests and needs within the social system itself (Habermas, 1996). Typically, tensions would not involve a call for significant social change, escalate to a conflict, or leave demands for substantial shifts in welfare state programmes and policies, but predominantly constitute the steady flow of calls for social change that is an incremental adjustment of how social coordination and problems are solved through the parameters of the welfare state itself.

While Mannheim's work has laid the foundation for the sociology of generation and generational analysis, Norbert Elias's work has been in the background. There is, however, an overlap between their theoretical approaches. Like Mannheim, Elias saw generations as bound to biological factors, the birth and

death of individuals, and how they were embedded into their social conditions and experiences through time. However, as John Connolly (2019) points out, Elias offers a more comprehensive theory to understand tensions and conflicts between generations. In his book *Studies on the Germans* (2013), he shows how tensions arise between generations through the opening or closing of channels for young people's opportunities, in terms of life opportunities, meaning, and upward mobility. He does not perceive access to key positions in society as a planned process in which the elderly open or close to the young, but an outcome of societal change in which wars, revolutions, economic development, and peace are central. Empirically, Elias studied how life chances were small for the young generations in the Weimar Republic in the 1920s and the 1960s and 1970s in Germany. A central issue for Elias is that the individualization process, secularization, and security from hunger lead the young generations to search for meaning and fulfilment in society. This means that the understanding of tensions between generations not only contests economic, social, and cultural resources but also goes beyond such basic concerns into the social roles of generations, how intergenerational tensions arise, and tensions towards how society is governed (Elias, 2013).

Lived lives, however, is continuous. Having past generations designing how the welfare state operates will lead to practical tensions between interests and reasonable claims upon resources among those who designed the welfare state and those who live by it. More substantively, new generations bring new norms of interaction or adjust old norms and carry reasonable expectations that perhaps do not fit well with what the current welfare scheme provides. Although young generations carry welfare rights that can grant them benefits, they might not be in a position to change them. To this volume, however, tensions are not necessarily bent on becoming conflicts. Tensions are everything, from the necessary societal friction between generations, between generations and the welfare state in the one end, to the threat of devastating systemic crisis due to conflicts in the other.

The necessary tensions can be located within the welfare state itself. For instance, how the welfare state's development is intimately connected to the social sciences and their ability to point out social discrepancies and recommend measures to solve new challenges and identify problems continuously unveil tensions between generations (Giddens, 1990; Wittrock & Wagner, 2017). Over the years, solving collective problems and coordinating collective action has led to the dependency on professional discretionary decision-making to fit citizens' various needs and interests (Goodin, 1986; Lipsky, 2010). Addressing new needs and new interests across time has led to the development of complex bureaucracies involved in implementing legislation and policies that keep affirming and reaffirming the welfare state across time. Tensions between generations and the welfare state can be located at any joint in the welfare state complex.

Also, prior to any development of the welfare state itself or reflexively with the welfare state is the gradual increase of complexity of the social system itself and the character of each individual's life-course within it. For the past hundred years, each decade has been characterized by modernization processes that have increased social complexity (Giddens, 1990). The economy, science, politics,

law, education, religion, and so on have become socially separated functional spheres that have continued to differentiate themselves into an increasing number of subsystems, and which all can be assumed could be the source of tensions. In sum, answering the needs and interests across such a vastly complex social system is what establishes an advanced welfare state.

Generation perspective on the welfare state

This book is divided into three parts, each anchoring the concept of generations in a different tradition. The chapters focus on tensions and solidarity between generations from varying perspectives and illuminate consequences for the welfare state. The *first* part focuses on the *politics of generation* and embeds the concept of generation in light of democratic governance, polity, and future generations. *The second* part focuses on *generations within families* through the challenges of migration, inheritance, and education to counter marginalization. *In the third* part of the book, two distinct generations are focused upon: the digital generation and the boomers. It also has a chapter on the popular use of generation analysis.

Most of the chapters draw on Norwegian data. The intention is to utilize Norway as an example of a stable and advanced welfare state. Each chapter aims to apply a generational concept or a combination of either social generation, kinship generation, historical generation, or future generation when analyzing the data. The chosen topics that inform the different applications of the concept of generations are relevant across nation-states attempting to maintain and enforce solidarity within the welfare state despite tensions that challenge or change it.

In the end, the book has a theoretical chapter about generations and how it is embedded in a social order that creates solidarity, which again becomes embedded in a legal form of the welfare state. In Chapter 11, Asgeir Falch-Eriksen discusses how and why the concept of generation must be able to explain how a social system designed to redistribute goods and services last across generations. The focus is on how social order carries mutual trust and solidarity sufficient to make the welfare state survive through the everyday run of the mill collective interaction and logrolling politics, to expedite regular problems efficiently and overcome crises and devastating challenges, and remain over time as a socially integrated whole, collectively coordinated. To explain the resilience of a welfare state, a concept of generation is sought that would explain social integration processes, which develops, affirms, and reaffirms a level of solidarity that is continuously operative within the welfare state across time and concurrent generations.

The politics of generations

Basic to the first part of the book is that the welfare state is a stable and formal expression of solidarity that is contested and transformed in line with democratic principles of self-rule into a stable political-legal concept. This procedure of stabilizing norms into legislation also embeds a particular normative composition of solidarity into the welfare state. Once stable, the social system itself develops

further and creates new tensions between what is stable within the welfare state and the dynamic within the social system. How can we use the concept of generation to understand challenges in politics as a matter of distributive justice, as a cleavage in politics, and towards future generations?

In Chapter 2, Axel West Pedersen and Mi Ah Schoyen discuss different approaches to economic redistributions across generations. They explore the implication in the domain of pension- and family policies. As a point of departure, they use two approaches to redistribution among concurrent generations. The first holds that inequality in distribution among social generations can be justified as long as they maximize individual welfare from a lifetime perspective. The second is a strictly egalitarian theory that holds equality in distribution between different age groups at any given point in time. The chapter explores the policy implications of these two alternative approaches to redistribution and attempts to flesh out a compromising third option.

In Chapter 3, Ann-Helen Bay and Axel West Pedersen explore the hypothesis that population ageing will also increase welfare state redistribution conflicts between young and old. The basis is that the younger population will oppose a too heavy burden placed upon them by their older generations. Simultaneously, the elderly will use their increased share of the electorate to push their best interests through welfare state redistribution. With this hypothesis, the chapter investigates contemporary age orientation across a selection of European welfare states and voter preferences concerning policies that benefit the elderly and families with children, respectively. They find a tendency for a decline in spending bias in favour of the elderly across all countries. Their study also illuminates that voters generally support public responsibility for the wellbeing of the elderly and families. Their findings indicate a tendency towards convergence in age policies across Europe without clear signs of increasing conflicts between age groups.

In Chapter 4, Marianne Takle focuses on one of the most recent branches of generational analysis, namely future generations. The point of departure is the constitutional settlement that an increasing number of nation-states chose to accommodate, which stipulate the protection of future generations' access to a healthy natural environment. By so doing, the current generations are formally committed to holding the interests of future generations at heart while developing the welfare state further. This commitment can challenge the sustainability and design of the welfare state and lead to tensions between current generations' interests compared to future generations. The chapter moves one step further and elaborates theoretically on what solidarity towards future generations entails, which is different from what solidarity towards living generations holds. This theoretical concept's empirical relevance is evaluated by applying it to Norway as an example of a country that has included a protection clause for future generations in its constitution.

Generations within families

The second part of the book is devoted to kinship generation and how challenges towards kinship generations can be understood through social generations. Individuals belong to a kinship generation, with their hierarchical structure and role expectations, but are also influenced by the societal norms belonging to their social generation. There is a long-standing tradition of studies of parent–child generational shifts and value transmission within sociology, focusing on intergenerational continuity (Kertzer, 1983).

In Chapter 5, Monica Five Aarset, Ingrid Smette, and Monika Grønli Rosten utilize lessons from Norbert Elias contributions to the sociology of generations to explore the challenges and dilemmas confronting descendants of immigrants as parents in welfare states. The chapter especially draws on the concept of assumed futures and how these become questioned by the so-called second generation when they become parents. In their qualitative interviews, they unveil ruptures in previously assumed futures and continuities in narratives on parenting and kinship roles. The parents' narratives illuminate how parenthood involves a renegotiation of their conception of belonging. The chapter shows how the concept of generation is linked not only to ideas of social change and continuity, but also to questions of belonging.

In Chapter 6, Hans Christian Sandlie and Lars Gulbrandsen address the interplay between the welfare state and family dependency, focusing on material transfers between generations through the example of housing. Their contribution explores whether or not public policy arrangements lead to a reliance between older and younger family members or if it enables autonomy. They explore how changes in housing policy and housing markets have led to different levels of intergenerational dependency within the family. They find that public policy arrangements shape the level of intergenerational solidarity. However, there is also a more ambiguous picture that is drawn compared to previous studies. Despite restrictions on mortgage-lending practices and an increase in house prices, they find no decline in the likelihood of entering homeownership among young adults. This is nevertheless not explained by increased parental support as parental support for housing has been stable.

In Chapter 7, Jon Ivar Elstad studies the educational expansion within the Norwegian welfare state. To a welfare state, the educational system's transformation has led to significantly improved educational opportunities for younger generations, which is widely held to be a ticket out of the poverty of past family generation. Furthermore, the educational expansions underpin economic growth and the development and maintenance of the modern welfare state. The chapter analyzes economic marginalization at age 35 in six successive birth cohorts born from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s. On average, the prevalence of marginal work income, disability pension, and social assistance remained largely stable from the earlier to the more recent birth cohorts. However, among those in the shrinking category of low educated, economic marginalization increased, resulting in wider educational inequalities between the low educated and other educational categories. Simultaneously, the economically marginalized composition

changed, as the better educated constituted a steadily rising proportion of them. Such findings cast doubts that raising educational levels in the younger generations will, in themselves, be efficient policies for doing away with economic marginalization and reducing social inequalities through education.

Historical and ascriptive generations

The third part of the book focuses on three specific generations, frequently referred to in social change discussions today and often identified as distinct generations in Mannheim's sense. How can we discuss generation types, their social roles, and how they stand apart from other generations? We illustrate with two different generations that challenge the welfare state: the digital generations and the boomer generation, and discuss the popular use of ascriptive generations.

In Chapter 8, Idunn Seland and Christer Hyggen explore the young generation as the "digital generation". Although not yet settled, this generation clearly represents social change. Having an entire life with the internet and its possibilities makes this generation sharply distinct from earlier generations. The authors study the representation/discussion of the digital generation across more than 1100 Norwegian newspaper articles between 2010 and 2020. They seek out discursive trends in public discourse and the character of the dominant narratives on youth and digital media. Also, they add survey data on youth self-reported trends in the use of digital media aged 13–18 years. They find that the digital generation's portrayal shares traits with previous narratives on danger in youth culture and that there is a fear and a need to work against what the youth culture brings. However, the media narrative of young people's digitalized life is ambiguous, as their mastery is also met with admiration, excitement. They argue that the youth's personal experience has left them with an individualized responsibility in the digital domain, which puts this generation apart from previous generations.

In Chapter 9, Britt Slagsvold and Thomas Hansen present current images of the Baby boomer generation and explore these images' validity using survey data. During the last decades, boomers have more and more often been portrayed as a selfish, hedonistic, and demanding generation in the media. Being young and formed in the "wild 60'ies", their values and expectations of control are assumed to differ from the pre-war generation and the younger generation. The authors find that boomers represent a shift from past generations, as boomers have a considerably firmer belief in controlling their own lives and value hedonism significantly higher than the pre-war generation. Younger generations, however, do not represent a generational shift in this regard as their values and expectations are even more "boomer-like" than the boomers'. The blaming of boomers' character has gained momentum with increased worries about the future of the welfare state and climate crisis. The authors conclude that to blame the boomers for these problems instead of addressing the political and social causes behind the threats to the welfare state seems unwarranted and may create a mistaken conflict between generations.

In Chapter 10, Ida Tolgensbakk explores the uses and abuses of Karl Mannheim's concept of social generation. As a point of departure, she examines the literature rooted in Karl Mannheim's concept of social generations. She traces Mannheim's influence through scholarly contributions to the popular media, which ascribe traits to conjoined social generations. Especially after 2000, and the eruption of internet media, ascriptive generations' use seems to have become more frequent, often creating in-groups and out-groups and becoming part of a popular categorization. The chapter explores how social generations seem to have transitioned from academic use, both in history and sociology, to become a part of popular culture usage and to depict certain key traits of conjoined social generations and set them apart from others. Furthermore, social generations have become theoretically disconnected from understanding social change and have become part of a simplistic media culture. Today this tendency has crossed back over to academia again, making much of the generation research simplistic and in conflict with the motivation of Mannheim.

A new research agenda

Across European countries, the welfare state still has broad support among popular opinion (Meuleman et al., 2018; Svallfors, 2012b). However, solidarity among citizens is not equally distributed towards all groups that are in need. For instance, solidarity towards unemployed and immigrants is weaker than for the elderly (Meuleman et al., 2018), reflecting an overall tendency of relatively high intergenerational solidarity in the Western-styled welfare states.

To Mannheim, the problem of generation was epistemic in character, and a generation approach was to be applied to explain social change, and often as historical discontinuities (Mannheim, 1952). Generation, Mannheim argued, was to be understood as one of the basic factors contributing to the "genesis of the dynamic of historical development" (Mannheim, 1952, p. 320). To explain social change, Mannheim wanted an approach that was between a purely positivistic approach, which focused on birth cohorts, on the one hand, and the romantic-metaphysical concept of generation on the other, which sought to unveil the "soul" of a generation (viz. "entelechies") (Kecskemeti, 1953). This book draws on a similar motivation but is not in and preoccupied with historical discontinuities that mark significant societal shifts. Hence, generation is not studied to explain significant social change and generational styles alone but to provide meaningful analysis of how the welfare state affects generations through the prism of a multifaceted generational concept.

By approaching the welfare state through generational analysis, we study continuity and change of society through the analytical level of the generation that is neither representative of the entire social system nor reducible to the individual personal level. Hence, studying generations provides insights into a core building block of sociology, the birth of persons, and how they are introduced and embedded in society through time, how they reflexively shape society and become shaped by society, and how they pass and exit society. Society would never be the same without generations *quo* generations.

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Part 1

The politics of generations

2 Welfare state redistribution between overlapping generations – normative theories applied to two contemporary debates

Axel West Pedersen and Mi Ah Schoyen

Introduction

The British sociologist Seebohm Rowntree famously pointed out how, before the advent of the modern welfare state, the risk of falling into poverty was particularly concentrated in both ends of the life cycle: during childhood and child rearing and in old age (Rowntree, 1901). One of the key functions of the modern welfare state is to help avoid this "poverty cycle" by transferring economic resources to families with children and to the elderly.

The elderly, but increasingly also children, are the main recipients of cash and in-kind transfers from the welfare state (Daly, 2018; Kohli, 2006). Welfare policies that are directly or indirectly related to age or stages in the life-course attempt to compensate for variation in the income-generating potential over the life-course as well as for variation in economic needs associated with different ages and life-phases. Old-age pensions, for instance, compensate for the typical decline in the capacity for income generation in old age, while free or subsidised health care and social care address the tendency for both health care and social care needs to rise in old age. Similarly, economic redistribution in cash and in-kind towards families with children can to some extent be seen as compensation for lower earnings potential of parents, and mothers in particular, due to care obligations towards children. More importantly, family transfers serve as compensation for higher economic costs of maintaining economically dependent children. This means that the income smoothing that welfare policies bring about should be interpreted not only in the narrow sense of levelling out fluctuations in income streams over the life cycle. In the broader sense, it is about aligning the access to economic resources with age-related variation in economic needs.

Income smoothing over the life cycle that results from age-related welfare policies should be distinguished from redistribution of lifetime income between the rich and the poor and, more generally, between individuals with different social characteristics and lifetime prospects. We might call the first within-individual reallocation of lifetime income and the second between-individual redistribution of lifetime income (Daniels, 1983). The former kind of redistribution is sometimes

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referred to as horizontal redistribution. By contrast, the latter (vertical) redistribution reduces differences between individuals situated at different ends of the income distribution (Palme, 2006).

Some of the within-individual reallocation of lifetime income achieved by the welfare state could in theory be achieved voluntarily and individually through the capital market, by families taking up loans to cover their higher-income needs in the child-rearing phase and by people saving for retirement. However, most welfare states engage rather heavily in the reallocation of resources and consumption possibilities across age groups. The involvement of the state can either be justified with reference to market failures and (soft) paternalistic considerations (see Daniels, 1983, p. 404 ff.) or with reference to intrinsic concerns about the distribution of resources and economic wellbeing between age groups at a particular point in time (McKerlie, 2012). A third possibility is that policies that reallocate resources across age groups and hence over the life cycle open up possibilities to pursue some degree of vertical redistribution of lifetime income between individuals as a kind of side effect (Rødset, 2004).[1] However, this does not really amount to a justification, and it begs the question of why vertical redistribution of lifetime income is perceived to be more politically feasible when integrated with schemes that primarily appear to redistribute resources across age groups and, hence, over the life cycle.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that individuals belonging to different age groups at a particular point in time also belong to different birth cohorts. While age groups have a regularly changing composition of members, the membership of any given (societal) generation or birth cohort is fixed. Distribution and redistribution across age groups at a particular point in time will therefore inevitably involve distribution and redistribution between individuals belonging to different overlapping generations. Using tax revenue to finance old-age pensions and elderly care or to give economic support in cash or in-kind to families with children involves redistribution of economic resources in favour of, respectively, old and young age groups, who at the same time belong to specific generations. The age groups in the middle, who themselves represent a specific generation, are asked to carry the financial burden. Only in a highly hypothetical steady state in terms of policy, macroeconomics, and demographics can it be assumed that policies that redistribute economic resources towards a particular age group or life-phase will be approximately neutral in a generational perspective and only result in within-individual income reallocation over the life cycle.

In this chapter, we are interested in the normative issues that arise in connection with welfare policies that have redistribution across age groups and reallocation of economic resources over the life cycle as their primary purpose. Welfare state policymakers constantly face difficult questions concerning how much redistribution is justified in favour of particular age groups and life-phases. In Chapter 3, Bay and Pedersen show that there is wide variation across contemporary European welfare states in the share of economic resources devoted to pensions and social services for the elderly, on the one hand, and the share of economic resources devoted to transfers and services to families with children, on the other.

In the past decades, the sceptre of population ageing and financial austerity has in many countries led to the legislation and implementation of pension reforms that are intended to limit or reduce the present and future growth in public expenditure on old age pensions and hence reduce the financial burden on future taxpayers (Ebbinghaus, 2011). Although contemporary pension reforms are designed primarily to have long-term effects that will fully unfold in the coming decades, we can now observe that in some countries, per capita expenditure on old age pensions has declined in recent years, while it has continued to grow in other countries at a decreasing pace. At the same time there are in many countries debates about how far the state should take responsibility for directly providing care for the elderly or subsidising privately provided care. Here, the cross-national policy differences are wide, but with some tendencies for upward convergence among the European countries (OECD & European Union, 2018, pp. 136–137). Debates about pension reforms and reforms in elder care obviously raise difficult normative issues about the priority given to (older) pensioners versus (younger) taxpayers and present versus future generations taxpayers/pensioners. They often explicitly refer to notions of intergenerational fairness and ideas about what a desirable "generational contract" underpinning the pension system and the overall welfare state should look like.

Public expenditure on family policy in general, and on childcare in particular, has in the past decade been growing in many countries, although from a very low level in Continental and Southern Europe and a significantly higher level in the Nordic countries (Schoyen, 2016). The patterns of variation over time and between countries in the priority given to providing or subsidising childcare are to some extent driven by the changes in the level of female labour force participation. However, in addition to this material/functional explanation, the widespread tendency towards growth in expenditure on family policy and children is arguably reinforced by a normative/ideological shift in the form of increasing political awareness across Europe of a normative obligation to combat child poverty and "invest" in children's social and cognitive development – as exemplified by the European Commission's initiative to promote investment in children as an important part of the so-called Social Investment Package (European Commission, 2013; see also Morel et al., 2011).

In this chapter, we address these more general normative issues by discussing and applying two competing theories about fairness in the distribution of economic resources between overlapping generations: Daniels' "prudential lifespan account" (Daniels, 1983, 1988, 2008) and McKerlie's demand for "equality between age-groups" (McKerlie, 1989, 2001, 2012). We try to relate these two rather abstract theories to two very specific policy developments in contemporary Norwegian welfare policy: (a) the conversion of the implicit generational contract in connection with the major old-age pension reform that was enacted in 2009 and (b) the gradual transformation of the package of economic support for families with children away from cash transfers (child allowance) and over to free or subsidised services (public childcare and after school programmes).

The chapter is organised as follows: In the next section we introduce the two contemporary Norwegian policy developments and the associated debates. We

complete the introduction of each case with what we believe are pertinent normative questions. Next, we present Daniels and McKerlie's theories before we return to the Norwegian case and discuss how each of the two contemporary debates and the associated questions can be interpreted in light of the two contrasting theories. Finally, we try to use the application of the theories to our two practical cases as a point of departure for suggesting a compromise or synthesis of the two competing positions that can be used as a guide to approaching critical normative issues involved in contemporary debates on family policy and pension policy.

Two contemporary policy issues

The first specific policy issue that we shall address here is related to a major, structural reform of the Norwegian old-age pension system that was legislated in 2009 and started to take effect from 2011. The reform was motivated by growing concerns about the long-term financial sustainability of the existing pension system that had been established in 1967, offering a combination of universal minimum pensions and earnings-related supplementary pensions based on pay-as-you-go financing. Due to the familiar combination of lower fertility and increased longevity, the continuation of the system was projected to result in rather dramatic increases in pension expenditure over the 21st century. In the early 2000s, calculations showed that total old-age pension expenditure would increase from 6% in 2000 to 15.2% of GDP in 2050 (Official Norwegian Report (NOU) 2004:1, 2004), and that the financing of the system in 2050 would require contributions from the economically active population equivalent to 29% of the total wage sum (Pedersen, 2013; cf. Fredriksen et al., 2008).

A key element of the reform is the introduction of a new principle of longevity adjustment of benefits, which means that annual retirement benefits will be reduced in line with gains in longevity for successive birth cohorts. The reform, and in particular the introduction of longevity adjustment, implies a redefinition of the implicit generational contract of the pension system. The old system promised a certain annual replacement rate from a fixed retirement age. By contrast, the new system promises a certain total amount of accumulated pension wealth to be distributed over the (expected) duration of the retirement phase. Younger cohorts with a successively higher life expectancy will be required to accept lower annual benefits since the accumulated pension wealth will be spread more thinly over the retirement phase. Alternatively, they can postpone retirement in order to receive the same annual benefits (replacement rate) as was promised in the old system. In either case, the costs of increasing longevity have been transferred from the working-age taxpayers to the pensioners. Other demographic and economic risks that are associated with a pay-as-you-go pension system, like changes in fertility or the wage sum, are still residing with the taxpayers, as the new pension system is fully integrated with the general state budget. Even so, it is projected that the reform will reduce public expenditure on old-age pensions by 25% in 2050, partly due to lower average benefits and partly to increases in the effective retirement age (Christensen et al., 2012).

While the pension reform and the introduction of the mechanism of longevity adjustment appear to have been widely accepted by societal stakeholders and by the general public before the enactment of the reform, few attempts have been made to provide this important aspect of the pension reform with a more profound and principled justification (Pedersen, 2013). Consequently, the reform is vulnerable to growing critique as the effects of the reform will gradually become more severe and visible for successive new pensioner cohorts.

Question 1: *Is it justifiable to let future cohorts of old age pensioners carry the full costs of increasing longevity and, if so, under what conditions?*

The second policy debate that we want to address is concerned with the level and composition of welfare state support for families with children. Over the past two decades, the level of public expenditure on support for families with children has remained fairly stable in Norway when measured as a percentage of GDP. The composition has changed, however, in favour of childcare services that can be seen to contain an important investment aspect – both here and now by freeing up the parents' time to participate in full-time employment and, particularly, in the long-term by contributing to the cognitive and social development of children (Official Norwegian Report (NOU) 2017:6, 2017; Schoyen, 2016). The increased emphasis on "social investments" in the policy package directed towards families with children over the past decades has been associated with and arguably implicitly financed by a gradual reduction in the real value of cash transfers granted to families with children. Particularly relevant in this regard is the universal child allowance that was first introduced in 1946. Since 1996, the nominal values of the allowance have been frozen with an associated severe decline in terms of both real purchasing power and its relative importance in the income packages for families with children. While the nominal value of the child allowance remained constant between 1996 and 2018, average nominal wages increased by 140% in the same period. In order to return the real value of the child allowance to the same level of generosity as in 1996, the annual benefits received for one child would in 2018 have had to be increased from just above kr10 000 (approximately €1000) to kr24 000 (approximately €2400).

Simultaneously and presumably partly as a result of this development, the level of financial poverty among families with children has been rising, in particular among single-parent families. While the rate of financial poverty among families with children used to be lower than in the general population, it is now significantly higher as shown in Figure 2.1.

The gradual decline in the value of child allowance has taken place with little debate under different governments. This reduction of cash transfers has gone hand in hand with increased expenditure on childcare services, securing virtually full coverage for children under school age, at strongly subsidised prices. Thus, there seems to be a broad and more or less tacit consensus about a narrative that the Norwegian welfare state has even increased its efforts in support of families with children over the past decades.

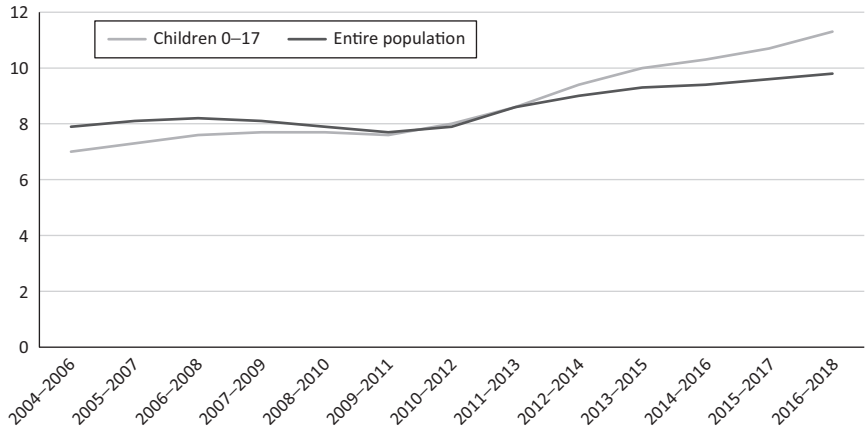

Figure 2.1 The financial poverty rates according to EU's "At Risk of Poverty" indicator applied to incomes summed over a three-year accounting period. *Source:* Statistics Norway.

The common acceptance of the decline in cash transfers to families with children and the political complacency with the associated increase in financial poverty rates among children seem to receive justification in recent research contributions. Aaberge et al. (2019) show that when taking into account the (increasing) value of the services that the families, poverty rates among families are lower than that indicated by conventional measures and do not show the same tendency to rise. The findings seem to suggest that the increase in financial poverty is in reality just an artefact that arises due to the narrow conception of income in conventional poverty measures.

What is lacking in this debate, however, is a principled framework for discussing how the overall level of support for families should be determined, and whether it is relevant to include the value of investment-oriented services in the measurement of financial poverty and economic wellbeing of families here and now. The pertinent normative question in this case can be framed as follows:

Question 2: *Is it justifiable to let increasing expenditure on early childhood care and education be indirectly financed by a decrease in the level of cash transfers to families with children, and should the economic value of the educational and care services received by families with children be counted in the measurement of their incomes and hence in the assessment of financial poverty?*

We believe that debates about both the pension system and family policy can benefit from more principled thinking along the lines of the two competing theories about a fair distribution and redistribution between age groups to which we now turn: Daniels' "prudential lifespan account" and McKerlie's demand for "equality between age-groups".

Presentation of the two theories

The theories that we are about to present share some core ideas that distinguish them from other important theories in political philosophy about distributive justice. Many prominent political philosophers either state explicitly or take for granted that theories about distributive justice should only be concerned with the distribution of *lifetime* income and economic wellbeing more generally between individuals. McKerlie refers to this commonly held position as "complete lives egalitarianism". The exclusive emphasis on complete lives is very explicitly developed by Thomas Nagel (1970), but it is also present in the respective theories of John Rawls (1971) and Ronald Dworkin (1981a, 1981b). The claim that egalitarianism should focus on complete lives is supported by the intuition that goods enjoyed at a particular point in time by an individual can fully compensate for the lack of similar goods enjoyed at another time. A core idea among egalitarian philosophers is precisely that a similar intuition does not apply to the situation where goods are unequally distributed or transferred between different individuals.

Both Daniels (1983, p. 500) and McKerlie (2012, p. 21 ff.) reject this "complete lives egalitarianism" by insisting that social justice is not achieved only by securing a just distribution of *lifetime* income and economic wellbeing within and between generations. Instead, they both argue that also the distribution of resources or *annual* incomes or wellbeing across age groups in a society at a particular historical moment is a moral concern in its own right.[2] However, they differ strongly in the way they frame the argument in favour of making the distribution between age groups and life-stages morally relevant in its own right and in their specific conception of a just distribution of economic resources across age groups and overlapping generations.

Daniels' theory: "the prudential lifespan account"

Norman Daniels (1983, 1988, 2008) has proposed a highly influential theory on how to think about the distribution of scarce resources between individuals belonging to different age groups. His seminal article on the topic (Daniels, 1983) was primarily concerned with the allocation of health care services between individuals of different ages and whether it could be justified to discriminate between patients according to age, for instance, by withholding certain expensive and at the same time potentially life-saving treatments from patients above a certain age. He discusses how discrimination according to age has both similarities and fundamental differences with discrimination according to gender and race. The most fundamental difference is that an individual over time can expect to live through the different life-phases, while this is obviously not the case for gender, race, and social class. This implies that thinking about the distribution of resources across individuals at different ages can be reframed as being analogous to a question about how resources should ideally be allocated over the life-course of a single individual. This is the core idea of Daniels' theory about what constitutes a just

distribution of resources between age groups: it is the distribution over different ages and stages in the life-course that a prudential individual would choose for him/herself behind a kind of "veil-of-ignorance" about individual characteristics (including age) and preferences (Daniels, 1983, p. 509) – akin to the more famous contractual theory of justice developed by Rawls (1971).

Daniels needs to make a number for further assumptions in order to arrive at substantial conclusions from this basic framework for thinking about issues of distribution and redistribution across age groups. He takes as a point of departure the principle of equal concern given to all life-phases. In other words, he avoids that the deliberation about a prudential distribution of resources over the lifespan takes the time of birth as a point of departure and applies some sort of discounting to weight costs and gains experienced at different points in the life-course. Instead, the age perspective of the deliberation is made neutral by also including age in the set of information that is kept behind the veil of ignorance. The deliberation does, however, take account of knowledge about the length of the "normal lifespan", and Daniels proposes that the deliberators will be concerned with attempting to maximise his/her opportunity range at each particular age/life-phase (Daniels, 1983, p. 508 ff.). The idea is to build in a recognition that the range of opportunities available for the individual will naturally differ with age. This further implies, according to Daniels, that the deliberators will be concerned with maximising his/her probability of reaching a normal lifespan, but not with prolonging life further beyond this threshold that can be roughly associated with the normal life expectancy. Based on this framework, Daniels claims to have established a theory that could justify excluding persons above a certain age from receiving expensive life-prolonging treatments if the resources that are liberated instead are used to develop other treatments that will increase the likelihood of reaching what can be considered the normal life expectancy in a given society.

Of interest here is not so much the specific conclusion that Daniels arrives at with respect to prioritising health care services, but more the general suggestion to look at the issue about a just distribution across age groups as an issue of a prudent allocation of resources over the lifespan of individuals. A prudent agent who gives equal weight to all life-phases will be prone to consider efficiency, i.e. how to achieve the highest economic returns overall, when contemplating how to allocate economic resources over the life-course. In other words, an uneven distribution of resources between age groups and life-phases can be justified if it contributes to enhancing the welfare of individuals in a lifetime perspective.

However, it is not entirely clear how strongly Daniels' prudent agents would emphasise efficiency in the allocation of resources over the life-course. Presumably, they would land somewhere in the range between a utilitarian principle of maximising the sum of welfare for all agents over all life-phases and adopting a maximin criterion with respect to welfare enjoyed in different life-phases in the spirit of the difference principle in Rawls' theory.

In any case, prudence would require that investing resources at a particular age or life-phase should be made if they are likely to give a high return in a lifetime perspective, and therefore the investments should be seen as such and not as

an unfair privilege granted to the age/life-phase where the investment is made. Although concerns for efficiency in a lifetime perspective are taken in in order to justify a possible non-egalitarian distribution of resources over the life cycle and hence across age groups, Daniels' position still deviated from standard "complete lives egalitarianism" by insisting that the distribution across age groups is an intrinsically moral concern. The argument is that prudence constrained by an equal concern for all life-phases should be the guide to distributive justice across age groups.

McKerlie's theory: "equality between age groups"

By transforming the problem of distribution across age groups from a between-individuals distributive issue to the problem of prudent within-individual allocation over the life-course, Daniels' theory allows for an uneven distribution of resources between age groups and downplays distributive concerns related to coexisting generations in favour of emphasising efficiency in a life-course perspective. This has led to critique from a number of scholars, including among others Anderson (1999) and Pettit (2012), who insist on the importance of minimising inequality across simultaneously living age groups or overlapping generations at any particular point in time as an important concern in itself. The most elaborate critique of Daniels' theory and proposal for an alternative theory of justice between age groups has been put forward by Dennis McKerlie in a number of articles (1989, 2001) and a book (2012).

McKerlie's critique of the prudential lifetime account centres on a rejection of the idea to transform the issue of distribution between life-phases into an issue of prudence and perhaps even efficiency in a lifetime perspective. His critique echoes the standard egalitarian critique of utilitarianism for offering the maximisation of the sum of welfare across individuals as the guide to the distribution of resources between individuals (McKerlie, 2012, pp. 41–47). McKerlie argues that even if Daniels assumes that the prudential deliberation takes place behind a veil of ignorance also concerning the individual's age, and hence, that the result should be neutral in terms of the priority given to each life-phase, the theory would still recommend more resources devoted to early and middle life at the expense of old age, because allocating resources to earlier life-phases is likely to have an investment component that is lacking when giving resources to the very old.

McKerlie's theory claims, by contrast, that we should be intrinsically concerned with inequality in income and living conditions between age groups and coexisting generations in a society at any given historical moment. He defends a position where egalitarianism is extended to not only refer to the distribution of lifetime income/welfare (as in "complete life egalitarianism") but also to the distribution across temporal parts (segments) of life, what we commonly refer to as age groups. In particular, he defends the so-called simultaneous segments view whereby comparisons between contemporary age groups have direct moral relevance (McKerlie, 2012, p. 61). According to this theory, inequalities between young and old at a point in time are objectionable, even if they should turn out to

cancel out in a lifetime perspective. A transfer of resources between age groups – say a child allowance or an old-age pension – is justified if it contributes to reducing inequality in wellbeing across age groups here and now. A transfer that is equalising in this respect might at the same time lead to more inequality across the respective birth cohorts in a lifetime perspective. Hence, there might be a conflict between these two egalitarian objectives. McKerlie recognises this, and he makes it clear that his position does not imply that potential effects on the distribution of lifetime income should be ignored or overridden, only that the effects on the distribution here and now between age groups are morally relevant in itself and should somehow be counted in. It is morally objectionable if a particular age group is relatively disadvantaged vis-à-vis other age groups, even if this disadvantage is compensated during other life-phases and even if it cancels out in a lifetime perspective.

A practical implication of McKerlie's theory is that it, in certain contexts, recommends that more resources are devoted to the elderly, compared to the recommendation that would follow from Daniels' prudential approach. McKerlie's theory could in principle lead to a recommendation that support for the elderly should be increased – given that their situation is particularly disadvantaged vis-à-vis other age groups – even if this redistribution in favour of the elderly would lead to some reduction in lifetime welfare for all cohorts/generations in a steady-state continuation of the policy.

Key differences and room for compromise?

The theory of Daniels puts concerns for efficiency and the maximisation of welfare in a lifetime perspective at the centre of considerations about age-related welfare policy, while the theory of McKerlie insists on weighing in intrinsic distributive concerns, including considerations for equality in income and wellbeing across coexisting individuals in different age groups and, hence, overlapping generations.

However, although the theories are clearly competing, there might be room for compromise because the initial basic focus of the two theories is different. The theory of Daniels is primarily concerned with the distribution of scarce resources across individuals in different age groups. The more or less implicit contrast is between a uniform distribution (no discrimination) on the one hand and giving some priority to specific age groups out of concerns for efficiency in a lifetime perspective on the other. McKerlie's theory, on the other hand, takes existing inequalities in the distribution of wellbeing across age groups in a given society as the point of departure, and develops the case for correcting these inequalities (by redistribution according to need at any given point in time). It can be argued therefore that the two theories are only in direct conflict with each other if and when investing resources at a particular age with a view to increasing lifetime welfare (as recommended by Daniels' theory) is associated with increased inequality at the level of welfare enjoyed by different coexisting age groups (condemned by McKerlie's theory), or to the extent that resources spent on correcting cross-age

inequalities could alternatively be spent on investments that lead to an improvement in lifetime prospects.

Application to the two cases

Longevity adjustment of old age pensions – under what conditions is it defensible?

The economist Richard Musgrave showed in a seminal article how the generational contract of a pay-as-you-go pension system, where current old pensions are financed directly by taxes/contributions paid by the economically active population, can be set up according to three distinctive principles (Musgrave, 1981). The first alternative principle he calls "Fixed Replacement Rate", and it corresponds to the main characteristics of classical ("defined benefit") social insurance schemes. The scheme promises pensioners a certain replacement rate in retirement (that the annual pension benefit will amount to a certain fraction of the previous wage) and benefits are paid lifelong from a certain age. On the financing side, the collection of taxes and contributions from the economically active population is constantly adjusted in order to collect the necessary revenue to cover pension expenditure. In this ideal-typical system, all demographic and economic risks of the pension system are carried by the economically active population. If, for instance, longevity increases (leading to higher pension expenditure) or fertility declines (leading to lower revenues), the rate of taxes and contributions on the economically active population has to be increased. As a consequence, the disposable incomes of the economically active population will decline relative to the contemporary pensioner generation that continues to enjoy the same level of benefits as promised by the scheme. The second alternative, "Fixed Contribution Rate", is the complete opposite of the first alternative. Here the system is built around a fixed contribution rate on the economically active population, and the level of benefits offered to the current generation of pensioners will depend on the size of revenues generated by the fixed contribution rate at a particular point in time and on the number of pensioners among whom the total revenues should be shared. In this ideal-typical scheme, all economic and demographic risks of the pay-as-you-go pension system are transferred from workers to pensioners. If longevity increases or fertility drops, the annual benefits paid out to each old age pensioner will have to be lowered in order to make sure that total pension expenditure matches the revenues generated by the fixed contribution rate. As a matter of fact, a version of this principled solution to the problem of the generational contract has been realised in the reformed Swedish pension system (Pedersen, 2005). Finally, Musgrave proposes the principle of "Fixed Relative Positions" as an attractive third alternative. This principle entails a perfect sharing of all economic and demographic risks between workers and pensioners. It can, for instance, be realised by letting the pension system be financed by general taxation with mechanisms to ensure that tax rates on workers and pensioners are adjusted proportionally to meet changes in pension expenditure, or changes in the tax base. In this case, if longevity increases or fertility drops, both the economically active

and the pensioners will have to suffer a (similar) decline in annual disposable incomes.

Musgrave's principle of Fixed Relative Positions is in perfect alignment with McKerlie's theory. It ensures that at any given point in time, the ratio of disposable income levels enjoyed by the young and the old will remain the same. At the same time, the Musgrave principle completely ignores fluctuations over time in the level of income available for the equal distribution between age groups (see Myles, 2003; Oksanen, 2003; Schokkaert & Van Parijs, 2003). In particular, it should be noted that increasing longevity will lead to strong increases in aggregate pension expenditure, and consequently to decreasing disposable incomes for both the economically active population and for pensioners; and this raises the question of whether it would not be in the interest of both age groups in a lifetime perspective to postpone the transition from work to retirement in line with increases in longevity.

This is why John Myles (2002) has argued for modifying the Musgrave principle by letting the longevity risk be carried exclusively by pensioners. If longevity increases are associated with improved health and functioning at specific ages, then Daniels' "prudential lifespan" perspective can be invoked to support the principle of longevity adjustment as a reasonable modification to the Musgrave principle. A prudential individual deliberating behind a veil of ignorance is likely to prefer working longer when longevity increases in order to uphold the same living standard as before (both while working and in retirement), rather than simply expanding the retirement phase and accepting lower annual incomes both before and after retirement.

The mechanism of longevity adjustment that is built into the new Norwegian pension system can be justified in this way. In the new Norwegian pension system, the longevity risk has been transferred to each pensioner cohort, while the sharing of the remaining risks (for instance, fertility and macro-economic developments) remains rather opaque since the pension system is fully integrated into the state budget without a clear specification how increasing pension expenditure will be shared between workers and pensioners.

In any case, the longevity adjustment that is built into the reformed Norwegian pension system can be justified with reference to prudential reasoning in a lifetime perspective. However, it should be emphasised that this argument rests on a crucial assumption: that the possibilities to work at specific ages improve in line with improvements in longevity. If the age at which the disutility of working increases and productivity decreases remains constant while longevity increases, the prudential individual would not postpone retirement. Longevity adjustment would, in this case, impose a strong decline in incomes in retirement in violation of McKerlie's claim for equality between age groups. The assumption would also be violated if employers and the labour market institutions more generally do not adjust to allow workers to postpone retirement in line with changes in longevity. McKerlie's concern for equal treatment and equal outcomes across age groups comes into full force if the link between improvements in longevity and improvements in the functional capacity for work and the actual opportunities offered at

different ages is weak. Whether this is in fact the case is an empirical question that has not been firmly settled (however, for a study that lends some support to the hypothesis that the prevalence of functional disabilities at a particular age tend to decline with increasing longevity, see Moe & Hagen, 2011).

Is it justifiable to let cuts in the child allowance programme finance increasing expenditure on services to families with children?

The social investment paradigm that became prominent in social policy debates both among academics and policymakers from the mid-1990s promises to overcome the dilemma between "neo-liberal" concerns for advancing employment, economic growth and economic efficiency, and upholding or expanding redistributive social policies (Birnbaum et al., 2017; Morel et al., 2011). The precise content of the social investment argument is not always entirely clear, and the same can be said about the policy recommendations that follow from the argument. Sometimes the argument is simply invoked as a justification for existing social policies, claiming that they have positive implications for economic growth in the long run. At other times it is used to justify changes in social policy interventions in favour of measures that are assumed to enhance employment rates and productivity in the long run. This ambiguity is revealed in debates about family policy. The social investment paradigm lends support to the idea of expanding the availability of affordable formal childcare and to transform it into an arena for promoting the development of social and cognitive skills from an early age (for highly influential contributions, see Esping-Andersen, 2002; Heckman, 2008). It is more unclear what the paradigm implies for existing cash transfer programmes towards families with children like traditional universal or means-tested cash transfer programmes. Does the paradigm justify cuts in these schemes in order to concentrate resources on educational programmes for small children, or could also cash transfers to families with children be justified as investments in the future productivity of children? The problem for the latter option is that it rests on strong factual claims about the relationship between cash transfers to families with children and the future outcome of the children that might be true but have been difficult to support with hard empirical evidence (Mayer, 1997; cf. Cooper & Stewart, 2020).

This is precisely the dilemma that comes to the fore in our second Norwegian debate. Norwegian policymakers tend implicitly to take the first view. The large effort to expand coverage with preschool day care, and the simultaneous decline in the value of the child allowance over the past decades in Norway, is seen as a legitimate redirection of economic support to families with children. This view is indirectly supported by a new approach to the measurement of income inequality and poverty suggested by Aaberge et al. (2019). The approach entails adding the value of publicly provided or sponsored services to the measurement of total equivalised household income. Using this approach, the authors show that the level of income poverty prevailing among families with children is very dramatically reduced when taking into account the value of subsidised childcare and free

primary school that is received by families with children. This is so even if the authors take measures to adjust the implicit assumption about the economic needs of different household types to take into account also the need to provide children with care and education. The reduction in measured poverty rates arises because the value of these services is uniform across families with a fixed number of children in the relevant age groups, while it is assumed that the economic needs for these services are proportional to household incomes.

Also, in relation to this debate, we believe that a combination of the theories of Daniels and McKerlie can help clarify the issues involved and suggest a constructive compromise. Investing in children's social and cognitive development is easily justified with reference to Daniels' "Prudential lifespan account". McKerlie's insistence on "Equality between age groups" can, on the other hand, be invoked to reject the idea that increased investments in children's long-term outcomes should be made at the expense of the living conditions of families with children here and now. Maintaining a clear distinction between investments in future outcomes and support to achieve an acceptable living standard here and now is key to the solution proposed here. Cash transfers to families with children are motivated by the goal to compensate families with children for their higher consumption needs and lower income-generating capacity, while educational services can be motivated as social investment.

Increasing investment in children can be justified in the spirit of Daniels' "prudential lifespan account", but it should not be done at the expense of cash transfers to families with children that are instrumental in avoiding widespread financial poverty among families with children here and now. Families with children should be helped to maintain the same level of economic wellbeing as other demographic groups in line with McKerlie's theory. Moreover, following McKerlie's line of reasoning, it becomes fundamentally misleading to include investments in schooling when measuring economic wellbeing among families. A defence for maintaining (or expanding) the quality of a traditional child allowance scheme could, therefore, in the first instance refer to the ideal of "equality between age groups" and not make itself solely dependent on empirically fragile and hence contestable claims about effects on future outcomes.

Conclusions

For the past 20 years or so, European governments have been concerned with making adjustments to the challenges posed by population ageing. Old age pension systems and family policy have represented two main areas of intervention. Pension reforms have aimed to reduce projected future public pension expenditures, above all by increasing workers' incentives to retire later or, alternatively, accept lower annual benefits. In family policy, we have seen a turn towards an expansion of childcare to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family and, thereby, stimulate higher labour market participation and, potentially, even fertility. Such developments would, in turn, affect positively the long-term sustainability of the welfare state.

More generally, welfare states redistribute income across age groups at any given point in time as well as both within and across generations in a life-course perspective via different policy instruments targeted at different ages. Such cash benefits and in-kind services determine how welfare states treat generations and age groups, and thus, they have implications for the (implicit) generational contract around which the modern welfare states are constructed.

Against this backdrop, this chapter has suggested that the debate about benefits and services that have age or life-phase as a point of reference for determining eligibility would benefit from a discussion about the normative principles that underpin the allocation of economic resources to different ages and overlapping generations, even if these principles are not always articulated explicitly. In this context, we have argued that Daniels and McKerlie offer two coherent but contrasting approaches to the question of how to fairly distribute economic resources across overlapping generations. The two perspectives have been influential in theoretical debates, and in this chapter, we have demonstrated how normative theories of this kind may also contribute to a theoretically informed discussion of real-world examples of age or life-phase-oriented policy. An explicit treatment of normative issues is often missing in public discussions of sometimes quite technical and complex welfare schemes (perhaps particularly true in the case of pensions).

On the one hand, for Daniels, a just distribution across age groups is obtained if the existing policies produce the kind of outcomes that would be preferred by prudent individuals when contemplating how to allocate resources over their own life-course. This goal might, in certain situations, justify a disproportional allocation of investments to a specific age group if it entails significant efficiency gains from a life-course perspective. The mentioned turn towards social investment in social policy, represented most notably by governments' increased efforts to expand and support early childhood education and care, is arguably the most prominent example of this kind of logic put into practice.

On the other hand, McKerlie underlines the importance of inequality in living conditions between age groups at a given point in time as a moral question in itself. Even if differences between age groups should tend to cancel out when adopting a life-course lens, it is problematic if there, at a given moment, are large differences across coexisting age groups with regard to incomes and living conditions more generally. We have argued that McKerlie's theory is in line with Musgrave's warning against letting the economic risks inherent in a pay-as-you-go pension system fall exclusively on either workers or pensioners and in agreement with Musgrave's suggestion for an equal sharing of risks between overlapping generations. Also, the example of the weakening of the Norwegian child allowance together with the more or less simultaneous steady increase in child poverty brings to the fore the practical relevance of McKerlie's arguments.

In our discussion of theories and their application to the two practical cases we have suggested that even if the theories of Daniels and McKerlie are competing, there is room for a compromise between the two that can give crucial normatively grounded guidance in decisions about age-based welfare policies. Following

Daniels, especially in a context of tight budget restraints, it makes sense to strive for an efficient allocation of resources, considering the whole life of individuals. However, inequalities (or lack of redistribution) across age groups at a specific moment in time may be bad both in terms of social justice and political sustainability. If one age group sees that poverty rates are growing fast, they will expect the government to react. Failure to do so can create popular discontent and unrest and may make otherwise sensible and necessary policy reforms more difficult to design and sell politically.

While the chapter has discussed two examples from contemporary Norwegian policy debates, questions of inequality across age at a given moment in time and across generations in a lifetime perspective are relevant to most mature welfare states and are not likely to go away. Life expectancy is increasing and is something pension systems across Europe have to address. The same can be said about the need to find the right mix of support for families with children in a time of growing income inequalities. Social investment with its emphasis on education to improve future life chances is by now a consolidated and relatively uncontroversial part of the solution. However, as the Belgian economist Bea Cantillon reminds us, "this must not stop us from locating shortcomings and problems, as […] the investment turn, too, did not deliver on poverty alleviation" (Cantillon, 2013). Traditional forms of social protection need to be preserved so that they can operate in parallel with social investment (Cantillon & Van Lancker, 2013). In short, economic redistribution across overlapping generations is not a question of either-or. We can draw on the theories of both Daniels and McKerlie to strike a reasonable balance between considerations of income and wellbeing over the life-course and the preservation of equality in living conditions across overlapping generations here and now.

Notes

1 Typically, the aim would be redistribution from rich to poor, but vertical redistribution can also in practice go in the opposite direction. In that case the outcome is sometimes described as "perverse" redistribution (Palme, 2006).
2 The focus does not have to be literally on annual incomes but on incomes received at a particular point in time irrespective of the exact length of the accounting period (one, two, or three years).

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3 The age profile of European welfare states

A source of intergenerational conflict?

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Introduction

It has often been claimed that population aging will lead to intensified distributional conflicts in the welfare state between the young and the old. Traditionally, benefits towards the elderly have enjoyed strong public support in most welfare states. However, with population aging, the costs related to the provision of old-age pensions and old-age care are increasing, and this could lead to increased intergenerational conflict.[1] Younger population segments are expected to oppose the heavy burden that pension systems and public provision of elderly care place upon them, while the elderly could use their strength in numbers to push through political priorities favoring themselves.

In a groundbreaking study of the development of the standard of living among elderly and children in the American society, Samuel H. Preston came to the widely cited conclusion that "*conditions have deteriorated for children and improved dramatically for the elderly and demographic change has been intimately involved in these developments*" (Preston, 1984, p. 436).

The aging of the population has according to Preston had a major influence on political priorities in the American welfare state in favor of the elderly, and he points to three sources of self-interested support for policies benefiting the elderly in particular: "the elderly themselves, the working-age population who wants to avoid elderly's need for family support and the same working-age population who cares for their own well-being as elderly" (Preston 1984, p. 446). Since Preston's seminal article, several studies have been undertaken to investigate the age profile of democratic welfare states and the drivers behind age policies as well as individual attitudes (see e.g. Vanhuysse & Goerres, 2012; Torp, 2015). A substantial amount of the research contributions deals with what for Preston is an important premise; that policy changes in favor of the elderly are the result of an aging electorate fighting for their own self-interests.

Julia Lynch (2006) joins Preston in his concerns about a potential bias in favor of the elderly in contemporary welfare policy. However, rather than seeing this as a universal trend driven by common changes in the age composition of the electorate, she proposes that the degree of elderly bias is contingent on the architecture of the existing welfare state and the nature of policymaking in different

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countries. She constructs an index-measuring per capita social expenditure on the elderly divided by per capita social expenditure to the nonelderly and finds dramatic variation in the degree of pro-elderly spending bias across OECD countries (Lynch 2006, p. 5 and p. 30). Her main conclusion is that "the age orientation of welfare is a largely unintended consequence of the structure of social programs and the mode of political competition in which politicians engage" (2006, p. 184).

Inspired by the comparative findings of Lynch and the contested premise of a self-serving, greying electorate, this chapter sets out to investigate the contemporary age orientation of welfare spending in selected European welfare states and voter preferences with respect to policies that benefit the elderly and families with children, respectively. Three main research questions will be pursued: (1) Does the pattern found by Lynch of large cross-national differences in the age profile of welfare state spending hold up, or have there been tendencies toward convergence over the last 15 years? (2) Does contemporary cross-national variation in the age orientation of welfare state spending align with cross-national variation in voter preferences? (3) To what extent do we see an age gradient in the voters' priorities over age-related welfare spending, and is this stronger in countries with a particularly elderly- biased profile of welfare spending?

The empirical analysis is based on a sample of 13 European countries. Before embarking on the empirical analysis, we offer a review of theoretical perspectives and previous research, followed by a presentation of our hypotheses and an introduction to our data and the methods applied.

Voter preferences and age-related political priorities: theoretical perspectives and previous findings

The premise of an aging electorate fighting politically for its own material interests is in accordance with standard models of political economy (Buchanan & Tullock, 1969; Persson & Tabellini, 2000): political parties competing for power are forced to adjust their programs to satisfy the preferences of the median voter who is assumed to be acting as an individual utility maximizer. Since important welfare programs like old-age pensions and child allowances benefit distinctive age groups, it is logical to expect a strong age cleavage in the degree of support for the respective programs among voters.

Studies of the relationship between age and individuals' welfare attitudes do however leave us with a somewhat mixed picture. Busemeyer et al. (2009) studied welfare attitudes in 14 OECD countries. They found considerable age-related preferences related to education, but modest effects of age on attitudes toward pensions. de Mello et al. (2016) studied attitudes toward government spending in 34 countries. They found that the elderly are less likely to support increased spending on education and more likely to support increased spending on pensions. They foresee increased tensions between generations in ageing societies (p. 1). Svallfors et al., on the other hand, conclude from a cross-country study of welfare opinions that age is not likely to emerge as an important social cleavage (2012, p. 182).

Based on the assumption of the self-oriented median voter, Jensen (2012) makes a distinction between life cycle and labor market-oriented social programs. According to Jensen, the (middle class) median voter is less supportive of labor market programs as they mainly affect the risks of low-income individuals. The median voter favors social programs directed toward life cycle risks, as these are by and large uncorrelated with income. The distinction challenges the hypothesis of age-based conflicts about distribution; the median voter will push both sides of the political left-right dimension to prioritize life cycle-oriented programs at the expense of programs directed toward the poor.

While it is possible to construct an argument based on self-interest to explain why also the young should be sympathetic to spending on the elderly (because they expect to benefit in the future), it is more difficult to develop a similar account of support for family policies among the elderly. Goerres and Tepe (2010) have however suggested that the self-interest of the elderly can be modified by intergenerational solidarity within the family. They find empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that the interaction with younger family members stimulates solidarity since the interaction is associated with more positive attitudes toward public spending on childcare among elderly voters.

The assumption of age-based interests as a premise for the individual's political preferences as well as the role of age policies played in the competition for power between political parties is challenged more fundamentally by alternative theories to the median voter theorem. According to the theory of symbolic politics, individuals form their political preferences based on a set of individually stable and culturally influenced political and social values, group stereotypes, sympathies, and antipathies (see Sears and Funk,1990 for a summary). Symbolic predispositions are "judgmental shortcuts, efficient ways to organize and simplify political choices" (Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991, p. 19). In the literature on the sources of individuals' attitudes toward social policies and the welfare state, particular attention has been paid to beliefs about the legitimacy of an individual's claim to benefits (Feldman & Zaller, 1992, van Oorschot, 2006). Findings from research on welfare attitudes have revealed that individuals base their evaluation of welfare benefits on notions of deservingness and the potential for abuse (Roosma et al, 2014). Many have pointed out that the elderly are generally regarded as a most deserving group; aging is beyond the individual's control (Fernández, 2012) and benefits to the elderly can be seen as a reward for their efforts through life for the society and the family (Heclo, 1988).

The median voter theorem and the theory of symbolic politics attach important explanatory power to exogenous voter preferences. They both predict convergence in voters' attitudes and policies across countries. Either individual self-interest or culturally imposed sympathy should encourage voters to prioritize benefits toward the elderly. In turn this must be expected to result in convergence in the actual policies pursued in different countries. These theories therefore have difficulties explaining cross-national variation in the age profile of social policies. In order to explain strong cross-national variation in the actual age profile of welfare policies, we either have to assume that some welfare states are not

responsive to the political priorities of their voters or that the preferences of the voters are less predictable and homogenous than the theories would lead us to expect.

The idea that welfare policy is converging as a result of structural similarities in voter preferences is challenged by theories emphasizing the path dependency of social policies and the importance of established institutions for political interest formation and political reasoning. According to this perspective, different welfare states can be set on divergent development paths that tend to perpetuate or even reinforce themselves. A trivial explanation for political path dependency is the costs involved in changing institutions and encompassing policy measures. But most important is the role played by established institutions in the framing of the discourse: "defining the repertoire of more or less acceptable (and expectable) discursive interactions" (Schmidt, 2003, p. 319). According to Pierson, established policies constrain the decisions of policymakers as well as the preferences of voters (1996, 1998, 2001). Voter preferences can play an important role also in this theory, but here they are assumed to be largely endogenous and conditioned by existing policies and institutional structures, and they can therefore be expected to diverge across countries rather than converge.

Lynch's study of the age profile of rich democracies puts a strong emphasis on the notion of path dependency. She suggests that an observed strong variation in the age profile of contemporary welfare states can be explained with reference to two analytical dimensions (Lynch, 2006, p. 55). The first refers to a distinction between countries with a historical legacy of universal, citizenship-based social programs and countries with a tradition for occupationally segmented social programs, both dating back to the birth of the welfare state in the early 20th century. In the first category she places the Nordic countries and the Anglo-Saxon countries (except the United States), while she places most Continental and Southern European countries in the second category. This dichotomy resonates with the more familiar distinction between "Biscmarckian" and "Beveridgean" welfare states (Palier, 2010), and it has affinities to Esping-Andersen's famous welfare state typology and in particular the distinction between Conservative/continental welfare states on the one hand and Social Democratic and Liberal welfare states on the other (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

According to Lynch, an intermediate group of countries can be identified that is characterized as having shifted path from an initial emphasis on occupationally segmented programs to more universal, citizen-based policies. In this intermediate group she places countries like Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal. In order to explain why other countries with a similar historical legacy (particularly Southern European countries like Italy, Spain, and Greece, but also Austria, Belgium the United States and Japan) have remained stuck in the occupationally segmented path, she brings in the second dimension, which refers to the nature of political competition between parties: many of the countries where occupational programs persisted tend to be characterized by a political system where politicians offer tangible benefits to selective groups in return for votes (p. 63) ("clientelistic" political systems), in contrast to party competition in countries

with universal programs that tends to be ideological and justified with reference to the benefits to society at large.

Lynch's empirical analysis seems to confirm that the age bias in welfare spending in favor of the elderly is particularly strong among countries that feature corporatist and occupationally segmented social policies and weakest among the group of countries with a legacy for citizenship-based social policies. The intermediate group of countries that are claimed to have changed paths after World War II toward more citizen-based policies are found to score somewhere in between the two other groups in terms of pro-elderly spending bias. She contends that these patterns are entrenched and therefore very difficult to change; the established age orientation seems "to create a kind of ideational feedback among elites, structuring how they perceive the welfare state to administer intergenerational justice, and thus setting new parameters for discussions about welfare retrenchment and reform" (p. 199).

Outline of the empirical analysis and hypotheses

We start out the empirical analysis by investigating whether Lynch's finding of a distinctive and stable pattern of widely different age profiles in welfare spending can still be identified. We then move on to elaborate on a topic suggested in Lynch's concluding remarks about topics for future research: the reaction to existing age policies among voters. Are voters in the respective countries also influenced by the path-dependent "ideational feedback among elites" so that they tend to support the different age policies pursued in the respective countries? In that case, we expect that cross-national variation in voter preferences aligns neatly with observed differences in the policies that are pursued in different countries. Or could it rather be the case that (median) voters in different countries tend to have exogenous and intrinsically similar preferences in line with standard political economy theory or motivated by universal ideas about justice between age groups so that we can identify a significant discrepancy between voter preferences and the policies pursued in countries with a strong pro-elderly spending bias? Finally, we are interested in finding out if a strong elderly-biased social policy will trigger a stronger age division in voter attitudes than a social policy with a more even distribution between spending on the young and the old. The strength of the debate about generational justice in the elderly-friendly American society gives reasons to expect stronger age division in voters' preferences in countries with mainly occupational-based social programs than in countries with citizen-based social programs. On the other hand, the political elite plays an important role in the development of social policies in the theory of path dependency. If voters are more or less detached from political decisions about social programs, there is no reason to expect that age has a stronger effect within some social policy regimes than in others, nor is there reason to expect a strong overlap between voters' priorities and the priorities pursued by governments in European welfare states.

Data and methods

Our study covers 13 European countries. The criteria for selecting countries is (1) that they are covered in the study by Lynch and (2) that they are covered in the European Social Survey Round 8, in which a module on welfare attitudes allows us to investigate voter preferences toward policies that favor the elderly and policies that favor families with children.

The 13 countries are presented in Table 3.1. We have divided them into four groups according to a conventional typology of European welfare states (Leibfried, 1992; Ferrera, 1996): Social Democratic/Nordic, Liberal, Conservative/Continental, and Southern European welfare states. We prefer to use this typology over Lynch's less well-known threefold typology, but - as already discussed – the two typologies are fairly similar in their grouping of countries. The main difference is that the Social Democratic and Liberal welfare states are joined together by Lynch in a group characterized by citizen-based universal policies. The Southern European category corresponds largely with Lynch's category of corporatist and occupationally segmented welfare states, while the Conservative/Continental category corresponds roughly with Lynch's category of Mixed Systems.

In the first part of the empirical analysis, we use data on social expenditure from the so-called SOCX database provided by the OECD (OECD 2019), to study cross-national variation in the age profile of social expenditure and how it has changed in our 13 country cases between 2000 and 2015.

Although inspired by Lynch, we have chosen a somewhat different operationalization. Like Lynch, we look at total expenditure on pensions and social services to people aged 65+ as an indicator of spending in favor of the elderly, but our indicator for spending on the "young" is different. While she uses total social expenditure on the nonelderly (including spending on unemployment, disability, and sickness benefits), we concentrate on social spending in favor of families with children (e.g. spending on cash benefits and services offered to families with children). We believe that this provides a more relevant contrast of social spending on the old versus the young. When taking a per capita perspective on spending in favor of the old and the young, we divide spending on the respective program areas by the number of people above the age of 65 (per capita spending on the

Table 3.1 Country cases, grouped according to welfare state type

Social democratic/-Nordic	*Liberal*	*Conservative/-Continental*	*Southern European*
Sweden	United Kingdom	Germany	Italy
Norway	Ireland	France	Spain
Finland	The Netherlands	Austria	Portugal
		Belgium	

elderly) and by the number of children below the age of 15 (per capita spending on children).

In the second and third parts of the analysis, we combine information on spending patterns with data on voter preferences about the government's responsibility for supporting the elderly and families with children.

Data on voter preferences are derived from the eighth round of the European Social Survey (ESS) that was implemented in 2016. This round of ESS was chosen because it is the latest wave containing a special module on welfare state attitudes. We have used two questions that tap attitudes toward supporting the elderly and families with children respectively: (1) "Should it be government's responsibility to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the old?" And (2) "How much responsibility do you think government should have to ensure sufficient childcare services for working parents?" Responses were registered on a scale of 0 to 10. Ideally it would have been preferable to have two equivalent questions about the governments' responsibility to secure the living standard of families with children/the elderly, but we take the answers to the available question about securing sufficient services for working parents to be a satisfactory proxy for a more general child- and family-friendly orientation.

Our analyses are mainly descriptive and concentrated on variation between country units in terms of spending profiles and (mean) voter preferences. With only 13 country cases, we are not able to do a more sophisticated statistical analysis of the relationship between variables measured at the macro-level, and we therefore rely on descriptive tables and bivariate plots of the respective country scores. In the third part of the empirical analysis, we run a set of country-specific linear regression models on the (microlevel) opinion data in order to reveal a potential age gradient in attitudes toward supporting the old and the young. We present results in terms of standardized regression coefficients in order to make it easier to assess the strength of the association.

Throughout we have used the so-called post-stratification weights provided with the ESS data. These weights are intended to correct for deviations in sampling design from a simple random sampling design of the adult population in the respective countries as well as for systematic sampling errors and nonresponse with respect to the distribution over a set of observed background variables.

Converging or diverging age-related spending profiles?

Table 3.2 shows figures on spending on income transfers and services directed toward the elderly and toward families with children in each of the 13 countries at the two time points: 2000 and 2015. The level of spending is expressed in the percent of GDP. For each of the two spending categories, we have also added a column showing the change in spending levels between 2000 and 2015 adjusted for changes in the respective population shares (the share of elderly 65 and above and the share of children below the age of 15).

Starting with the elderly, we see that there are significant differences in the level of spending at both time points, and the pattern of variation is roughly in line

Table 3.2 Public expenditure on income transfers and services to the elderly and to families with children in percent of GDP and change in spending levels adjusted for changes in population shares. 2000 and 2015

	Spending on the elderly			*Spending on families with children*		
	2000	*2015*	*Change*	*2000*	*2015*	*Change*
			Social democratic/Nordic			
Sweden	8.6	9.1	-0.6	2.8	3.5	0.9
Norway	6.4	8.5	1.6	3.0	3.3	0.7
Finland	7.3	12.2	1.7	2.9	3.1	0.5
Group mean	7.4	9.9	0.9	2.9	3.3	0.7
			Liberal			
United Kingdom	4.9	6.5	0.8	2.4	3.5	1.4
Ireland	2.4	3.6	0.6	2.0	2.2	0.2
The Netherlands	4.9	6.1	-0.3	1.5	1.5	0.2
Group mean	4.1	5.4	0.4	2.0	2.4	0.6
			Conservative/Continental			
Germany	8.4	8.3	-2.0	2.0	2.2	0.6
France	10.2	12.7	0.6	3.0	2.9	0.0
Austria	10.1	12.2	-0.1	2.9	2.6	0.2
Belgium	6.8	9.1	0.8	2.5	2.8	0.4
Group mean	8.9	10.6	-0.2	2.6	2.6	0.3
			Southern European			
Italy	11.2	13.6	0.1	1.2	2.0	0.9
Spain	6.6	9.3	1.7	0.9	1.2	0.3
Portugal	6.6	11.6	2.5	1.0	1.2	0.4
Group mean	8.1	11.5	1.4	1.0	1.5	0.5

Source: OECD SOCX database

with the one observed by Lynch. We find the relatively highest expenditure levels in the Conservative/Continental and Southern European countries followed by the Nordic countries, with the Liberal countries trailing far behind.

It must be noted, however, that the very low level of elderly expenditure in the three "liberal" countries should be seen in light of the fact that these three countries have public old-age pension systems (sometimes referred to as "Beveridgean" systems) that are geared toward minimum protection only, while the responsibility for income-related pension provision and income smoothing over the life cycle is left to occupational pension systems and private retirement saving. In the Netherlands, for instance, all wage earners are covered by quasi mandatory occupational pension schemes that entail large indirect labor costs and transfer economic resources from the economic active age to the retirement phase. It is not entirely obvious therefore that these three countries at the end of the day devote less resources to income provision in retirement, even if they do so to a smaller extent over public budgets.

In all countries, public expenditure on the elderly has increased relative to GDP from 2000 to 2015, with only Germany as an exception. However, when we adjust for the increasing population share taken up by the elderly, we find that four countries have reduced their level spending on the elderly: Germany,

Sweden, the Netherlands, and Austria. For Germany and Sweden, this is obviously a reflection of the fact that these countries have implemented rather tough retrenchment reforms within their pension systems. The largest increases in per capita spending on the elderly between 2000 and 2015 are found in Portugal, Spain, Finland, and Norway, and in all these four countries a process of continued maturation of fairly young pension systems seems to be a plausible main explanation.

Turning to the pattern of spending on families, we see that the mean level of spending at both time points was highest in the Social Democratic group followed by the Conservative group, while it is lowest in the group of Southern European countries. This pattern is roughly in line with Lynch's theoretical arguments and empirical findings. The only serious deviation is that expenditure on family policies is particularly low in the Netherlands and has remained so also in 2015. The observation of low spending on families with children in Italy, Spain, and Portugal also resonates with the vast research literature that has pointed to underdevelopment of family benefits and services as a key feature of the Southern European welfare states (Rhodes, 1996; Ferrera, 2000, p.169).

However, the last column shows that the per capita spending on (families with) children has increased in all countries except for the Netherlands. The increase is highest in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy, Norway, and Germany. In absolute terms, the increase is highest in the Social Democratic group, with 0.7 percentage points, but it is also sizable in the Liberal group with 0.6 and in the Southern European group with 0.5. The increase is modest in the group of Conservative/Continental taken together, but within this group, Germany stands out with a sizable increase of 0.6 percentage points. In relative terms, the increase is strongest in the Southern European and the Liberal groups, and it is therefore fair to say that we do observe a tendency toward upward convergence in the level of spending on families with children.

In Table 3.3, we have calculated the ratio between per capita spending on the elderly (age 65+) and on children (expenditure on family policy per child under the age of 15).

In 2015, we find the lowest pro-elderly bias in expenditure in the United Kingdom with a ratio of 1.8 between per capita expenditure on the elderly and children under 15, followed by Germany and Sweden with a ratio of 2.3. At the other extreme we find Portugal, Spain, and Italy with per capita spending ratios in favor of the elderly at 6.6, 6.0, and 4.3, respectively.

As expected, the spending ratio in favor of the elderly is most pronounced in the Southern European welfare states, followed by the Conservative/Continental group, while it is lowest in the Social Democratic and the Liberal groups. This overall pattern, that obtains at both time points, is well in line with the findings by Lynch.

However, in a majority of the countries, the spending "bias" toward the elderly has declined somewhat between 2000 and 2015. The decline is most pronounced in Italy, although from a very high level, but also Germany and Sweden have seen very sizable declines of 1.6 and 1.0, respectively.

Table 3.3 Ratio between per capita spending on the elderly (65+) and families with children (children <15)

	2000	*2015*	*Change*
		Social democratic/Nordic	
Sweden	3.3	2.3	-1.0
Norway	2.8	2.9	0.1
Finland	3.0	3.2	0.2
Group mean	3.0	2.8	-0.2
		Liberal	
United Kingdom	2.4	1.8	-0.6
Ireland	2.5	2.8	-0.3
The Netherlands	4.6	3.9	-0.7
Group mean	3.2	2.8	-0.5
		Conservative/Continental	
Germany	3.9	2.3	-1.6
France	4.0	4.2	0.2
Austria	3.8	3.5	-0.3
Belgium	2.9	3.0	0.1
Group mean	3.7	3.3	-0.4
		Southern European	
Italy	7.5	4.3	-3.2
Spain	6.2	6.0	-0.2
Portugal	6.7	6.6	-0.1
Group mean	6.8	5.6	-1.2

Source: OECD SOCX database

In all country groups, the general tendency points toward decreasing elderly bias in per capita expenditure. The decline is particularly large in the Southern European group with a decline of 1.2 points on average. It should be noted that this decline in the group mean is almost entirely driven by Italy, where the pro-elderly bias in expenditure has decreased from a ratio of 7.5 to a ratio of 4.3. In Portugal and Spain, per capita expenditure on families with children has increased as well, but here this has been balanced with increasing expenditure in favor of the elderly.

We can therefore conclude with quite significant tendencies toward downward convergence in pro-elderly spending ratios between 2000 and 2015. The overall ranking of the four country groups is intact, but the differences have become less pronounced.

Cross-country variation in voter preferences

We now turn to investigate voter preferences on government support for the elderly and for families with children and whether there is a correspondence between cross-national variation in the age orientation of welfare state spending and voters' priorities. We look at three aspects: (1) the degree of support for

government responsibility for the elderly, (2) the degree of support for family policies (i.e. services to working parents), and (3) the difference in the degree of support for the two groups in favor of the elderly.

Voters in all countries tend to be relatively supportive of the idea that the government should take responsibility for the elderly as well as for families with children. On a scale of 0 to 10, the mean country scores with respect to government support for the elderly vary between 8.6 (Portugal) to 7.4 (the Netherlands). The corresponding scores with respect to family policy tend to be slightly lower in most countries and also more dispersed, varying between 8.6 in Portugal and 6.1 in the Netherlands. It should be emphasized, however, that also here the mean scores are everywhere well above 5, the natural midpoint of the scale. The questionnaire also contains a similar question about government responsibility toward the unemployed, and here the mean score for the entire pooled sample is clearly lower at 6.8, compared to mean scores of 7.7 for supporting families and 8.0 for supporting the elderly.

The cross-national pattern of support for the elderly is in line with expectations with the highest support in the (notoriously elderly friendly) Southern European countries, with a mean score of 8.5 and lowest in the Liberal group with a mean score of 7.7.

The pattern of support for government responsibility in the area of family policy is however somewhat surprising. Here we find significantly stronger cross-group variation, and it turns out that voters in the Southern European countries have the highest score here as well, with a mean score of 8.2 in favor of supporting families. This is followed by the Social Democratic/Nordic group and the Conservative/Continental group with mean scores of 8.0 and 7.8, while the Liberal group is trailing significantly behind with a mean score of 6.7.

The third column shows that voters in most countries tend to be somewhat more supportive of policies to cater to the elderly compared to policies directed toward families. The largest pro-elderly bias in voter preferences is found in the Netherlands, with a difference of 1.3 scale points, followed by the United Kingdom and Ireland with 0.8 scale points. Germany deviates from the remaining 12 countries with a negative score of 0.9 on this variable. In Germany, family policies appear to be more popular than policies catering to the elderly.

The strongest pro-elderly bias in voter preferences is found in the Liberal group with a mean difference of 1.0 scale points. The mean scores in the three remaining country groups are all fairly close to zero, indicating a balanced voter support for policies directed toward the old and families. The group means hide significant within group differences, however. In the Conservative/Continental group, there is a stark contrast between a relatively strong pro-elderly bias in France and a strong pro-family bias in Germany. Among the Southern European countries voters show a significant pro-elderly bias in Spain, while voters in Portugal show a balanced high degree of support for government policies in favor of the old and the young.

In order to bring out the relationship between the actual spending priority of elderly versus families (based on the ratio for 2015 in Table 3.4) and how the voters

Table 3.4 Attitudes toward government's responsibility toward elderly and families with children. Mean scores

	Support for the elderly	*Support for families with children*	*Difference in favor of the elderly*
		Social democratic/Nordic	
Sweden	8.0	7.8	0.2
Norway	8.2	8.2	0.0
Finland	8.1	8.0	0.1
Group mean	8.1	8.0	0.1
		Liberal	
United Kingdom	7.8	7.0	0.8
Ireland	7.9	7.1	0.8
The Netherlands	7.4	6.1	1.3
Group mean	7.7	6.7	1.0
		Conservative/Continental	
Germany	7.6	8.4	-0.9
France	7.9	7.4	0.5
Austria	8.0	7.9	0.1
Belgium	7.8	7.6	0.3
Group mean	7.8	7.8	0.0
		Southern European	
Italy	8.5	8.1	0.3
Spain	8.5	8.0	0.5
Portugal	8.6	8.6	0.0
Group mean	8.5	8.2	0.3

Note: Standard deviations of the estimated country means vary between 0.03 and 0.06.
Source: ESS Round 8. 2016

prioritize the two groups (based on the difference in favor of elderly in Table 3.4), Figure 3.1 shows a scatterplot of the respective country scores on these two dimensions.

The distribution of country cases on these two dimensions does not bear witness to a strong systematic correlation between actual spending pattern and voters' priorities. Among the four countries with a lowest spending bias in favor of the elderly (the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, and Ireland), voter preferences differ quite dramatically. Voters in the United Kingdom and Ireland are among the most pro-elderly biased in our country sample. Germany, on the other hand, is the only country where voter preferences are distinctly pro-family oriented. The country with the strongest elderly-biased preferences in the electorate, the Netherlands, features a spending pattern close to the sample mean. The two countries with the strongest pro-elderly spending profile, Portugal and Spain, both have voters who are either perfectly balanced in their strong support for policies favoring both sides of the life cycle (Portugal) or voters with a sizable pro-elderly bias (Spain).

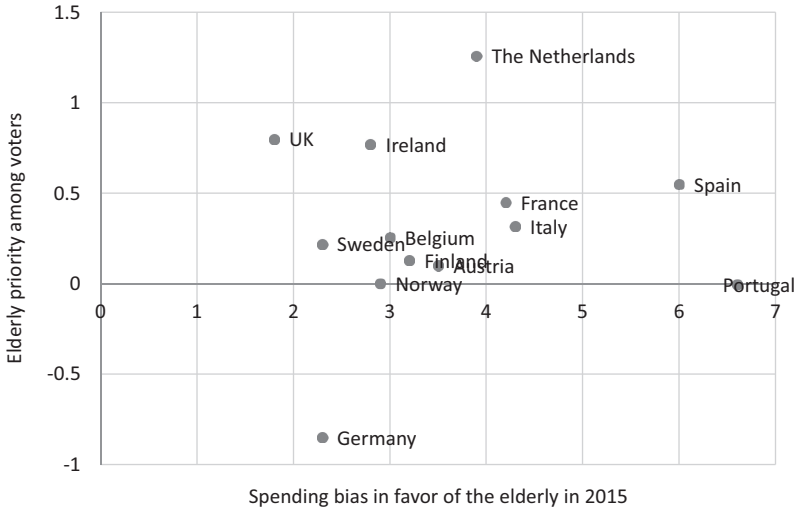

Figure 3.1 Elderly priority among voters (2016) and spending bias in favor of the elderly in 2015.

Disagreement across age groups?

The question remains whether attitudes toward welfare provision in favor of the elderly and families show a stronger association with age in some countries compared to others. Based on the theoretical framework adopted by Lynch, we expect a stronger self-interest-related age division in countries belonging to the Conservative/Continental and Southern European groups compared with countries belonging to the presumably more citizen-oriented Social Democratic and Liberal groups. To test the hypothesis, we have run a series of country-specific regression analyses with age as the independent variable and with the three voter preference variables as dependent variables. The results are presented in Table 3.5.

We find a significant negative age gradient with respect to support for families with children in 6 out of the 13 countries, and the tendency for a negative association with age is strongest and most consistent among countries belonging to the Liberal and Social Democratic groups, with the strongest negative association found in the United Kingdom. Even here the relationship is not particularly strong. One standard deviation increase in age is associated with 0.19 standard deviation decrease in support for families with children. Among the six countries belonging to these two welfare state groups, only Finland deviates by showing attitudes toward supporting families that appear unrelated to age. Among countries belonging to the Conservative/Continental and Southern European groups, the picture is mixed. In Germany, we find a significant negative age gradient,

Table 3.5 Country-specific OLS regression with age as independent variable. Dependent variables: support for families with children, support for the elderly, and difference in favor of the elderly. Standardized regression coefficients

	Support for families	*Support for the elderly*	*Difference in favor of the elderly*
		Social democratic/Nordic	
Sweden	-0.1***	0.06*	0.14***
Norway	-0.09***	-0.03	0.06*
Finland	0.02	-0.01	-0.02
		Liberal	
United Kingdom	-0,19***	0.01	0.19***
Ireland	-0.08***	0.15***	0.19***
The Netherlands	-0.05*	0.02	0.06*
		Conservative/Continental	
Germany	-0.08***	-0.11***	-0.03
France	0.00	0.01	0.01
Austria	0,01	0.12***	0.11***
Belgium	0.06*	0.10***	0.03
		Southern European	
Italy	0.04	0.10***	0.05**
Spain	0.0	0.06*	0.05*
Portugal	0.08**	0.06*	-0.02

Source: ESS Round 8. 2016. * indicates that a coefficient is significant at the 5% level, ** at the 1% level, and *** at the 0.1% level.

while in Belgium and Portugal the age gradient is in fact reversed so that support for family-friendly policies is increasing with age.

The age gradients for support for elderly policies are generally somewhat weaker and more inconsistent. Support for the elderly is positively related to age in eight countries: Ireland, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, Sweden, and Spain. In one country, Germany, support for the elderly is in fact clearly negatively related to age.

The between-group pattern is rather mixed. The most consistent positive age gradient related to policies for the elderly is found among the three countries in the Southern European group. Among the three remaining country groups, the gradients are either consistently weak (the Social Democratic/Nordic group) or inconsistent (the Liberal and the Conservative/Continental group).

The third column shows that the tendency to favor support for the elderly is positively related to age in eight countries. The age gradient is by far the strongest in Ireland and the United Kingdom, where a standard deviation increase in age is associated with an increase of 0.19 standard deviation in the dependent variable. Also in Sweden and Austria we find a substantial and clearly significant age gradient, while the age gradient is weaker in Norway, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain. In Germany, Finland, and Portugal, the age gradient is in fact negative, but without reaching statistical significance.

Age conflicts over welfare priorities appear to be strongest in the Liberal countries followed by the Social Democratic countries, that is in countries that were classified by Lynch as having a legacy of citizen-based policies.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in some countries we find a significant age gradient in the same direction in the preferences with respect to support for both demographic groups. This is the case for Belgium and Portugal in particular. In these two countries, elderly respondents show consistently more pro-welfare attitudes compared to younger respondents, and the positive age gradients with respect to the two program areas tend to cancel out so that we find no gradient for the difference variable. Germany is an example of the complete opposite pattern. Here the young are more pro-welfare than the elderly irrespective of the program area. Ireland shows a third, distinctively different pattern. In this country, a negative age gradient with respect to support for family policy is combined with a positive gradient with respect to support for the old, and these two tendencies combine to produce a strong age conflict (only matched by the United Kingdom) over welfare priorities between supporting families and supporting the old as measured by the difference variable.

Our initial hypothesis that age conflicts over welfare priorities should be strongest in the countries with a strong pro-elderly spending pattern is not borne out. This is demonstrated more clearly in Figure 3.2. If it is at all meaningful to talk about a linear association here, it is in the opposite direction due to the contrast between Portugal and Spain (combing a high spending bias toward the elderly with no age conflict in voter preferences) and the United Kingdom, Ireland, and

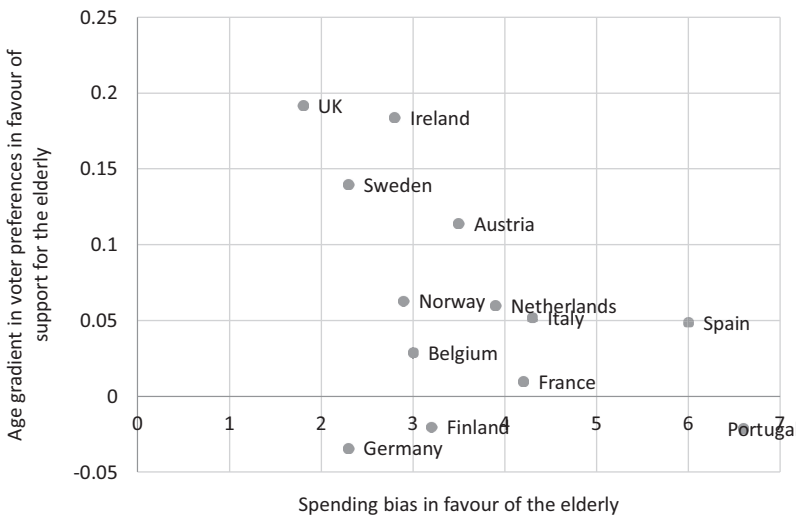

Figure 3.2 Age gradient in voter preferences favoring support for the elderly (standardized regression coefficients) and spending bias in favor of the elderly in 2015.

Sweden (combining a modest pro-elderly spending bias with a relatively strong age conflict in voter preferences).

Summary

This chapter is motivated by the anticipation of increased tensions between generations about the distribution of benefits and burdens within the welfare state. Our investigation of the development of expenditure revealed that the spending "bias" toward the elderly has declined somewhat in all countries. This clearly goes against the idea that a greying electorate will force the welfare state to cater exclusively for the needs of the old. The decline in elderly bias is most pronounced in Italy, which traditionally is one of the most elderly-oriented countries in the sample. At the same time, the spending ratio in favor of the elderly has declined less in the countries belonging to the Liberal and Social democratic groups where the pro-elderly bias was less pronounced already in the year 2000. Both findings indicate a tendency toward convergence in the ratio per capita expenditure on the elderly and children. Preston's diagnosis of a greying electorate pressing forward pro-elderly policies at the expense of families with children is rejected by our analysis. Even the Southern European countries that have been claimed to be caught in a pathological pro-elderly path dependence (see Rhodes, 1996; Ferrera, 2000; Lynch, 2006) show signs of convergence toward a more balanced mixture of expenditure on the young and the old.

We went on to examine whether the preferences of the voters mirrored the spending profiles of their country, or if cross-national similarities in voters' preferences could be a force pointing toward convergence. One robust finding is that European voters are rather supportive of the idea that the state should take responsibility for the wellbeing of both the elderly and the families, while the support for the state taking responsibility for the unemployed is significantly lower. The finding is in line with Jensen's (2012) conclusion that the median voter is more inclined to favor life cycle-oriented social programs than programs with a social class gradient. At the same time, European voters are found to be somewhat more supportive toward public responsibility for the elderly than toward responsibility for families. Only in Germany, we find the complete opposite pattern with voters being more enthusiastic toward supporting families than they are toward supporting the elderly.

The comparison of voters' preferences across countries does not align neatly with expectations based on welfare state typologies and the countries' actual spending pattern. In some respects, voter attitudes are at odds with spending patterns in their country, and hence voters appear to show a demand for change and mostly in the direction of convergence. The most obvious example is the finding that voters in the Southern European countries appear to be at least as supportive of family policies as voters in the other country groups. Conversely, but in a similar vein we find the strongest pro-elderly bias in voter preferences in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Ireland, all countries with a comparatively low spending on the elderly. Germany is the only country where voters are more

supportive toward government responsibility for families than toward the elderly. At the same time, Germany is among the countries with the largest decline in the elderly bias of actual welfare spending. It is tempting to speculate that a stronger emphasis on support for working families in German welfare policy over the last decade has been facilitated by a particularly child- and family-friendly public opinion.

We do find a rather modest age gradient in attitudes toward public spending patterns. The age gradient is mainly visible with respect to support for spending on families, and it affects also the priority given to spending on the elderly over spending on families. Our initial hypothesis that age conflicts should be strongest in the countries with a strong elderly-biased spending pattern is not supported. On the contrary, age conflicts over spending patterns tend to be the strongest in the Liberal and (to a smaller extent) Social democratic countries where the spending pattern is relatively balanced. In some countries we see a parallel age gradient in support for spending on both the elderly and the families with children. This is the case in Belgium and Portugal, where older respondents tend to be consistently more supportive of welfare policies favoring either the elderly or families compared to younger respondents. Also in Germany, we find parallel age gradients, but here they are consistently negative. Younger respondents are more pro-welfare with respect to both program areas than older respondents. In these three countries, there are tensions between generations in welfare attitudes, but these tensions appear not to be driven by a simple conflict of interest between the young and the old.

Discussion

Despite huge differences in the design and the size of welfare states, all developed democracies have acknowledged a certain level of responsibility for the economic wellbeing of the elderly in society. The establishment of national pension systems providing financial support to the elderly has been a cornerstone of all developed welfare states. The younger generations have been relieved of the responsibility of providing for elderly family members, and the elderly themselves have acquired increased autonomy and economic independence from their children. There is more cross-national variation in the tendency for the state to take responsibility for providing services to elderly in need of care. Here the Nordic countries have been frontrunners while both countries belonging to the Liberal, Conservative, and, in particular, the Southern European welfare state-type have tended to lag behind. For the Southern European countries, an obvious part of the explanation is the very high expenditure on pensions, which leaves little room for public expenditure on services to the elderly. But also more traditional gender roles and the associated underdevelopment of transfers and services to working families contribute to lock in the Southern European countries in an elderly friendly and transfer-dominated profile of welfare spending. Where public responsibility for elderly care has been taken furthest - like in the Nordic countries in particular - it has helped facilitate and at the same time been dependent upon a substantial

growth in women's participation in the labor market. It is no coincidence therefore that also family policies have traditionally been furthest developed in the Nordic countries, again with the Southern European countries as persistent laggards.

Given the traditional familialism in the Southern European welfare states and the comparatively low spending on families in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, the support voters in these countries express toward state responsibility for childcare services for working parents is somewhat surprising. That the support is equally strong among young and old indicates that voters do not consider an increased public responsibility for families as a challenge to the benefits directed toward old age. An intergenerational perspective might help explain this. Low availability of public day care combined with sparse benefits to families with small children discourage family reproduction as well as female participation in the labor market (Ferrera, 2000). Voters might realize that the intergenerational contract erodes if young couples fail to reproduce themselves. Additionally, a system with generous public pensions toward elderly is dependent upon high participation in the labor market among citizens in the working age part of the population. To enable female participation in the labor market through public care, strengthen the financial basis for public pensions.

Several studies have shown that public responsibility for the elderly receives particular strong support among voters (Coughlin, 1980; Bay, 1998; Svallfors et al, 2012). The pattern seems to be more or less stable over time and across countries with different levels and designs of their welfare state, indicating that the preferences are at least partially exogenous. One obvious explanation is self-interest, shared by large segments of the electorate as pointed out by Preston. Additionally, care and respect for one's elderly is deeply rooted in the culture of most societies, in Christianity it is embodied in the fourth of the ten amendments in the Bible. Europeans' (in our case) shared and internalized duty toward the elderly is a powerful constant premise in the politics of social policies. At the same time, the "communication" between voters and policymakers takes place through existing policies and institutional structures. Voters' preferences are endogenous in the sense that they relate to the established path of social policy development, as pointed out in the theory of path dependency. Paul Pierson (1996; 1998; 2001) argued in his important contributions on the politics of retrenchment that the strong popular support for existing pension systems (and other welfare benefits) represents an "immovable object" confronted with "the irresistible force" in demographic and economic change. Our findings leave us with a somewhat more optimistic picture. Several countries have decreased their per capita spending on the elderly and subsequently reduced their elderly bias in per capita expenditure. The political elite has a room to maneuver through elite cooperation (Schmidt, 2008) and through the framing of the communication with their voters.

The aging of the population combined with lower economic growth will for most European societies reinforce the need to weigh these interests against each other. Many see age as a new potential political cleavage, either crowding out traditional socioeconomic and cultural cleavages or filling the gap caused by a weakening of traditional lines of conflicts within the electorate. Objective conflicts of

interests are however not enough to constitute a political cleavage; the interests must be self-perceived by a group and mobilized by a political party or another political actor (Bartolini & Mair, 1990). The substantial support toward government responsibility for the welfare of the elderly as well as families with children and the lack of a strong and consistent age gradient in voters' preferences documented in our study lead us to the conclusion that age is an unlikely political dividing line in European societies. The reasons for a lack of self-perceived group conflicts between the elderly and the younger segments of society are already touched upon; large parts of the population have vested interests in benefits toward elderly, conflicts of interests are modified by intergenerational solidarity within the family (cf. the study of Goerres & Tepe, 2010 cited in the introduction), and a sustainable policy toward the elderly is dependent upon policy measures that promote fertility and labor market participation among parents with younger children.

Seen from the perspective of social cohesion, the lack of distributional conflicts between the elderly and the nonelderly is good news. At the same time, it underlines the challenges Pierson, among others, has identified related to the policymakers' ability to make priorities. It might be easier for politicians competing for power to position themselves in a situation where the electorate is divided based on clearly defined conflicts of interests, than in a situation where they have to deal with challenges related to demographic and economic developments that tend to be ignored by a welfare demanding median voter.

Note

1 In this chapter, we simply define generations as bands of birth cohorts that at a particular historical moment occupy a specific age group.

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4 Solidarity with future generations

Protection clauses in constitutions

Marianne Takle

Introduction

Today's generations have the capacity to affect the future ecosystem more than ever before. This means current generations have a major influence on the welfare of future generations. Therefore, obligations to safeguard the natural environment for future generations have been included as protection clauses in national constitutions (Tremmel, 2006; UN Secretary-General, 2013). As national constitutions are meant to endure for many generations, they are the most important intergenerational contracts in modern welfare states (Gosseries, 2008).

By including the protection of future generations' access to a healthy natural environment in constitutions, the current generations have committed themselves to taking future people into account in contemporary welfare state considerations. This commitment might challenge the welfare state particularly in two ways. First, the inclusion of future generations implies welfare states cannot only be understood in economic and social terms but must also include environmental concerns (Schoyen & Hvinden, 2017). Second, the concern for future people's welfare might be at the expense of people living today, leading to tensions between current and future generations.

To understand the consequences of these challenges to the modern welfare state, this chapter develops a fine-mesh concept of solidarity with future generations. More specifically, it elaborates theoretically, and examines empirically, the question: What kind of concrete binding commitments to collective actions – on the part of present-day state institutions – would solidarity with future generations require?

The word "generation" can have at least two different meanings: generations as age groups and generations as ensembles of all people living together at a given point in time. Accordingly, we can distinguish between two types of relations between generations. One is "relations between young, middle aged and old people alive today", i.e. overlapping generations, and the other is relations between the current generations, i.e. all people alive today and future unborn generations (Tremmel, 2009, 2019). Constitutions are intergenerational contracts in terms of both types of relations as future generations include children as well as the unborn.

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The concern for future generations has mainly been discussed in scholarly literature in the fields of economics, law, and philosophy. Scholars have developed general principles of justice between generations, also termed "intergenerational justice". These principles are based on contractual approaches, understandings of stewardship, common heritage of mankind, human rights approaches, and/or theories of needs and capabilities (Lawrence, 2014; Page, 2006; Rawls, 1971; Sen, 2013; Taylor, 2017; Tremmel, 2009). In general, this literature captures the complexities and tensions underlying concerns for future generations, and it provides abstract principles of justice between generations that both extend globally and include future generations. However, general principles of intergenerational justice are not efficient as analytical tools to examine what kind of binding commitments to collective actions solidarity with future generations require. This chapter aims to contribute to filling this gap by combining scholarly literature on future generations with that of solidarity.

Solidarity has commonly included mutual obligations and entitlements within some kind of community such as religious or political groups, classes, local places, and nations (Elias, 1989; Stjernø, 2005, 2015). National welfare states have boundaries, and the distinction between insiders and outsiders is important to maintain internal solidarity (Banting & Kymlicka, 2017, p. 6). While national solidarity is still essential, we increasingly observe calls for solidarity that are transnational and cosmopolitan (Grimmel & Giang, 2017; Habermas, 2015). Appeals for cosmopolitan solidarity are based on a growing awareness that complex policy challenges as environmental degradation can only be solved by crossing national boundaries.

However, solidarity with future generations differs in many respects from solidarity with contemporaries. We can neither expect anything from people who have not yet been born nor know what their preferences will be. The concept of solidarity with future generations developed in this chapter will be useful to understand the consequences of these uncertainties for the current welfare state.

Empirically, the chapter evaluates the relevance of this concept by examining Norway as an example of how around 30 countries have included ecological protection clauses for future generations in their constitution (Tremmel, 2006, 2019). Article 112 in the Norwegian Constitution states the current and future generations have the right to a healthy environment. Greenpeace Norden and the organisation Nature and Youth (Natur og Ungdom) have taken legal actions against the Norwegian Government for violating Article 112. This is one example of 1587 climate lawsuits (not necessarily referring to future generations) registered in the world between 1986 and 2020 (Setzer & Byrnes, 2020). The central issue is the Norwegian Government's decision from 10 June 2016 on awarding licences for searching for petroleum in the Barents Sea. Due to climate change and the vulnerability of areas in the High North, environmental organisations argue the country should not search for more petroleum in these areas and should also phase out petroleum production. The environmental organisations have not succeeded. The Supreme Court concluded in December 2020 that these decisions must be made by politicians and not in the courtroom. Most of the judges voted in favour

of the Norwegian state. Four judges argued the decision on awarding licences was invalid due to procedural errors, and they believed further processing of the case in relation to future global emissions of greenhouse gases was necessary.

In this Norwegian case, the challenges to the welfare state come to the fore. The country's most important industry, petroleum activities, is set against one of the most important environmental challenges the world is facing: climate change. The Norwegian case also represents an interesting paradox – the country takes leadership in addressing the global climate emergency but is simultaneously one of the world's largest exporters of oil and natural gas (Takle, 2020; UN General Assembly, 2020, p. 8). The combined value of oil and gas represents almost half of the total value of national exports. This production and the infrastructure supporting it are of considerable importance to the welfare state.

Within the context of a welfare state completely dependent on income from its large petroleum industry, the Norwegian climate lawsuit throws light on how long-term concern for protecting the environment – also for those who come after us – is weighed against the challenges it poses to today's welfare state. Accordingly, the Norwegian case is used to analyse the ideas expressed by experts, politicians, and judges, and which political and normative assessments they make regarding solidarity with future generations. The analysis is based on the main documents in the climate lawsuit.

The following section discusses how solidarity and constitution are intertwined. The third section suggests a novel concept of solidarity with future generations, which is applied to the Norwegian case in the fourth section. The final section summarises and concludes.

Solidarity and constitutions

While solidarity is a key concept in European political thinking, there is no single definition of the concept (Lynch, Kalaitzake, & Crean, 2018; Takle, 2018). One way of defining solidarity is by delineating the concept from other related concepts, and in this respect, Jürgen Habermas' (2015, pp. 3-28) approach is useful. Habermas distinguishes solidarity from justice. His argument is that moral and legal norms are perceived as "just" when they regulate practices that are in the equal interest of all affected. While moral commands should be obeyed out of respect for the underlying norm itself, a citizen's obedience to the law is conditioned by the sanctioning power of the state ensuring general compliance. In contrast, Habermas (Habermas, 2015, p. 23) states solidarity depends on the expectations of reciprocal favours, and the confidence in this reciprocity over time. In this respect, he argues solidarity is more related to what he calls ethical obligations, i.e. *Sittlichkeit*. However, Habermas (2015) also delineates solidarity from such ethical obligations the way these are rooted in pre-political communities. Solidarity presupposes political contexts of life that are legally organised.

According to Habermas (2015, p. 24), solidarity is a political concept based on confidence in a form of reciprocity guaranteed by legally organised relations. He has labelled this constitutional patriotism, which combines patriotic attachments

with the specific way these are codified in specific constitutions. Members of a political community are co-authors of the laws and the political order is an expression of their collective will. The praxis of citizens who exercise their civil rights forms a legally constructed solidarity (Habermas, 2001, p. 76).

This way of defining solidarity implies that solidarity is distinguished from those ethnic-cultural connotations that have accompanied the expression of national political communities in modern Europe and have been emphasised in the literature on nationalism. By applying such a political-legal understanding of solidarity, it is fruitful to build on how Ulrich Preuss (1999, p. 283) explains why solidarity has become a principle of social ordering in the modern state. In common with Habermas, he argues that solidarity is a modern concept not based on pre-political communities. Preuss (1999) contends the concept of solidarity unites two seemingly contradictory elements. On the one hand, it includes duties of care nurtured in *Gemeinschaft*-like types of communities. On the other hand, these duties are directed towards aliens and implemented in *Gesellschaft*-like types of communities. Solidarity can thus be understood as institutionalised reciprocity, which combines feelings of sympathy with modern institutions.

This paradoxical combination is enshrined in the institutions of contemporary welfare states. Rights and duties within a national solidaristic community are mediated through state institutions and are inherently linked to the basic principles of constitutionalism (Preuss, 1999, p. 284). The most important is the principle of legal rights and the connected concept of an independent judiciary, the separation of powers, and the principle of equality before the law. These principles are based on the idea that all forms of governmental power, also a majority in parliament, are subject to important substantive limitations.

While the idea of constitutionalism expresses limitations on democratic decisions, these limitations are enshrined in the constitution. The constitution places restrictions on the powers of the legislative to preserve the fundamental freedoms of individuals. Constitutions are meant to place certain questions beyond the reach of a simple majority. Most written constitutions are difficult to change as they often require legislative supermajorities, concurrent majorities of different legislative houses, and/or legislative majorities in two consecutive parliaments. Constitutions are thereby self-imposed political and legal bindings for current and future generations (Gosseries, 2008; Häberle, 2006). Such bindings are decisive for solidarity as a guarantee for confidence in a form of reciprocity over time.

More specifically, protection clauses in national constitutions intend to set limits for democratic decisions to secure the wellbeing of future generations. Jörg Tremmel (2006) distinguishes between three types of protection clauses: (a) general clauses, which refer to general considerations of future conditions of prosperity, but not specifically to future generations, (b) financial clauses, which mean that one should not transfer the debt to future generations, and (c) ecological clauses, which point directly to the need to ensure ecological conditions for those who come after us. According to Tremmel (2006), around 30 countries have included ecological protection clauses for future generations in their constitutions. A report by the UN Secretary-General (2013) also emphasised the importance of

such clauses for future generations and highlights six examples: Bolivia, Ecuador, Germany, Kenya, Norway, and South Africa. A study from Dirth (2018) shows that 120 countries have clauses referring to the environment and sustainability, and 37 of them explicitly point to future generations.

Solidarity with future generations

The point of departure for the development of a concept of solidarity with future generations is the concept of solidarity as outlined above. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between political and legal aspects in modern welfare states. To elaborate further on the main question raised in the introduction, this chapter distinguishes between four dimensions of solidarity developed from how solidarity has been used historically in European thinking (Stjernø, 2005): What is the foundation of solidarity? How is the objective of solidarity defined? How can the boundaries of a community be defined? What are the requirements for the degree of collective orientation? By dividing the concept of solidarity into these four dimensions, we can analyse how each dimension separately differs from solidarity with contemporaries.

The foundation of solidarity

The foundation of solidarity can be common interests or sameness (Stjernø, 2005). For these commonalities to lead to national solidarity, there must be some confidence in a form of reciprocity over time (Habermas, 2015). A concept of solidarity with future generations differs from solidarity with contemporaries as the foundation implies expectations of reciprocity with people who have not yet been born. In this regard it is useful to build further on how political philosophy scholars have developed ideas of intergenerational justice for future generations (Connelly, Smith, Benson, & Saunders, 2012); Tremmel (2009). Three principles are frequently used: "justice as impartiality" based on Rawls' (1971, pp. 284–310) original position theory, "justice as equality", and "justice as reciprocity". All principles are for various reasons problematic to apply to intergenerational relations (Tremmel, 2009).

Nevertheless, regarding the foundation of solidarity, it is useful to elaborate further on "justice as reciprocity". Reciprocity could be interpreted as justice as a mutual advantage, and those who cannot return anything are not taken into consideration. Justice as reciprocity fails to provide adequate justifications for our obligations towards future generations, as we cannot expect anything from people who are not yet born. This should not be confused with compassion or generosity as these are asymmetrical relations and belong to the realm of moral behaviour (Habermas, 2015; Stjernø, 2005).

One solution could be to emphasise "indirect reciprocity", in which each generation receives from its predecessors and contributes to later generations (Lawrence, 2014; Page, 2006). This is also a kind of stewardship (Connelly et al., 2012). Consequently, appeals to solidarity with future generations make

it worthwhile to accentuate indirect reciprocity as a central tenet of the concept. Accordingly, a concept of solidarity with future generations requires that current generations both open for an identification with future people and impose legally binding obligations on themselves. By giving future generations legal rights, they thereby gain access to a political community in a modern welfare state based on long-term expectations.

The objective of solidarity

The objective of solidarity can be to unite interests, unite people, or surmount conflicts (Stjernø, 2005). Accordingly, the national concept is based on the objective to unite all individuals belonging to a nation in a good society, and the general ideal is that all individuals should be equal within the nation (Elias, 1989). Accordingly, solidarity with future generations would be to create a good society for people living today and those who come after us. This would require future people to be included as a part of contemporary understandings of political community and be represented in democratic welfare state decisions.

In this regard, political science literature on future generations contributes with crucial analyses of how the interests of future generations often fall short, when the interests of current and future generations are balanced (Caney, 2018; Jones, O'Brien, & Ryan, 2018). This question is often discussed as a problem of "presentism", i.e. short-term thinking in both the mindset and structure of democratic systems (Tremmel, 2019). One suggestion on how current generations could proceed to take future welfare into account in contemporary policies is by proxy representations by, e.g. giving extra votes to persons representing future generations (Kates, 2015). This could bring out the long-term implications of actions and present alternatives which are important for the welfare of future generations. This could also bring in the time horizon to the resolutions of issues traditionally confined to the here and now. Future generations could thereby be given a voice in democratic decisions. Yet, the inclusion of protection clauses in national constitutions is the most important intergenerational contract in modern society (Gosseries, 2008). This would not only allow for long-term considerations which go above and beyond short-term decisions, but it would also include the legal bindings of solidarity.

The boundaries of solidarity

The boundaries of solidarity can be drawn in relation to the nation, the continents, or the whole world (Stjernø, 2005). The concept of solidarity with future generations differs from solidarity with contemporaries because the boundaries are not only drawn in relation to territorial space and administrative units, but also require an extension into time. We constantly develop our relationships between past, present, and future and combine them with territorial spaces and administrative units (Elias, 1987; Koselleck, 1989). Within the framework of the nation-state, the past is crucial. National solidarity is based on a sense of timeless continuity with

past generations, which is transmitted to future generations who are understood as future citizens of the nation-state (Elias, 1989).

While national welfare states are based on bounded solidarity, such exclusive boundaries are more problematic in relation to solidarity with future generations. One reason is the increasing knowledge about how actions in one part of the world directly affect the lives of people in other parts. This implies that the ability of the state to function as an adequate shelter for its citizens is reduced, and principled reflections on justice are not only confined to domestic political settings but also require a global approach (Sjursen, 2020, p. 125).

A global concept of solidarity emphasises how contemporary challenges cross national borders and require global solutions. The contemporary solution is that international solidarity is based on mutual rights and duties sovereign states owe each other according to the rules of international law. This is based on the state system and individuals are subject to the states. Can we conceive of a cosmopolitan solidarity for future generations grounded in the universalism of human rights? This would imply that states have the same responsibility for the welfare of all future people and not exclusively their own future citizens, and thereby erode the national boundaries of solidarity. Although national boundaries are important, there are signs of mutual responsibility for future generations, which clearly point to solidarity at the global level (Taylor, 2017).

In emphasising solidarity with future generations, one would accentuate the future, rather than the past and historical traditions, to define the boundaries of solidarity. This concept is forward-looking. It emphasises that today's actions have an important future dimension as people who will be born in the future will have become increasingly dependent on current decisions due to ecological limits (Kverndokk, 2020). The cosmopolitan way of connecting past, present, and future would be equipped to approach the concern for future generations, but its foundation is weak as it lacks the constitutionally defined national welfare state boundaries that determine with whom one should act in solidarity.

The collective orientation of solidarity

Solidarity can be identified in relation to the strength of the collective orientation. Stjernø (2005) defines this as a question of the extent to which solidarity implies that the actors (e.g. individuals, states, or non-state actors) should relinquish autonomy and freedom in order to achieve collective interests or values. Moreover, he distinguishes between strong and weak collective orientation (Stjernø, 2005). The national concept has a strong collective orientation based on national community, democratic polity, and redistribution based on conditional reciprocity institutionalised through the welfare state (Banting & Kymlicka, 2017). In contrast, the concept of solidarity with future generations has a weak collective orientation because it is based on the recognition of future generations' welfare, and the uncertainty is high.

Although we have limited knowledge of future generations' preferences and technological abilities, we know what they will need in some basic terms.

Sustainable development was defined by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987, p. 41) as: "development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". While the Commission defined this as an interaction between environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability, these dimensions have often been applied separately. Welfare state sustainability is often seen as problems of economic and social sustainability, while debates about climate change are defined in terms of environmental sustainability (Büchs & Koch, 2017). The inclusion of the concern for future generations in welfare state consideration requires an integrated analysis in which avoidance of environmental harm is seen as essential for the welfare state (Schoyen & Hvinden, 2017).

Amartya Sen (2013, pp. 6–20) criticises this emphasis on the needs to achieve sustainable development. Rather than emphasising the ability of each generation to meet its respective needs, he proposes each generation should be given the freedom and possibility to evaluate and identify its own wants. Sen (2013) focuses on human capability and his central concern is that we see human beings as agents who can think and act. In contrast, Ian Gough's (2017) essential premise is that all individuals around the world have certain basic common needs. He argues that needs should be given priority over preferences as needs imply ethical obligations on individuals and claims of justice on social institutions (Gough, 2017). Accordingly, a concept of solidarity with future generations would require a collective orientation that is legally organised, in which current generations relinquish autonomy and freedom to safeguard sustainable development for future generations in terms of needs and/or capabilities.

The Norwegian tensions over implications for the welfare state

The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 is one of the world's oldest constitutions which is still in force. An amendment to the Constitution requires a two-thirds majority in the Storting (Norwegian Parliament) and changes can only be adopted after a new election. Many of the provisions of the Norwegian Constitution are relatively short and aim to specify general rules (Fauchald & Smith, 2019). This also applies to the environmental protection clause, Article 112 of the Norwegian Constitution:

> Every person has the right to an environment that is conducive to health and to a natural environment whose productivity and diversity are maintained. Natural resources shall be managed on the basis of comprehensive long-term considerations which will safeguard this right for future generations as well.
>
> In order to safeguard their right in accordance with the foregoing paragraph, citizens are entitled to information on the state of the natural environment and on the effects of any encroachment on nature that is planned or carried out.

> The authorities of the state shall take measures for the implementation of these principles.
>
> (Stortinget, 2018)

Greenpeace Norden Association and Nature and Youth Norway have taken legal actions against the Norwegian Government represented in court by the Office of the Attorney General for violating the Constitution's Article 112. The issue is awarding of licences for searching for petroleum in the Barents Sea. The environmental organisations succeeded neither in the first trial in the Oslo District Court in November 2018 nor in the second trial in Borgarting Appeal Court in November 2020. Also, the Supreme Court concluded in December 2020 that such decisions must be made by politicians at Stortinget.

The Norwegian "climate lawsuit" highlights tensions and solidarity between the welfare of current and future generations. The following analysis of the lawsuit includes the main documents from the environmental organisations (Greenpeace Norden Association, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020), and from the Government representation in court by the Office of the Attorney General of Norway (Attorney General of Norway, 2016, 2018). Moreover, it includes the judgements made by the District Court (2018), the Appeal Court (2020), and the Supreme Court (2020). The analysis is an idea analysis (Bratberg, 2017). The focus is on future generations and the analysis does not include assessments of all aspects of the lawsuits and court decisions. The main tensions and solidarity between generations are analysed by means of the four dimensions of solidarity with future generations.

The foundation of solidarity

Today´s generations have to impose some kind of binding obligations on themselves in order to act in solidarity with future generations. In Norway, this is achieved with Article 112 in the Constitution. However, a contested issue is how binding this protection clause is; should it be interpreted as a rights provision?

Environmental organisations perceive the article as a rights provision. In terms of rights, they also argue the decision on awarding production licences is contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights. In contrast, the Government argues this article does not provide substantive rights for individuals, which can be reviewed before the courts. Both the District Court and the Appeal Court concluded that Article 112 grants rights that can be reviewed before the courts. According to the Appeal Court, neither the wording in the article, its placement in the chapter on human rights since 2014, nor the preparatory work provides any clear answer, but altogether they point in the direction of providing a substantive right.

Within the discussion of the protection clause as a rights provision or not, a question is raised whether the courts are suitable to make decisions in matters affecting the environment. Such issues often involve political considerations and priorities. Therefore, the Government argues that decisions on awarding production licences involve political decisions that should be made by elected

representatives in the Storting and not by the courts. This means the protection clause has weak bindings on current generations.

In contrast, the Appeal Court argues that courts must be able to set a limit, also for a political majority, when it comes to protecting constitutionally established values. It argues that the environment is fundamental in the broadest sense to human living conditions. Moreover, the Appeal Court points out Article 112 provides that natural resources shall be disposed of in a manner "which will safeguard this right for future generations as well" and continues:

> The fact that the right is to be safeguarded across generations has an aspect of the concern for democracy, in that future generations cannot influence today's political processes.
>
> (Appeal Court, 2020, p. 18)

These ideas of setting a limit for democratic decisions in the Storting are in line with how the foundation of solidarity with future generations builds on indirect reciprocity, i.e. each generation receives from its predecessors and contributes to later generations as a form of stewardship. The inclusion of the protection clause, Article 112, in the human rights chapter of the Constitution would thereby impose constitutionally binding obligations on current generations to act in solidarity with future generations.

However, the Supreme Court concludes the wording in the article reflects an intermediate solution between a substantive right and a declaration of principle. This means individuals or groups can take a case to court on the basis of Article 112 in cases when the Storting has not taken a position on an environmental problem. In this lawsuit, the Supreme Court argues that there is no evidence in the legal sources that the courts should exercise control over decisions made by the Storting. The Supreme Court refers to the balance between the rule of law and democracy and concludes that environmental issues include broad assessments, and such decisions should be made by elected bodies and not by the courts.

The objective of solidarity

Protection clauses in constitutions are means to guarantee that future generations are included as a part of contemporary understandings of what it means to create a good society (Gosseries, 2008; Preuss, 1999). In this regard, the Norwegian trial reveals different ideas of which binding commitments to collective actions the protection clause implies. This can be found in the discussion of how to determine the substance of the rights under Article 112. There are various ideas of where to define the threshold for when the courts should review a decision made by the Storting. The threshold is measured in terms of the seriousness of the environmental damage.

According to environmental organisations the threshold should be low for when the courts are to set limits for democratic decisions, and it is already exceeded. They argue that an overall assessment of environmental harm must include risks

involved in an environmentally valuable area connected to the polar front and the ice edge, and the emission of greenhouse gases in connection with production and combustion. They refer to the established knowledge of how serious the climate crisis already is, and future generations' access to a healthy environment is decisive for defining a low threshold.

The Government's argument is that Article 112 should not be interpreted as granting rights, but if it should, the Government questions whether the protection clause contains a threshold at all. Moreover, it argues politically that the protection clause is neither suited to, nor intended for, any regulation of greenhouse gas emissions and it cannot be understood to set limits for Norwegian petroleum export. According to the Government, there will not be any net increase in greenhouse gas emissions, as such emissions are included in the EU's emissions trading system. Moreover, it contends the emissions are uncertain and will be marginal from a global perspective.

Both the District Court and the Appeal Court argue the threshold must be high for when the courts are to review decisions made by elected bodies, and in this case, they conclude the threshold has not been exceeded. However, the Appeal Court discusses the challenge to decide in which situations the court should review a decision made in parliament. The court claims to give the Storting broad margin for discretion. The Appeal Court will not determine a specific limit for how serious the environmental damage must be before the court is to set limits for decisions made in the Storting. It sees grounds to be restrained by reviewing decisions that have been the subject of political processes in the Government or Stortinget, as is the case here.

As a response to the Appeal Court, the environmental organisations contend the Storting's discretion is strictly limited due to both legal and factual circumstances, and the concern for future generations is crucial:

> Because future generations lack the opportunity to safeguard their own need for a liveable environment, Article 112 of the Norwegian Constitution protects precisely these "future generations". This is essential when determining the discretion, which must be narrowed if the concern for "future generations" requires it. The Court of Appeal does not discuss the concern for "future generations" when determining the discretion.
>
> (Greenpeace Norden Association, 2020, p. 6)

The objective to create a good society which includes future people is crucial for environmental organisations, and they thus argue in terms of solidarity with future generations. However, the Supreme Court concludes the threshold must be high when the court is to set limits for democratic decisions. According to the Supreme Court, the article is a safety valve for cases where the Storting has neither considered environmental problems nor implemented measures. This means the protection clause does not imply concrete, binding commitments for the current generation to create a good society in solidarity with future people.

The boundaries of solidarity

The boundaries of the concept of solidarity with future generations require an extension of time. As one would accentuate the future solutions to global problems, a cosmopolitan concept of solidarity would be better equipped than national solidarity to approach the global ecological commons (Takle, 2018). However, it lacks the constitutionally defined boundaries of welfare states. The climate lawsuit reveals contestations over whether, on the basis of Article 112, one should only make an assessment of the environmental damage associated with the production of oil and gas in Norway. Or, if the assessments should also include greenhouse gas emissions associated with combustion outside Norway.

According to environmental organisations, an overall assessment is required which includes the future risk of traditional environmental damage in the Barents Sea, and greenhouse gas emissions associated with both the production in Norway and combustion outside Norway. One central argument is that in a situation of catastrophic global warming, Norway has a global responsibility that must be assessed on the basis that the country is a major oil exporter.

In contrast, the Government draws national boundaries and argues that emissions from the combustion of Norwegian petroleum, which takes place outside Norwegian jurisdiction, are not covered by Article 112. The Government states the Constitution does not provide global rights, and it has a limited scope of application and jurisdiction, both in terms of persons and territory. It refers to the fact that bot h international and national climate policies are based on each state being responsible for its national emissions, and Norway has committed itself to reducing its own emissions through international agreements. According to the Government, it is therefore only relevant to assess the consequences for the climate in Norway.

The District Court concludes in line with the Government, while the Appeal Court argues emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels after export should also be included. However, the arguments are vague:

> This involves, in the same way as the principle regarding solidarity across generations, a moral principle that can have major significance in the work on reducing climate changes. However, in contrast to the principle on solidarity with future generations, the principle has not been expressed in the wording of Article 112, nor have any clear references been made to the principle in the preparatory works. The key will therefore have to be the effects arising in Norway.
>
> (Appeal Court, 2020, p. 22)

The Appeal Court concludes that global environmental harm must be taken into account in line with environmental organisations' cosmopolitan ideas for future generations, but its main concern corresponds with the Government's drawing of national boundaries. Moreover, the Supreme Court concludes in line with the Government's argument that Norwegian climate policy is based on the division of responsibility between states which comply with international agreements. While

this is the decision so far, the climate lawsuit reveals how global environmental challenges to the welfare state lead to contestations over national boundaries and cosmopolitan ideas for future generations.

Collective orientation of solidarity

The concept of solidarity with future generations has a weak collective orientation, mainly because it is based on uncertainty about future generations' needs and wants. While Article 112 states that natural resources are managed on the basis of comprehensive long-term considerations for future generations, there is a tension about to what extent and how today's generations must relinquish autonomy and freedom to achieve this. There are various understandings of which efforts are necessary to achieve sustainable development, and how to achieve a healthy environment for future people.

Environmental organisations focus on environmental sustainability, and economic and social sustainability are subordinated to this. They emphasise global warming will have catastrophic future consequences if drastic measures are not taken. Moreover, these organisations argue the decision to search for petroleum will have a serious environmental impact, which cannot be justified on the basis of economic considerations. Their central concern is that there is no room for more fossil fuel resources if future generations should have access to a healthy environment to be able to enhance their capabilities.

The Government's point of departure is, as we have seen, that these questions are not suitable for decisions made by the courts. It asserts that the majority in the Storting has upheld the decision to search for petroleum in the Barents Sea, also after considering all themes discussed by the environmental organisations. In line with the decisions made by the Storting, the Government defines welfare in terms of a combination of environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

> At the same time, the majority emphasises the importance of a continuous focus on the environment and safety to ensure good and sustainable resource management. Cancelling the allocation of new blocks in the 23rd licensing round is therefore considered not to be in line with the Storting's objectives for Norwegian petroleum policy.
>
> (Attorney General of Norway, 2016, p. 27)

The concept of solidarity with future generations requires a collective orientation that is legally organised, in which current generations relinquish autonomy and freedom to achieve sustainable development. However, none of the main documents from the Government, which form the basis for this analysis, has references to the concern for future generations. This lack of discussion about future generations' needs for a healthy environment indicates that environmental sustainability has a lower priority than economic and social welfare state sustainability. This could also be understood as a tension between the concern for current and future generations.

This tension is also evident in the Supreme Court's argument that the environmental organisations' position would imply that central parts of Norwegian petroleum policy, including extraction and export, were put to the test. Moreover, it argues that these views will affect later licensing rounds and thereby involve a controlled phasing out of Norwegian petroleum activities. According to the Supreme Court, this is outside the scope of what it could rule on. This means it is up to the elected politicians in the Storting to decide what today's generations should do with petroleum production, and thereby ensure how future generations have their needs and capabilities covered (Takle, 2020).

Conclusion – tensions over solidarity with future generations?

This chapter develops a theoretical concept of solidarity with future generations and evaluates its empirical relevance by applying it to Norway. The theoretical concept consists of four dimensions of solidarity with future generations: foundation, objective, boundaries, and collective orientation. The main question raised is what kind of concrete binding commitments to collective actions – on the part of present-day state institutions – solidarity with future generations would require.

The inclusion of Article 112 in the Norwegian Constitution is an excellent example of a global issue as it reveals conflicting ideas about whether to impose political and legal bindings on current generations and thereby act in solidarity with future generations. Moreover, the Norwegian climate lawsuit reveals the tensions these binding might lead to.

Firstly, one central tension is over whether to perceive this as a rights provision. The Supreme Court's final conclusion is that the article is an intermediate solution between a substantive right and a declaration of principle. This means individuals or groups can take a case to the court on the basis of Article 112 only in cases when the Storting has not taken a position on an environmental problem. Accordingly, the *foundation* of solidarity with future generations is only weakly fulfilled as strong fulfilment requires current generations to identify with future people and impose legally binding obligations on themselves by giving future generations constitutional rights.

Secondly, in the climate lawsuit, there are different ideas about where to define the threshold, in terms of environmental harm, for when future generations' welfare is guaranteed by the protection clause. The Supreme Court concludes the threshold must be high when the court is to set limits for democratic decisions. It calls the article a "safety valve" for circumstances where the Storting has neither considered environmental problems nor implemented measures. This means the protection clause will only involve binding commitments for current generations if legislative bodies have not considered the environmental harm. The *objective* of solidarity with future generations can thereby hardly be achieved as this implies future people are included as a part of contemporary understandings of what it means to create a good society.

Thirdly, the climate lawsuit reveals how global environmental challenges might lead to tensions over national boundaries and cosmopolitan ideas for future

generations. There are contestations over whether one should only assess the environmental damage in Norway or if the assessments should also include greenhouse gas emissions associated with combustion outside the country. The Supreme Court draws national boundaries. It argues the Constitution does not provide global rights, and Norwegian climate policy is based on the division of responsibility between states which comply with international agreements. However, by defining the *boundaries* of solidarity with future generations, the cosmopolitan human rights ideas would be better equipped to approach the concern for future generations than national boundaries emphasised by the Supreme Court. However, cosmopolitanism lacks the constitutionally defined national welfare state boundaries, which are also defining contemporary international relations.

Finally, the climate lawsuit reveals tensions over the importance of a controlled phasing out of Norwegian petroleum activities for the sake of future generations' welfare. According to the Supreme Court, this is outside the scope of what it could rule based on Article 112. This means it is the responsibility of elected politicians in the Storting to decide what today's generations should do with petroleum production, and so far, there is an agreement about increased production. This implies priority is given to economic and social welfare state sustainability. One might question whether this would be in line with a concept of solidarity with future generations. This would require a *collective orientation* that is legally organised, in which current generations relinquish autonomy and freedom to safeguard sustainable development for future generations.

By applying the theoretical concept of solidarity with future generations, we can conclude protection clauses in constitutions might have weak binding commitments to collective actions on the part of present-day state institutions. It is, however, important to note that the climate lawsuit studied in this chapter involves much more than just the case itself. We may assume that in most cases such climate lawsuits not only create public discussions but also show the ideas that form the basis for the various actors' arguments about how to create a political system that is designed to safeguard the welfare of current and future generations. This reveals tensions over whether to include future generations in the contemporary welfare state considerations. These are tensions over solidarity with future generations, which we will probably see more of – due to our capacity to affect the future ecosystem.

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Part 2

Generations within families

5 Thinking through generation

On parenting and belonging among adult children of immigrants in Norway

Monica Five Aarset, Ingrid Smette, and Monika Grønli Rosten

Introduction

Lubna and Latif are a married couple in their mid-30s; both were born in Norway to parents who had migrated from Pakistan. They were active and engaged parents to three kids between the ages of 6 and 12. A couple of years ago they moved to a majority dominated middle-class area on the outskirts of Oslo because they wanted their children to grow up "as part of Norwegian society, not in a minority dominated enclave". They spoke of themselves and their generation as being both Pakistanis and Norwegians but said it was important that their children saw themselves as Norwegians. After attending a social gathering with mothers of her son's classmates who had talked about how their older children had started dating and going to parties, Lubna started worrying about how she would tackle "these things" when her children grew older. Would it still be possible for her children to feel "at home" in their neighbourhood if they experienced different rules and norms from their peers? Would her son manage to keep his friends even if he did not drink alcohol or have girlfriends? And how would - and how should - she and Latif react if their son got a girlfriend, went to parties, or drank alcohol? In other words, she was struggling with how to be both a Muslim and a Norwegian mother to soon-to-be teenage children.

Lubna and Latif belong to the first generation of adult children of immigrants to Norway post-WWII. As children of migrants, they are establishing their lives as adults and as parents in structural and cultural contexts that are different from the ones their parents migrated from. Norwegian society, which provides universal and inclusive welfare arrangements and sees gender equality, individualism, and nuclear families as dominant ideologies, poses challenges to, and requires transformations from, families with more explicit complementary gender roles and generational hierarchies. This chapter investigates how questions of belonging are renegotiated and dealt with in new ways when this generation enters parenthood.

Questions of generation and belonging

Theories of generations have a long history in studies of social and cultural change. In *Studies on the Germans,* Norbert Elias (2013 [1989]) argues that tensions and

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conflicts between generations are "among the strongest driving forces of social dynamics" and that it would be to underestimate them if they are understood "primarily as conflicts between parents and their children or children and their parents" (p. 344). In the context of migration, the notion of migrant generations is central in the measurement of "migrant adaption"; that is, how migrants integrate into new societies and what kinds of transnational connections they uphold (Crul & Vermeulen, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Particular significance is attached to children of immigrants, the so-called second generation, which is often referred to as a litmus test for integration (Brocket, 2020; Henriksen & Østby, 2007; Skrbiš, Baldassar, & Poynting, 2007). How well they do in the education system, job market, housing, and family life, as well as to what extent they display trust in and solidarity with the majority society is seen to define the success of the integration process. Thus, the life choices and life chances of the second generation are at the heart of the question often raised about the consequences of migration for advanced welfare states, that is whether migration will undermine or contribute to welfare state sustainability.

While concepts of migrant generations are widely discussed in the research literature, they are also contested. The term "second-generation immigrant" is criticised for marking people as immigrants over generations, implicitly indicating that they do not quite belong to and are not fully included in the nation-state (Rumbaut, 2004). Researchers also discuss whether it makes sense to speak of migrant generations in situations of continuous ongoing migration (Waters & Jiménez, 2005) or with continuing transnational connections (Levitt & Schiller, 2004).

The scientific discussion is complicated by the fact that generation is a folk concept dense with different meanings. Several studies highlight how many children of immigrants use terms like "second generation" or "our generation" when talking about themselves and their peers (Jacobsen, 2011). The term "second generation" can also be used to underline how growing up with parents who have immigrated from a social context different from the one they now live in may create specific experiences and positions in terms of, for instance, cultural and social resources (Andersson, 2010). As such, this term may challenge the homogeneity of ethnic categories by illuminating diversity within and similarities across such categories.

In sum, generation, like other concepts in the field of migration, is a messy and problematic concept that conflates "categories of practice" and "categories of analysis" (Brubaker, 2012). It is linked not only to ideas of social and cultural change but also to questions of belonging (Skrbiš et al., 2007). That is, to questions of where one fits in, where one feels "at home", where one's solidarity lies, certainly, but also to questions of the politics of belonging understood as the "specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectives" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 197).

This chapter aims to contribute to discussions on the generation concept for migration research by investigating how adult descendants of immigrants in Norway reflect upon family life and parenthood. It also aims to contribute to

general theoretical discussions on social change by analysing generational relations in advanced welfare states. The chapter draws on empirical material from interviews with and ethnographic fieldwork among adult descendants of African and Asian immigrants in Norway. The overarching question is– and if so – in what ways second-generation parents can be seen as driving forces of social dynamics in welfare states. We approach this question by investigating how belonging, and, by extension, the relationship with the welfare state, is renegotiated and put at stake in new ways when descendants of immigrants in Norway enter parenthood. Public and political debates on descendants of immigrants often imply an either-or hypothesis or argument: their actions and choices are understood *either* as the reproduction of gender and family practices from their parents' country of origin *or* as a rebellion against and distancing from the parental generation and thus becoming similar to, and integrated in, majority society (for discussion on the debate in relation to marriage practices, see Charsley, Bolognani & Spencer 2017; for discussion on fertility and reproduction, see Kristensen, 2009, 2020). We find that the narratives of our interlocutors challenge the premise of an either-or hypothesis of generational change and continuity and thus of belonging. We discuss the implications of this analysis for the welfare state and for descendants of immigrants in the final section of the chapter.

Second-generation parenthood as a vital conjuncture

Narratives of parenting and family life provide a fruitful frame for discussing generational changes and continuities as well as belonging. On the individual level, becoming a parent brings together past, present, and future horizons. As such, parenthood represents what Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2002) describes as a *vital conjuncture*: "a temporary configuration of possible change, a duration of uncertainty and potentiality" (p. 22). Vital conjunctures arise in situations where previously assumed futures are called into question and may imply a transformation in what social actors see as their trajectories. The concept can therefore be used to grasp and analyse the vital events of human life that cause previously steady trajectories to shift direction and may also lead to the formation of new horizons.

On a societal level, parenting in immigrant families has become central to arguments about the rights and the wrongs of living in multicultural societies (Grillo, 2008). Excessive parental control of girls and young women is of particular concern in the Nordic context as gender equality and individual autonomy are constitutive of Nordic nations' self-images (Røthing & Svendsen, 2011; Smette, Hyggen, & Bredal, 2021).

The literature on the second generation's family organisation in Norway has mainly addressed gender equality ideals and household organisation among adults (Aarset, 2015; Nadim, 2014; Rytter, 2013; Kavli, 2015). Parenting and childrearing have not been central themes (with the exception of Erstad's 2015 study), although there is an emerging literature on immigrant parents' (first and second generation) relationship with child protection services (Handulle & Vassenden, 2020). The second-generation literature has, so far, only been connected with the

vast sociological literature on transformations of childrearing and parenting ideals and practices in the era referred to as late modernity to a limited extent. These transformations involve intensified forms of middle-class parenting (Lareau, 2011), a shift from external to internal disciplining (Gullestad, 1996), and increasing parent-child emotional intimacy (Stefansen & Aarseth, 2011), and what is referred to as responsibilisation of parents (Vincent & Ball, 2007). In this chapter, perspectives from the new parenting literature serve as a reminder of Elias' (2012 [1939]) proposition that social and cultural change is a continuous process in both minority and majority populations.

Generation as thought-distinction and structural relation

The analysis draws inspiration from Karen Foster's (2013) discursive concept of generation, which allows us to approach generation as a "vehicle for thought and action, a concept and a mental structure that provides people with, and limits them to, specific way(s) of understanding, speaking about, and acting in the world around them." (p. 198). Foster uses a qualitative analysis of interviews with Canadians that focuses on experiences from their work life to argue that people talk about generation in two distinct ways in terms of their work experience: as an axis of difference related to attitudes to work, and as a socio-historic dynamic where "generation is drawn into larger narratives about social change and progress" (p. 200).

A discursive concept of generation may appear to be in conflict with a view of generational relations as structural relations, which was how Norbert Elias (2013 [1989]) approached generation. Elias' overarching interest was in the structure of social processes, and in how these structures could be uncovered through a study of microprocesses. His main contribution is his theory of civilisising processes. The main point in Elias theory of civilization is the connection between changes in the structure of society and changes in the structure of behaviour and psychical make-up (Goudsblom & Mennell, 1998, p. 43). Elias's theoretical perspectives on generations are, as pointed out by Connolly (2019, p. 157), most clearly expressed in *Studies on the Germans* (2013[1989]), where he emphasised the sociological significance of generations and stressed intergenerational tension and conflict as fundamental forces of social dynamics. The empirical fundament for Elias' analysis was what he saw as more or less clearly delineated generations in Germany, more specifically the generations born before and after WWII, and the drastically different ways in which they were positioned in terms of resources and opportunities. Elias saw generations as social positions with different opportunities and values and as *figurations*, that is, as webs of interdependent people. He further emphasised the ways in which individual parent-child relations change in accordance with the generational relations of the wider society. According to Elias,

> the changes in the relations between people in their capacity as parents and children, or even as husbands and wives – in short, members of a family – are quite inseparable from the changes in the relations between people as

> inhabitants of a city or as citizens of a state. Family relations are often presented as the foundation of all human social relations. But this is a misunderstanding. The structure of the family, the socially-given form of the relation between man, woman and child, changes in connection with, and corresponding to, the larger society it is part of.
>
> (Elias, 1998, p. 207)

Foster argues that "understanding generation as a discursive, historically contingent 'thought' with 'effects' is as important as understanding its structural form and contents" (p. 195). Foster does not, however, argue that generation is only a mental structure. She argues that "how we think, speak, write and otherwise communicate the idea of generation has practical consequences that social science must examine" (p. 198). Similarly, Elias emphasised the need for personal meaning as a specific generational problem of the middle class in Germany after WWII as the post-war generation experienced an urgent need to distance themselves from the previous one.

Returning once again to Brubaker (2012)'s argument regarding concepts that are both categories of analysis and categories of practice, we claim that descendants of immigrants may use the term "second generation" as a thought distinction to help position themselves with regard to the parental generation. At the same time, the concept may refer to an analytical category that describes a specific structural position with regard to both the first generation and the majority society. Second-generation immigrants must negotiate a sense of belonging in political landscapes where they tend to be considered foreigners (Phoenix, 2019). Thus, descendants of immigrants may carry with them experiences of what Paul Gilroy (1993) terms double consciousness: the double position as minority and citizen characterised by a feeling of being both inside and outside the nation.

The second generation in Norway

The material on which this chapter is based was produced by three studies about parenting, generation, gender, and family life conducted in 2010-2012 (Aarset, 2015), 2018 (Smette & Rosten, 2019), and 2020 (Smette's ongoing postdoctoral project). Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and spending time with families in everyday domestic contexts. More specifically, the empirical cases we refer to here include roughly 50 descendants of immigrants from Pakistan, India, Somalia, and Sri Lanka between the ages of 30 and 45. These subjects are living in the Oslo region and, for the most part, working in lower and upper-middle-class professions. Some were born in Norway, while others came along with their parents as children; and they are part of a second generation in a wider understanding of the term.

Even though this sample was not purposely representative, it reflects the demographic profile of adult descendants of immigrants in Norway to some extent. The second generation, defined as those born in Norway to immigrant parents, constitutes 3.4% (180 000) of the total Norwegian population of 5.3

million (Statistics Norway, 2020). This is still a young generation: four out of five people are under the age of 20 (Molstad & Steinkellner, 2020, p. 5). Post-WW II, immigration to Norway started relatively late as compared to other Western European countries. Labour immigrants from Pakistan, India, Morocco, Turkey, and Yugoslavia comprised the first substantial immigration to Norway from outside the Nordic countries in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Norway passed a temporary immigration ban in 1975 that put stop to unskilled labourer immigration. Migration continued, however, in the form of family immigration. From the late 1970s and onwards, refugees and asylum seekers began to arrive from countries such as Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Iran, the Baltic countries, Iraq, and Somalia.

Even though most descendants of immigrants in Norway are still young, statistics indicate that significant changes are taking place between them and the parental generation. Studies show substantial intergenerational progress in education, employment, and income level (Hermansen, 2016; Reisel, Hermansen, & Kindt, 2019), though studies also show that descendants of immigrants experience discrimination in the Norwegian labour market (Midtbøen, 2016). When it comes to family formation, descendants of immigrants marry later, have children later, and have fewer children than their parents (Molstad & Steinkellner, 2020; Tønnessen, 2014). Second-generation immigrants also seem to express strong support for gender equal work-family practices (Kitterød & Nadim, 2020).

Parenthood as vital conjuncture: ruptures, continuities, and belonging

This section first explores how people use generational thinking in their reflections on ruptures and continuities in their own parenting and family practices and then goes on to discuss how they renegotiate belonging through narratives of generation and parenting.

Generational ruptures and tensions

Experiences of conflicts with parents in childhood and adolescence were prominent in some narratives. Such negative experiences from their own childhoods were described as having contributed to how these individuals try to be parents today by some of the research participants. Several mothers, as well as some fathers, framed their efforts to establish emotional closeness in their relationships with their children in this way. One example was of a mother of Somali background who emphasised her continuous efforts to build a close relationship with her teenage son. She described that she wanted her children to know that they could always come to her with what was on their minds. She also let the children know that she was simultaneously teaching herself to disclose her emotions to them. She contrasted her approach to that of her parents, who had been emotionally distant and had not shown interest in what was going on in her life when she was a child. Therefore, she had not been able to share things that had troubled her

with them. She described these experiences as formative in terms of her approach to parenting:

> I think that … because of what I've been through where I did not have the possibility of discussing things with Mum and Dad. So… in a way that has taught me the importance of talking with my child, right … and being as honest as possible.

For this mother, her negative childhood experiences were something that she could learn from. She also stressed her entirely different approach to gender equality from her parents, who had exercised strict control over her and her sisters, while her brothers had enjoyed much more freedom. Her sense of injustice regarding this unequal treatment led her to emphasise that her two children – a teenage son and a younger daughter – were to share the same responsibilities and that the brother was not to control his young sister. In this and other narratives, generation served as a tool for understanding both one's own childhood – what was good and what was painful – and for explaining the rationale behind one's own transformed parenting practices and ideals. In other narratives, the concept of generation served to explain transformations in everyday practices by the new generation of parents. One example concerned proper forms of socialising. One woman with Indian background described how her generation installed new conventions for weekend visits:

> For our parents, visiting was like Friday, Saturday – and it started around 7 pm with a type of fried snack – very heavy stuff. So, you're full. Then they serve the main course around 11:00 – 11:30 pm. By then they [the kids] are totally beaten. Then they leave right after they have eaten because it is so late that nobody wants dessert or anything. But we have moved on to a more Norwegian type of visiting that starts around four o'clock. We are finished with dinner about half past six. We watch the children's programme on TV and everybody leaves about 8:30 – 9 pm. That suits us better.

The mother contrasts visiting as practiced by the parental generation with the form of visiting that her family and, we infer, her generation prefers. These new forms of visiting are adapted to the needs of parents with small children as well as to the needs of the children themselves regarding meals, activities (television), and bedtimes. Her narrative describes how practices that had been a source of tension between generations within individual families are being transformed. Generation here is described as a collective source of empowerment for parents who want their own and their children's needs to frame how families, including grandparents, should socialise. At first it could appear as if this narrative of distancing from the parental generation and their values inherently entails aligning oneself with the majority society's requirements, thus confirming the "become like us" hypothesis of what will happen to the second generation. However, while this mother did label the new form of visiting "Norwegian", identifying

with Norwegian conventions for visiting should not be read as a statement about belonging in its own right. Vassenden (2010) argues that even if people use categories such as Norwegian or foreign to label themselves – or their practices – this does not necessarily mean that identities or boundaries between categories are fluid. It, therefore, becomes necessary to distinguish between categorical distinctions (Indian and Norwegian forms of visiting) and symbolic boundaries between first-generation, second-generation, and majority Norwegians. This means that one may, at the same time, be categorically non-Norwegian yet culturally (almost) Norwegian. It may also mean, however, that as one becomes more like the majority, for instance in terms of concrete family and childrearing practices, factors that may contribute to marking belonging to the parents' homeland may assume renewed importance.

Generational continuities

Many of the parents alternated between describing their lives as being just like "any other family life" and talking about elements that made their lives different from those of majority Norwegians. In general, parents across the three studies agreed that it was important that the children had knowledge about their origins.

Several of the mothers of Tamil origin were recruited from Tamil language and cultural centres. These centres were established as voluntary organisations by the tightly knit networks characteristic of the Tamil diaspora in the first generation (Fuglerud & Engebrigtsen, 2006). These schools offer extensive courses in Tamil language and culture as well as extra instruction in regular curricula and help with homework. Parents living in different parts of the city bring their children to the school on weekends and socialise while they wait for the children's classes to end.

The mothers described the language school as an important part of their childhood experience. However, many stressed the friendships they had established, some of which they still retained, as more important than the proficiency they had acquired in the Tamil language. One mother described the language school as a place where she had been able to discuss the everyday challenges of living, "with two cultures and having legs firmly placed in each."

There were different motivations, mostly related to the value of learning the language, for these mothers to take their own children to the language schools on weekends. Knowledge of the Tamil language would enable their children to communicate with family and relatives living in different countries in their own lingua franca. This ability to communicate with others from the same background would, for the mothers, provide them with a sense of belonging to a transnational Tamil community. Belonging was understood here in the concrete sense; people mentioned examples of relatives who could not speak the Tamil language and were, therefore, left feeling very isolated at transnational family gatherings. The sense of belonging offered by language was also more abstract, existing as a gateway to knowledge of Tamil culture. However, none of the mothers mentioned belonging to the Tamil nation, which was a principal motivation for establishing language and culture centres by the first generation (Bruland, 2012).

Several studies show how nostalgic family narratives of homeland identity and cultural tradition strengthen collective bonds and identities in migrant families (Rumbaut, 2004). For the descendants of immigrants in our studies, inculcating in their children skills in and knowledge of their parents' or grandparents' language and homeland were important to connect family members within households, between generations, and across national borders. Other motivations were also involved, such as providing children with the ability to master several languages. These motives for taking children to the language school were largely shared, as were the key premises of the whole venture; the children wanted it, showed signs of enjoying it, and had a say in whether or not to go on with it. This point may have been stressed partly to counter the narrative of overly ambitious and pressuring immigrant parents, and Tamil parents in particular, in the Norwegian public sphere (Kindt, 2018). The emphasis on language skills as a generalised resource can be seen as reflective of an aspect of late-modern parenting often referred to as cultivational (Lareau, 2011), which centres around parents' responsibility to ensure that children develop and optimise their abilities. In this sense, what primarily came across as generational continuity was also reflective of concerns to resource the child, in ways that resemble middle-class childrearing logics.

In a similar vein, practices that may appear to identify with traditional parenting ideals and a focus on homeland belonging may, upon closer inspection, come across as being in line with highly modern forms of parenting and be directed at maintaining children's dual belonging. One example is parents who pay for online Quran courses for their children. Aarset (2016) discusses these practices with regard to both cultural continuity and modern parenting ideals. She argues that while the desire to ensure that children acquire knowledge of the Quran, Arabic, and Urdu may reflect a preoccupation with cultural continuity, the choice of online courses reflects the modern parenting ideals with which the parents identify. For example, online courses enable parents to closely monitor what is being taught and said during the class as opposed to letting children attend an ordinary Quran school in a mosque. Online classes also enable parents to fit them in between other activities, thus allowing them to engage in a cultivating parenting style. As one father described it:

> Now they [the children] get an effective half hour. It is part of a new trend: making everyday life easier by buying services. The kids are at home, use the facilities they have, and get what they need.
>
> (Aarset, 2016, p. 445)

For some, and on one level, the choice of online Quran courses may be understood as an expression of belonging to Pakistan, as the companies and the teachers they used were based there. At the same time, it was also a reflection of their daily lives in Norway and an expression of belonging to the local Norwegian context. Furthermore, giving their children religious education and therefore emphasising their religious identity can be understood as an expression of a transnational way of belonging to a global or European Muslim community.

Belonging to what?

Many of the parents referred to an imaginary community of the pioneers of the "second generation" in their interviews. This way of locating themselves in relation to their own parents and extended family was used both in reference to children of immigrants from the same ethnic group (e.g. second-generation Pakistanis) and a shared community of children of immigrants from various countries, cross-cutting national and ethnic background (e.g. second generations in Norway).

One of the ways in which narratives of generation and parenting entailed a renegotiation of belonging was through the conceptualisation of the second generation as pioneers. The parents of Pakistani and Indian origins conceptualised the second generation as pioneers manoeuvring between different and often conflicting understandings and practices in the intersections between the parental generation, Norwegian society, and transnational social fields. As pioneers, they were conscious of how their life choices, successes, and failures could impact their younger siblings, cousins, and future generations. In this sense, they were "moving in unploughed ground", contrasting their generation with both their parent's generation and their own children, younger siblings, or cousins.

The second-generation identity among adults of Tamil origins was also linked to the notion of being a pioneer. One young man (not yet a father) described how sons and daughters in the close circle of families that socialised on a regular basis during his childhood had become almost like brothers and sisters. They had supported each other in negotiations with the parental generation and he believed that their joint efforts had resulted in moving the parental generation in a more liberal direction regarding issues such as premarital relationships and arranged marriages. These efforts had, in his opinion, benefitted the younger siblings in the families. He himself was in a long-term relationship with a majority Norwegian girl. This was not fully accepted by his parents, but he was hoping that he would make it easier for those who would make similar decisions after him. In a similar vein, several others in our studies referred to "us" in the second generation as a community of pioneers operating within and across ethnic barriers and, therefore, securing easier transitions to adulthood for future multi-ethnic generations in Norwegian society (see also Rosten, 2015).

However, as the literature on the second generation makes clear, the concept of the second generation is far from clear-cut. Thus, becoming a parent could also entail a reinforced sense of belonging to the parental generation and their homeland, and thus a sense of disconnection from others, including younger siblings also identifying as second generation for some. One illustration of the messiness of generational boundary-making is how a mother of Somali background, for example, placed herself somewhere in between the parental generation and her young siblings in what she saw as a gradual transformation from Somali to Norwegian. She referred to differences in clothing as she described the differences in ethnic and national identification between herself, her mother, and her daughter:

> My mom wears those big jilbabs, Somali-like, while I wear a simple hijab. But not with trousers, of course. None of us are wearing trousers yet, but I imagine my daughter will. That will be the norm in her generation.

The mother also described, however, that her younger sisters would wear trousers from time to time and that her younger brother had married "a Norwegian", something that she herself "would not have done". What particularly accentuated her sense of belonging to Somalia and to her parents' generation, however, was her deliberations over whether to move back to Somalia to look after her parents:

> I don't want my mother to live in Somalia alone, it does not make sense. And I know my siblings would never go there. They just, "Somalia?! Are you crazy!" They do not even understand what I'm talking about. But for me it is different, I have lived there much longer than they have. And I have a different perspective [being a parent myself] (…). They just "whatever, they [the parents] are adults, they have to take care of themselves." They have that Norwegian mentality. While I am more like in both camps. I too can have an individualistic perspective on things but not in all areas.

The idea that she and her husband would consider moving back to Somalia came from her sense of obligation to take care of her parents as they got older and her realisation that she was the only likely candidate among her siblings to do so, as she had lived in Somalia until she was 15. Thus, this mother places herself somewhere in between the generations of her parents and her younger siblings. She describes her younger siblings as potentially having more in common with the generation of her daughter than her own.

For most parents being part of a generation of involved parents with emotionally close relationships with their children was the overarching narrative of generation and parenting. Yet, being part of this broader transformation of parenting practices could still imply ambiguous belongings. One reason for this involves the ways in which Norwegian (or Nordic) parenting in public discourse is conceived as timeless, and, therefore, in that sense always modern, whereas immigrant parenting is presented as obsolete with authoritarian and patriarchal forms of parent-child relationships (cf. Keskinen, 2017). In accordance with this representation of difference, generational changes occurring in the second generation will be understood as a form of a *civilizing process*, to use Elias' term (2012 [1939]). A father, born in Norway to Pakistani parents, challenged this representation. He described how his willingness to accommodate his children's practical needs distinguished his way of parenting from that of his parents but also from the majority of parents from his childhood:

> Growing up, we, like others, received a lot of attention and love, but we also heard that we had to manage things by ourselves. If you were going to training, you had to get there yourself, it doesn't matter where it is. And the matches, if Dad couldn't drive you there, you had to get someone to give you

> a lift. That's what it was like then, it wasn't all on the children's terms. But I don't think you need to hear about this change from someone with an ethnic minority background, I think you will find that anywhere.

The father contrasts his experience of having to sort out things himself when he was going to attend a football match with how he himself spends a lot of his free time organising his children's leisure activities – and enjoys it. He claims, however, that this generational transformation is not specific to ethnic minorities but is rather a broad change in parenting ideals in both minority and majority families. In other words, he challenged static assumptions of who "we" are and what becoming like "us" means.

Conversely, for other parents, attentiveness to the fact they will be perceived as "different" because of their religion, skin colour, name, etc. is an integrated part of parenting. They emphasised in interviews that it was particularly important for *their* children to get a good education because they knew they would have to work extra hard to reach their goals and be accepted. One father with a Pakistani background put it this way:

> I think that we place high demands on our children and that we have influenced them a lot … to pursue higher education, an academic education. We tell them almost daily that education is important. And there is a reason for that. The motivation behind it is ... it's a little bit sad saying it, but it is not exactly a good environment in Norway for Muslims these days. And perhaps it'll get even worse in the future.

Excelling in what they do and investing in overlapping belongings could, therefore, be seen as a form of protection, an attempt to compensate for their conditional belonging (Aarset, 2018) to the majority.

Overlapping belongings in advanced welfare states

Lubna, who was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, shared her worries as she stood at the threshold of becoming mother to teenage children. She was grappling with what was right for her children and her family. Lubna questioned how and to what her children would belong but also how she would react if her children challenged values and norms that she had held as important.

Lubna's deliberations illustrate how parenthood is an accentuated form of vital conjuncture for descendants of immigrants. Parenthood stirs up questions of belonging both now and in the future and "the range of identities that could potentially be claimed" (Johnson-Hanks, 2002, p. 872). In this chapter, we have explored how descendants of immigrants like Lubna use generational narratives and generational thinking in their reflections on parenting and family practices. We find that they navigate between broader narratives of generational changes in parenting related to late modernity and more minority-specific narratives of both rupture and continuities in their descriptions of parenting practices and family

life. We argue that these narratives of generational change reflect and constitute overlapping belongings to a late-modern parenthood generation, a family generation, and the second generation.

The parents in our studies, like Foster's (2013) research participants, used phrases like "that generation", "the younger generation", and "my generation" to delineate groups with specific positions and approaches to doing things. Even though the second-generation identity is imagined –"both in terms of parent/children relations and in terms of a particular temporality of migration that generates common experiences" (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 85) – the concept of the second generation may provide an important path to locating oneself in relation (and opposition) to the parental generation as well as to the majority society.

Elias emphasised the problem of personal meaning as specific to the middle class. Here, we will not go into a discussion on Elias's distinction between the middle and working classes in relation to generational conflicts, or the unique and traumatic situation of the post-war generation of Germans. We find, however, that his description of situations where there is no taken-for-granted path speaks to the situation children of immigrants may find themselves in when establishing their lives as adults and as parents. This generation of descendants of immigrants can, therefore, be understood as a figuration, an interdependent web of people who share experiences and represent cultural shifts that, in part, are both produced by and produce tensions in their relationship with the parental – or first - generation. There are, however, important differences between the empirical base for Elias' analysis and the adult children of immigrants in our material. For Elias' German post-WWII generation, the overall society which they opposed, and the parental generation were one and the same. This led Elias to emphasise *conflict* between two delineated generations as the driving forces of social dynamics. For the participants in our studies, however, the parental generation and the larger society do not overlap in the same way, making the social and structural relations more complex. This might explain why generational *ruptures* and *continuities* both seem to be driving forces in our material.

The either-or hypothesis of generational change and continuity presented earlier leaves no room for the overlapping of different belongings in descendants of immigrants' narratives of parenting. Through this renegotiation, descendants carve out a position that implies a transformation of the parenting ideals and practice of their childhood, and yet offers a way in which Somali, Pakistani, Indian, or Tamil belonging is also possible for the parents today and as potential or possible supplementary belonging for their children. We argue that the holding of simultaneous, overlapping belongings is enabled through their identification with the second generation, even if it is an imagined category (cf. Jacobsen, 2011). Among the parents in our material, second-generation belonging was created partly through shared childhood experiences of "in-betweenness" (Brocket, 2020), partly through joint efforts of changing attitudes in the parental generation, and finally through the sense of being part of a transformation of family life and childrearing that makes them more similar to majority Norwegian families. Shared ideals of childrearing and a good family life meant that the second-generation

parents were *in sync* when they arranged their weekend socialising and when they talked about their rationales for taking their children to language schools on weekends.

The concept of pioneering also underlines the multidimensional and complex nature of diverse belonging, thus broadening the scope of what Norwegian families may be. As discussed, second-generation immigrants are seen as a litmus test of the integration process in welfare states. The concept of integration is, as the Danish anthropologist Mikkel Rytter (2018) points out, unclear and fuzzy; it varies depending on whether it refers to social, economic, political, or cultural integration. Furthermore, the concept is often used to simultaneously refer both to an end, "the utopian horizon of absolute *integration* (whatever that means)" (p. 682), and the process of getting there. Rytter argues that "talk of and demands for integration in public and political discourse rest on, produce, and reproduce specific ideas of the society, the state, the nation, and the relationship between majorities and minorities" (p. 679); the latter is based on a contrasting relationship between an "us" and a "them". This "talk of and demand for integration" does not take into account how categories of "us" and "them" are continuously changing; the "we" of today is different in terms of both who it includes and the practices and values it represents 20 or 30 years ago.

In what ways, then, can second-generation parents be seen as driving forces of social dynamics in welfare states? One answer is that they are pioneers in changes occurring within the minority population. The other answer is that, as descendants of immigrants, they may compel the welfare state - or rather its inhabitants and agents - to take into account the existing complexities in the belongings, living conditions, and everyday lives of its population. The third answer is that descendants are part of and contribute to the broader ongoing transformations affecting both the family and society more generally. Or, as Elias writes in "The Civilizing of parents": "every family relationship is a process. The relationships are ever-changing, and the task always poses itself anew" (Elias, 1998, p. 211). The direction of these continuously unfolding social dynamics will depend on both the descendants' ability to acknowledge the yet undefined belongings of future generations and the ability of the welfare state to incorporate its inhabitants' complex belongings.

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6 The welfare state and family

Intergenerational tensions and solidarity within the housing sector

Hans Christian Sandlie and Lars Gulbrandsen

Introduction

Questions concerning intergenerational relations, especially intergenerational equity, have gained a lot of attention in recent years (e.g. Arber and Attias-Donfut 2001; Willetts 2011; Searle 2018). Previously, the rhetoric around intergenerational justice pictured older generations as relatively disadvantaged compared to younger generations who could profit from an ever-expanding welfare state. However, in more recent debates, the focus is on the imbalance between a growing, older population, supported by a shrinking younger generation against a backdrop of an economic austerity and welfare state retrenchment (Searle 2018). A key issue in these arguments is that changing economic, demographic, and political contexts may create dividing lines among people whose chronological age anchors them at different points in historical time. These dividing lines may be understood as conflict, tension, or competition between young and old over scarce public resources.

The counterpart of the debate on intergenerational conflict is intergenerational solidarity. The basis for both conflict and solidarity between generations is wealth inequalities. However, rather than focusing on inequalities as a source for tensions, a focus on solidarity highlights cohesion and interdependence between generations. More generally, solidarity between generations includes not only the provision of care and maintenance when needed but also shared expectations and obligations regarding the distribution of resources between generations (Katz et al. 2005). Intergenerational solidarity is fundamental for the generational contract in modern welfare systems (Albertini et al. 2007); protecting the old and investing in the young within the balance of financial sustainability and social justice and fairness principles. The generational contract has both a public and a private dimension. The public dimension operates at the societal level. It refers to the relations between generations within the welfare state. The private dimension refers to intergenerational relations within the families. In this chapter, we will study the private dimension of the generational contract in light of the public dimension.

Common in both the conflict and solidarity hypothesis is the concept of generation as a key to analyzing social dynamics. Generations are a basic unit of both

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social change and social reproduction. The intergenerational conflict hypothesis argues that large inequalities in wealth distribution between generations beg for reforming the generational contract at the societal welfare state level. Reforms are needed to secure the welfare state's sustainability and its purpose of providing comprehensive social security according to the principles of fairness and social justice (Kohli 2006). However, the intergenerational solidarity hypothesis argues that the conflict frame is too naive and ignores inequalities within a generation (Williamson and Watts-Roy 2009). People within the same generation have different access to resources. Therefore, the dividing lines or conflicts are not necessarily between the young and the old but between the rich and the poor. For example, intergenerational solidarity at the family level may compensate for welfare reforms, and family support may act as an insurance against life-course risks (Kohli et al. 2010). Because distributional principles within the family might differ from the norms guiding redistribution within the welfare state, social inequality will be reproduced both within and across different generations.

In this chapter, we focus on the intergenerational dependency within the family. Comparative studies in Europe have shown that intergenerational family relations are shaped by national public policy arrangements (Kohli et al. 2010; Dykstra 2017). A central issue concerns the extent to which these arrangements enforce reliance on older or younger family members or enable individual autonomy (Dykstra & Hagestad 2016; Hagestad & Dykstra 2016). A key component of generational interdependencies is reflected in the flow of resources between family members. Although intergenerational exchange can include, among other things, care and emotional support, transfer of wealth can be a significant contributor to intergenerational solidarity. Transfers are evident in practices of nest-leaving and support between generations in early housing pathways. Although parents often take an active role in supporting children leaving the nest regardless of welfare regimes, differences exist in the modes and extent of support transferred to young adults (Holdsworth 2004; Albertini & Kohli 2012). Furthermore, young adults' position on the housing market has become more vulnerable, and studies from European countries show that parents' role in their housing pathways has become more important in recent years (Lennartz et al. 2016).

This chapter focuses on the importance of parents' economic resources for first-time buyers. It aims to connect the concept of intergenerational dependency and housing to specify how the transformations in the housing systems have affected the dynamics between generations. Using Norwegian data from the living condition surveys conducted by Statistics Norway, we address the following questions: To what extent and by what means do parents support their children in entering the housing market? Is there evidence of shifting patterns in this support in recent years? And, does this support affect the young adults' way into the housing market?

Our next two sections take a broad approach: we begin by presenting the main concepts within the literature on the interplay between the welfare state and the intergenerational dependency within the family sphere before highlighting how recent changes in the housing system have restructured the homeownership-welfare

dynamics. Here, housing concepts as a "wobbly pillar" or "cornerstone" in the modern welfare state captures how the homeownership model works through its dual-cum-service nature as both accommodation and capital asset. We then narrow our focus to the specific Norwegian case: the third section presents results on changes of parental housing support in recent years, before we reflect in the final section on how these patterns affect the intergenerational and intragenerational relations.

The welfare state and intergenerational dependency within the family

All welfare states have some way of dividing caregiving and maintenance responsibility between the family and the public service systems. Still, this family-state mix's infrastructure is shaped by the cultural context and different generations' position in both historical time and society. The central component of generational interdependencies or family solidarity is reflected in the flow of resources between familial generations (Searle 2018). A key issue concerns the extent to which welfare state arrangements enforce reliance on older or younger family members or enable individual autonomy.

The welfare state frames the context in which intergenerational relations within the family are embedded. Two aspects of this state-family dynamics are considered important (Dykstra 2017): firstly, generous welfare provisions may help relieve family and kin from the burden of economic support and personal care (Lingsom 1997). However, instead of viewing welfare state arrangements as a substitution of family care and maintenance, generous public services are understood as complementary to the family (Daatland and Lowenstein 2005). According to this approach, the welfare state will take responsibilities, and thus family members have more opportunities to maintain their close relationships without perceiving them as obligations. Secondly, public transfers might be redistributed at the family level. Monetary welfare provisions enable families to respond to members with the most significant financial needs. Family support may act as informal insurance against life-course risks within the family (Kohli et al. 2010).

As there is interdependence between family generations, family solidarity is a multidimensional phenomenon, and its components reflect different exchange relations (Bengtson and Roberts 1991). Thus, family members may have different motives for giving support to other members. Cigdem and Whelan (2017) distinguish between three motives for why such transactions are made within the housing context. A *first* motive is altruism, or concerns about the welfare of family members. Here, the child's wellbeing is the central focus, and no repayment is expected. The support is transferred out of goodwill and emotional ties. A *second* motive is exchange and demonstration effects as family members support each other to receive favours in return. This means that intergenerational transfers may be acts of self-interests where, for example, parents look after their children with the expectation that children will take care of them in old age. A

third motive is insurance. Families may support their members to circumvent market failures such as credit market imperfections that constrain family members from borrowing. This has been demonstrated in harsh market conditions, where parents transfer wealth to children to facilitate home purchase (Cirman 2008).

The theoretical basis for this understanding of the interplay between the welfare state and intergenerational dependency within the family sphere is Esping-Andersen's (1999) discussion of different regimes in terms of what he calls "familialism" and "de-familialisation". Within this framework, welfare states may be categorized from the extent to which they enforce reliance on the family ("familialisation") or enable individual autonomy ("de-familialisation"). Policies affect intergenerational dependency by reinforcing or lightening the reliance on older and younger family members. By taking the starting point in Esping-Andersen's classifications of countries based on the decommodification of public transfers and services, the term "transfer regimes" is often used to interpret cross-national findings on intergenerational exchanges (Albertini et al. 2007; Albertini and Kohli 2013). For example, Albertini and colleagues (2018) have nicely demonstrated how generational interdependence and young adults' housing careers vary, depending on the transfer regime context. In the Southern European countries, the primary family support provided to children is co-residence, and financial transfers are rare. Living in the parental home seems a suitable alternative when a frail welfare state is accompanied by high unemployment rates and difficult entry to the labour market. Co-residence is not a widespread strategy for supporting children's housing in the Continental countries. However, needy children are more likely to receive financial help from their non-co-resident parents. In the Nordic countries, young adults leave the parental home at an early age. A generous welfare state, along with parents' financial support, favours adult children's residential autonomy. The welfare state generally takes on supporting young adults in need, while family members provide complimentary financial support.

Although there is empirical evidence on how family transfers have different aims and meanings across European welfare states, the relation between the state and the family is manifold, and countries within these regimes will display different patterns (Kasearu and Kutsar 2013). A focus on different regimes overlooks these within-regimes differences and regional ways that go beyond the regime categorization. Thus, Dykstra and Hagestad (2016) have argued that national policies constitute a valuable strategy to uncover how macro-level social forces shape intergenerational family relations. Within this framework, three actors are highlighted in considering intergenerational dependency: family, market, and state. Generational dependency is regarded as a product of allocations between private and public protection and the state's respective roles, the market, and the family in providing welfare to individuals. Following this, the idea is that the interplay between the family and the state is not static but dynamic and may change over time. In the following section, we will use this approach to study how recent housing policy and housing markets have affected intergenerational family relations within the Norwegian housing sector.

Housing – the wobbly pillar of the welfare state

Housing has been one of the central pillars of the modern welfare state. It is recognized as a key aspect of everyday life and associated with security, health and wellbeing. For this reason, providing sufficient and affordable housing of adequate standard was a high priority in the founding of post-war welfare systems (Kemeny 2001). In the expansion years of the welfare state, the main element was new production and private housing; in many countries mainly through owner-occupation, housing was heavily subsidized using low-interest loans, price regulations, and favourable taxation. This mass homeownership model's ambition was to enable households to uphold a socially acceptable housing standard independent of the housing market and family background. In Norway, this ambition was to no small degree achieved during the post-war period. Today, about 80% of Norwegian households are homeowners, either as individual owners or through collective arrangements. Moreover, near 95% become homeowners throughout their lifetime (Sandlie and Gulbrandsen 2017).

With its dual capital-cum-service nature, housing has a unique position within the welfare state (Fahey and Norris 2010). On the one hand, housing provides a service or accommodation, and, on the other hand, an owner-occupied dwelling is also a capital asset that provides an essential means of saving or allocating resources within the family. The ambiguous place of housing in the welfare system led Torgersen (1987) to refer to housing "as the wobbly pillar under the welfare state". He demonstrated the difficulties in solving social problems through private property. The welfare state supports housing to provide socially acceptable and affordable housing, but in providing housing through owner-occupation, it also subsidises homeowners' prospects of accumulating wealth. Consequently, a support scheme aiming to neutralizing inequalities paradoxically will also produce inequalities when public support converts into private property.

The housing context has a profound impact on generational relations and the growing interests concerning intergenerational equity. Housing is one of the dominant wealth resources emerging in several nations in recent decades, and it could give rise to new tensions or dependency between generations (Searle 2018). Altering historical conditions may have created new intergenerational relations patterns at the societal and family levels. While previous generations benefitted from a generous welfare state and favourable economic conditions, restructuring of housing systems and changing housing markets have imposed increasing constraints on the opportunities of young adults to leaving the parental home and entering the housing market (Forrest and Yip 2011; Lennartz et al. 2016).

In the Norwegian context, the housing policy, underpinning mass homeownership, has changed dramatically post-1980s (Sørvoll 2011). The housing market regulations were eased up, brick and mortar subsidies were phased out, and universal support schemes aimed at all members of society were replaced with policies targeted at marginalized groups. However, subsidizing homeowners' post-war policy through generous tax deductions and low property and housing taxation rates was continued. The main aim of the recent housing policy is to

facilitate well-functioning housing markets and support those who are unable to enter the housing market and maintain socially acceptable housing standards on their own. Combining this move to greater individualization of welfare support and changing market conditions has altered the circumstances that different generations have entered the housing market. Later generations are potentially disadvantaged against earlier generations, who profited from an ever-expanding welfare state.

More recently, like many other countries in Europe (Ronald 2008), there has been a rapid increase in Norwegian house prices. Consequently, Norway has experienced aggregate wealth build-up in housing property and a corresponding bound up in debts. Homeownership has been a primary mechanism by which households have accumulated debts and economic risks (Ford et al. 2001; Aalbers 2017). To reduce housing price inflation and financial risks, the government introduced mandatory home purchase deposits. The maximum loan-to-value ratio for repayment mortgages was at first set at 90% of the property value (in 2010), but the ratio was later reduced to 85%. But, if homebuyers can provide adequate additional security in the form of a mortgage on other property, the opportunity for higher loan-to-value ratio exists. Parallel to the more stringent requirements for housing finance, the award criteria for a public start-up loan have been tightened (Astrup et al. 2015). The loan scheme is now restricted to longer-term, financially disadvantaged households who can repay the mortgage. In practice, prudent mortgage-lending practices increase the threshold for young first-home buyers entering the housing market.

The housing-welfare state relationship has changed in recent years. Cuts in generosity and increasing qualification conditions make welfare support schemes less universal and restrict the number of recipients. Combined with changed economic conditions in the housing market, these trends contribute to debates over generations' relationships. One prevalent assumption is a re-familialisation of the housing sector with the growing importance of family transfers and the significance of receiving financial help from parents in entering homeownership (Scanlon and Blanc 2019). Parents who have experienced favourable economic conditions may provide their offspring financial support to make entering the housing market easier or less risky (Halvorsen and Lindquist 2017).

In a picture of changing housing conditions, geography has become an important dimension shaping intergenerational support (Bayrakdar and Coulter 2018). Conditions in local housing markets influence parents' role in determining the young adults' need and the parent's opportunities. This is also visible in the Norway context where Galster and Wessel (2019) have documented the crucial role of housing wealth in perpetuating social inequalities across several generations. By exploring multi-generational reproduction of socio-economic status through the transmission of housing wealth, they found that those whose grandparents owned a large home in Oslo, the capitol of Norway, in 1960 had a much higher probability of owning a home in 2014 compared to otherwise similar individuals.

Wealth and family transfers – data and analysis

We primarily use data from the Norwegian part of the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2015. This is a cross-sectional and longitudinal sample survey (the sample size for Norway is 6.394) coordinated by Eurostat, based on data from the EU member states (Støren and Todorovic 2019). The survey provides data on income, poverty, and living conditions in the European Union. In the Norwegian part, a battery of more detailed questions on housing conditions and different kinds of housing transfers within the family is also included every third year. Our analysis relies on surveys conducted in the period between 2001 and 2018. In addition to these surveys, we also use national representative surveys. These data are collected by internet panels consisting of people recruited through telephones or postal questionnaires. Comparisons between these internet data and data from the Norwegian living conditions surveys, which are based on personal interviews and carried out by Statistics of Norway at the same time, show that the two sources of data correspond very well (Gulbrandsen 2016).

We use parental housing support as an indicator of family solidarity. Young people may receive housing support from their parents in two different ways (Köppe, 2018): financially (deposit, inheritance, loans) and in-kind (guarantor, living rent-free at parental home). Our study provides data on both categories of parental support. Using questions on family and position in the household, we can identify whether the respondent shares residence with parents. However, we do not know whether they are living rent-free or at a discount. Furthermore, homeowners are asked whether they received these three different types of support from their parents when they purchased their home: inheritance or advancement of inheritance, a loan from parents/parents-in-law, and used parents/parents-in-law as guarantor for a loan.

Our analyses give a simple, but representative, picture of how recent changes in the housing sector have affected housing wealth and parental housing support among Norwegian households. However, a weakness worth mentioning in such cross-sectional data is that the sample size does not allow us to study geographical variations in these developments. Thus, in such variations, we are limited to discuss our results considering existing literature.

Age inequalities in wealth and family support

The recent years' changes in the Norwegian housing sector are manifested in age inequalities in net wealth. This is illustrated in Table 6.1. Using data from surveys conducted by TNS Kantar, the table shows the median value of net wealth in Norwegian kroner (NOK) in the age intervals 20-29 and 55-62 in 2006 and 2015, respectively. Net wealth is measured by asking the respondents about the assumed market value of central assets such as the dwelling, holiday houses, financial assets, car(s) minus their total debt. The two age groups in the table mirror the young generation about to enter the housing market and their parent generation. Table 6.1 shows net wealth in the two generations in 2006 and 2015. Despite the short time

Table 6.1 Net wealth (median) in 1000 NOK by age in 2006 and 2015

	20-29 years	*55-62 years*	*Total 20-62*
2006	148	1925	1175
	(601)	(436)	
2015	170	2990	2010
	(231)	(415)	
2006–2015	+22	+1065	+835

Source: TNS Kantar

interval, nine years, the table shows large and significantly growing age inequalities in net wealth. The inflation in this period was approximately 18%. The increase of 22 000 NOK in the youngest age group corresponds to 15%, a bit less than the drop in the value of NOK. However, in the oldest age group, the increase was about 53%, which was far more than the value inflation. In other words, the economic impact of increasing house prices has been substantial and favourable for middle-aged homeowners, while the situation for young adults has remained stable or has worsened. Parallel to rising house prices, the youth has also accumulated corresponding debts.

Although entering the housing market seems to have become more difficult and risky for young first-time buyers, the proportion of young Norwegian adults entering the housing market has not changed. Table 6.2 shows that the proportion of youth living with their parents has not increased in a period with a steep increase in house prices and more restricted housing finance access. On the contrary, the share of young adults living with their parents has been relatively stable. Furthermore, the table shows that the homeowner rate among young people has remained at the same level in this period. In this respect, Norway differs from many other European countries (Revold 2019), where the ownership rate among young people dropped considerably after the financial crisis in 2014.

A significant proportion of young Norwegians receive parental support when entering the housing market. In 2015, about 50% of the homeowners in the age group of 20–34 years had received some kind of financial support from their parents (Revold 2019). It may be more surprising that the proportion of young homeowners receiving parental support has remained remarkably stable during the period after 2001. Table 6.3 shows the percentage of young homeowners who received different types of parental housing support in 2001, 2015, and 2018. Regarding the recent years' changes in the housing sector and the stable homeownership rate among young adults, we expected increasing shares of young first-time buyers receiving parental support. However, the incidences of transfers are stable. The first indicator, using parents or parents-in-law as a guarantor for the loan to buy a home, has been stable between 2001 and 2018. In 2018, 29% of the homeowners in the age group of 20–34 years received this kind of support, compared to 27% in 2001. This is also the most common form of parental support. Although stable, it is worth underscoring that more than one-fourth of the young homeowners in this age group use parents as a guarantor for their loans.

Table 6.2 Housing tenure among Norwegian youth by age: 2001–2018 (%)

	20–24 years			*25–29 years*			*30–34 years*		
	2001	*2015*	*2018*	*2001*	*2015*	*2018*	*2001*	*2015*	*2018*
Living with parents	31	33	27	6	9	9	3	1	2
Renting	51	52	59	36	37	41	20	24	23
Homeowners	17	16	14	57	55	51	77	74	75
N =	334	451	398	415	463	409	494	411	458

Source: Level of living surveys

Table 6.3 Proportion received different family transfers among homeowners in the age group of 20–34 years (%)

	2001	*2015*	*2018*
Used parents/parents-in-law as guarantor for loan to buy a home	27	28	29
Received inheritance or advancement of inheritance to buy a home		16	13
Received loan from parents/parents-in-law to buy a home		11	8
Repossessed the dwelling as inheritance, gift or by exchange	-	5*	5*
Number asked	(673)	(503)	(447)

Source: Living conditions survey/EU_SILC 2001–2018.
* For this category, N = 523 in 2015 and N = 320 in 2018.

In 2015 and 2018, respectively, 16% and 13% of young homeowners in the age group of 20–34 years received inheritance or advancement of inheritance to buy a home. This is slightly higher than the proportion of first-time buyers who received a loan from their parents (11% and 8%). The less common form of family transfers among young homeowners is repossessing the dwelling as inheritance, gift, or exchange. Only 5% of the homeowners in the age of 20–34 years live in a dwelling they inherited or received as a gift from or exchanged with other family members. Unfortunately, the last three indicators of parental support were not included in the survey from 2001. Therefore, we do not know whether the scope of this support has changed since 2001. However, in another national survey from 2001, a question on receiving an interest-free or affordable loan, or another kind of financial support to housing, was included (Sandlie 2008). In the age group of 18–35 years, 15% confirmed they had received such support. Although not wholly comparable, this does not indicate a dramatic change in family transfers regarding housing in recent years. It would probably be more reasonable to argue that the share of young Norwegian adults receiving financial support for housing is significant. Still, this support's extent has not changed parallel to changes in framework conditions in the housing sector.

Youth who receive support receive a relatively modest sum of money compared to the average wealth in parents' and grandparents' generations. Table 6.4 shows the results of a national representative survey conducted by TNS Kantar in 2015. Youth still living in their parental homes are omitted in Table 6.4, and the percentage owners in Table 6.4 will, therefore, necessarily be higher than the same percentages in Table 6.2. In all age groups, a large majority had not received any help at all, and only a tiny minority had received help valued more than 500 000 NOK or €50 000. In 2015, the median value of support received in connection with house purchase was 200 000 NOK. The median value of support given by elderly parents was 250 000 NOK (Gulbrandsen 2016: 82). According to the same survey, the median value of net wealth in the age group of 63–68 was well over 3.5 million NOK, or more than 14 times as much the median value of the amount given. Parents will not fall into bankruptcy by supporting children or grandchildren. However,

Table 6.4 Percent of owners who have received help from family and percent owners who have received 500 000 NOK or more by age

	20–24 years	*25–29 years*	*30–34 years*
Percent owners	*33%*	*69%*	*82%*
Percent owners who have received economic support from the family when they bought the dwelling	14%	26%	25%
Percent who have received help at the value of one half million NOK or more	-	2%	6%
N =	(52)	(94)	(195)

Source: TNS Kantar 2015

a relatively modest amount of money may be significant for the offspring in meeting the equity required to obtain housing financing.

It seems that family transfers in housing often are marginal concerning both the parents' total wealth and concerning what the adult children must pay for their dwelling. However, being marginal is not the same as being insignificant. For intergenerational transfers in Norwegian housing, marginality and importance coexist.

Concluding remarks

The term "intergenerational dependencies" describes to what degree family members rely on each other. This reliance is affected by macro-level structures such as economic and policy conditions. This chapter aimed at unveiling the interplay between the welfare state and the family to understand the dynamics between generations. The underlying assumptions were that a public policy that increases economic inequality between the young and the old would increase private transfers between generations and increase the family's importance as an arena for redistribution. We have examined how intergenerational dependency in housing is affected by changes in national housing policies and housing markets. Despite recent housing policy reforms which restrict mortgage-lending practices and increase in house prices, we find no decline in the likelihood of entering homeownership among young adults. About 50% of the homeowners in the age group of 20-34 years receive some kind of financial support from their parents. The share of parental support has not changed in recent years.

An important goal of the Norwegian welfare state is to reduce economic inequality and the importance of family background on life chances. However, partly as a result of the broad and general welfare schemes in housing and partly due to the interaction between these schemes and the dynamics in the housing market, inequality seems to increase within the housing sector. The wealth gap between older and younger generations has increased in recent years. This is

largely related to changes in the housing policy and the housing market. Changed macro-level circumstances in the form of restructuring support schemes, more cautious mortgage-lending practices, and growing house prices has not caused a decline in the likelihood of entering homeownership among Norwegian young adults. Furthermore, the share of young adults receiving financial support from parents to their first-home purchase has remained stable. In other words, significant changes in the framework conditions for entering the housing market have not affected the family transfer patterns. Except for the loan guarantees that most likely reflect the house prices and corresponding higher debt, we do not know whether the amounts given as financial support have increased during this period. However, financial support to home purchases generally seems modest concerning the parents' wealth. Simultaneously, from the young adults' perspective, the amounts are significant enough in meeting the banks' requirements for collateral and equity when buying a home. Some of this help seems to acquire slightly higher mortgages than they would receive without this support. Thus, compared to young adults not receiving financial support, parental help gives them a head start on the housing ladder.

Due to well-functioning credit markets and high intergenerational mobility, homeownership is still achievable without parental help, even under unfavourable conditions (Halvorsen and Lindquist 2017). Despite this, a significant number of young homeowners receive parental support. Restructuring conditions in the housing sector have not changed family solidarity or intergenerational dependency within the family. In other words, family support is probably not a necessity but an opportunity to smoothen the housing pathway of young family members. The young adults receiving family support get an advantage with a less risky start and possibilities of hastening the housing career steps. A weakness in our data, however, is the lack of information on geographic variations. It seems reasonable to assume that both the need for family assistance and the opportunity to assist are more significant in the cities, with the most considerable pressure on the local housing market. This is in line with recent studies in both the United Kingdom (Bayrakdar and Coulter 2018) and Norway (Galster and Wessel 2019). Therefore, conditions in local housing markets may affect the intergenerational dependency in housing differently.

Although Norway makes a special case with high numbers of homeowners, good economic conditions, and the generous welfare state, the case gives important insights in the dynamics between the welfare state and generations and the theory of intergenerational dependencies. Our results show that the extent of family support in housing has remained stable in a period with important public housing policy changes and economic conditions in the housing market, though the content of this support or amounts transferred may have changed. Further, our results confirm the thesis of housing as the wobbly pillar under the welfare state. A welfare system based on supporting private property has a large potential of reproducing inequality. Regardless, there are no loud protests to the existing policy condition, and few politicians argue for a more progressive housing tax. The widespread homeownership, and the fact that a vast majority of households

still become homeowners during their life-course, is an essential explanation for accepting the reproduction of inequality within the housing system. Even though housing wealth is unequally distributed at the societal level, most people will benefit from the existing housing system. Most households will take advantage of both receiving and giving financial support at the family level.

Age differences in wealth at the societal level are not necessarily equivalent to intergenerational conflicts. Although generational inequality on the societal level may be described as theft from younger generations (cf. Willets 2010), the inequality may also be understood as the basis for support and gifts between generations at the family level. For young adults, investments in good intergenerational relations within the family will probably give better odds to financial profits than redistribution through public policy. This is most likely true in a homeowner nation like Norway, where almost 95% obtain homeownership during their life-course. Redistribution of wealth within the family is undoubtedly regarded as preferable to redistribution within the welfare state. Family transfers are more targeted and accurate, and indeed more predictable, than redistribution through public policies. In this way, differences in wealth within the family framework will typically produce more solidarity than tensions and conflicts.

Intergenerational inequality remains a significant issue from a justice perspective where not all generations have or will benefit to the same extent from political, economic, and institutional developments. However, intragenerational inequalities may be a more pressing issue where there are wider inequalities within generations than between them, particularly when inequalities are reinforced as wealth becomes concentrated through inheritance and inter vivos gifts. Gains in homeownership and family transfers of wealth seem to be a major contributor to the production and reproduction of social inequality in years to come, despite not contributing to increased tension between generations.

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7 Will more education work?

Economic marginalization and educational inequalities across birth cohorts 1955–1980

Jon Ivar Elstad

Introduction

As societies change, each new generation faces altered social conditions. The new social environment will set the stage differently for the new birth cohorts than for the preceding ones. The educational expansion, with its proliferation of educational institutions and widening of educational opportunities, is one of the most prominent social transformations in the 20th century. It is a worldwide phenomenon, affecting practically all countries. Steadily rising educational levels are a conspicuous feature of modern welfare states, alongside other striking developments such as economic growth, the establishment of a range of social safety nets, and the advancement of women. Together, these institutional developments structure life-courses for those born towards the end of the 20th century in quite different ways than for those born in the mid-20th century.

The expansion of educational opportunities, and a markedly longer – on average – stay in educational institutions for each successive birth cohort, is rightly considered both a cause of and a sign of social progress. It is deeply implicated in the ongoing restructuration of the economy, as well as in improved material standards and better public health (World Bank, 2020). It has also been praised as a vehicle for social equality. Access to knowledge has been broadened in underprivileged social strata; education has become an important channel for upward social mobility (Breen, Luijkx, Muller, & Pollak, 2009); and gender equality is promoted by women's increased entrance into higher education.

Nonetheless, the association between rising educational levels and social equality is ambiguous. Scholars have pointed out that education is also a source of and creator of social stratification and inequality structures (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Collins, 1979). Educational institutions are "sorting machines" (Domina, Penner, & Penner, 2017) which rank people in a hierarchy of educational categories. This has a profound impact on life chances, which vary markedly with educational attainment. Research has demonstrated that credentials from higher education enhance work careers (Breen, 2004), better earnings (Hansen, 2001), and social prestige (Klein, 2016). For those placed in the bottom layers of the educational hierarchy, life careers are typically very different – low education is commonly associated with social disadvantages such as low income (Eurostat,

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2020), unemployment (Lahtinen, Sirnio, & Martikainen, 2020), and higher mortality (Mackenbach et al., 2003).

The relatively poor life chances of the low educated are a concern in all welfare states, not only because they threaten egalitarian ideals but also because worrying social issues, such as lack of employment, reliance on social benefits, and ill health, are associated with low education. Decades with educational expansion have brought forward an additional concern: Are educational inequalities not only persisting over time, but also even becoming *larger*? Rising educational levels mean that for each new birth cohort, a larger percentage will proceed to higher levels in the educational hierarchy, while those who attend little more than compulsory school will be fewer and fewer. Will this affect the *size* of the educational differences so that the disadvantages experienced by the shrinking category of low educated, relative to other educational levels, are becoming more and more severe?

This chapter addresses these issues. The focus is on *economic marginalization*, indicated by lack of paid work, reliance on social benefits, and weak labour market attachment.[3] We ask whether such misfortunes have become scarcer as the educational levels in the younger generations have increased, and we assess whether economic marginalization has become more and more concentrated in the low-educated category.

Below, we first overview previous research about these topics, and we present four main approaches to explain the observed patterns. Thereafter follows our empirical contribution to this research field. We use Norwegian public register data, which provide us a more long-term view than commonly found in previous research. After an overview of the educational expansion in Norway since the Second World War, the prevalence of economic marginalization, when aged 35, is examined. Six successive birth cohorts born from the mid-1950s to around 1980 are analyzed, i.e., a period spanning from the early to a recent phase of the educational expansion. We comment on the relevance of the different explanations, before the chapter ends with a critical discussion on the typical welfare state response to economic marginalization: further educational expansion. We argue that this is, in itself, hardly an efficient tool for eradicating economic marginalization – rather, it may contribute to a worsened labour market attachment for the low educated.

Previous research

Background

For several decades, researchers have discussed the relationships between educational expansion and educational inequalities. Since all welfare states adhere, more or less, to the ideals of equality, signs of aggravated life situations for the low educated are a policy concern. One worry is that social safety nets, unemployment benefits, and other income protection types, such as disability pension and social assistance, may drain public budgets if the low educated are frequently in need of such support.

A basic empirical question is whether educational expansion *actually* coincides with a tendency that the low educated in recent birth cohorts face more difficulties in the labour market than the preceding cohorts. In order to answer this question, longitudinal data for several decades are required, since the educational expansion has been a protracted, nearly century-long, process. Such data are not abundant. Variable comparability is also an issue, since educational categories, for instance, change content over time. In addition, measuring differences has conceptual and technical challenges (Mackenbach & Kunst, 1997).

Nonetheless: Findings from economically advanced countries indicate, by and large, that the era of educational expansion has been accompanied by growing educational inequalities on several life arenas, not the least in work life. Thus, "Research indicates that the decreasing number of low-educated has been accompanied by a deterioration of their socio-economic position and a worsening of their life chances" (Gesthuizen, de Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2005, p. 441). Other researchers have similar assessments: "It is now a widely acknowledged fact that the low-educated workers are facing important risks of labour market exclusion in modern economies" (Abrassart, 2013, p. 707), and it is "practically a universal feature … that labor market outcomes of low-skilled people have deteriorated compared to those of high-skilled people" (Giesecke, Heisig, & Solga, 2015, p. 1).

The picture is not entirely uniform, however, as both stable educational differences across several decades and considerable between-country differences have been found. A Finnish study with 1988–2015 data did not find that unemployment risk had developed more negatively for low educated than for high educated (Lahtinen et al., 2020). The earning difference between those with and those without college education – the so-called college premium – was *reduced* in both Norway and United States during the 1970s. Later on, it increased in United States, but remained stable in Norway (Eika, 2010, pp. 21, 44). A study of 17 OECD countries found more economic marginalization among the low educated if they were a small percentage of the population, but also considerable between-country differences in occupational attainment among the low educated (Gesthuizen, Solga, & Kunster, 2011).

Explanatory approaches

Deteriorated labour market attachment over time among the low educated, relative to other educational levels, seems nevertheless the dominant tendency. But *why*? Four explanations have been highlighted: *displacement*, *family origin, negative selection*, and *discredit*.

An often-used argument is that the technologically advanced economies confronting recent birth cohorts will primarily need highly skilled, and therefore highly educated, workers. A direct implication may be that employment opportunities for today's low educated will decrease. A counterargument is, however, that the number of low-educated workers seems to decrease *more* over time than the decrease in the number of low-skilled jobs (Åberg, 2003, p. 204). Therefore,

displacement has been suggested as a more appropriate explanation (Blackburn, Bloom, & Freeman, 1989; Solga, 2002; Åberg, 2003). This interpretation argues that educational expansion has resulted in an oversupply of well-educated individuals, relative to the number of jobs that require high education. In order to find work, the higher educated are therefore pushed towards the lower parts of the job hierarchy. When competing with low-educated applicants, the higher educated will often be preferred, and this may aggravate the labour market difficulties for the low educated.

Taking a different angle, the family origin and the negative selection explanations propose that wider educational inequalities are due to *compositional* changes in the category of low educated. The *family origin* interpretation contends that as an increasing proportion of each new birth cohort attains higher education, the shrinking minority that remains low educated will typically be recruited from socio-economically disadvantaged families: "Those who leave school without diplomas [will] increasingly originate from families with low levels of family resources"(Gesthuizen et al., 2005). Thus, the low educated of today, compared to previous birth cohorts, are more characterized by relatively unprivileged childhoods. This will obstruct school performance and hinder the acquirement of the social skills, sense of worth, and social networks, which help careers. Growing labour market difficulties for the low educated will be the result.

The *negative selection* hypothesis is related to the former explanation, but its primary focus is *personal traits* (Gesthuizen et al., 2011; Mackenbach, 2012; Solga, 2002). It assumes that in current welfare states, economic and social barriers against educational attainment are practically eliminated. Therefore, personal shortcomings become a main reason for ending up with low education. Those in recent birth cohorts who do not acquire better education will typically lack the required intelligence, motivation, energy, or mental health. The ample opportunities for education mean that those with favourable personal traits will almost without exceptions advance in the educational hierarchy, while the low educated will be "negatively selected" because of their unfavourable personal qualities. A premise for this explanation is that in earlier cohorts, when educational careers were scarce, both the low educated and other educational levels had a wide diversity in personal traits. As educational expansion proceeds, the educational hierarchy in more recent cohorts will mirror personal qualities, and educational inequalities in such traits will become more marked, thereby causing worse labour market opportunities for the low educated.

The *discredit* interpretation (Gesthuizen & Solga, 2014; Gesthuizen et al., 2011) has also links to the compositional change explanation, but it refers primarily to *stereotypes* that low education signifies a lack of abilities, skills, and trainability. Such stereotypes can develop and spread *irrespective* of verification by empirical evidence. If employers assume that such stereotypes apply to most low educated, employment difficulties will occur for all low educated – so-called statistical discrimination (Solga, 2002). The discredit explanation emphasizes in particular the *relative size* of the low-educated part of the

population. The fewer the low educated, the more will they appear in the public mind as a deviating minority, and this cultural labelling will impact negatively on their life chances.

Empirical analysis

Data and design

The following empirical study addresses these issues in Norway, a sparsely populated (about 5.3 million in 2015) but comparatively affluent country which exemplifies the Nordic (also known as social democratic) welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Public register data obtained from the data portal *https://microdata.no/en/* are used. This portal provides access for authorized researchers to linked individual-level data for all registered residents, with information from a large number of public registers administered by Statistics Norway.

The data source has a number of advantages. The entire population can be analyzed, individuals' life-courses can be followed for years, and variables have high validity. Of particular importance for the present chapter is that life-courses for different generations, born in different epochs and confronted with different social conditions during their formative years, can be compared. However, data are restricted to information that public authorities have chosen to collect. Besides, analyses have to rely on the restricted assortment of statistical techniques *inside* the data portal, since raw data files cannot be transported out of the portal because of security reasons (NSD/SSB, 2020, pp. 106–113).

For the following analyses, *six cohorts*, termed the 1955 cohort, the 1960 cohort, and so on up to the 1980 cohort, were selected. Note that three birth years were pooled into each cohort in order to increase sample size: those born between 1954 and 1956 represent the 1955 cohort, those born between 1959 and 1961 are the 1960 cohort, etc. Data availability was the prime reason for the choice of birth cohorts. Demographic information stretches back for many decades, but information on economic marginalization was barely available before 1990 and – at the time of writing – was available only until 2015.

The main variables used in this study, i.e., educational level and indicators of economic marginalization, refer to age 35 for the 6 cohorts. Comparing the situation in the samples at exactly the same age facilitates the study of how different cohorts have experienced different (or similar) life-courses during young adulthood (note that since three birth years are included in each cohort, measurements are actually made at age 34, 35, or 36, which we term "age 35" for simplicity). At age 35, the life careers for the majority would commonly be more settled than the instability in employment and social relations more typical for those in their 20s (Vogt, Lorentzen, & Hansen, 2020). Cross-tabulations are used in the analyses. Since they include the entire population in the selected birth cohorts, we do not burden the tables with formal statistical testing of differences.

Educational expansion in Norway

At the end of the Second World War, less than one in six of the adult population in Norway had more than compulsory education. As low education appeared as a serious obstacle to economic growth and welfare progress, a series of educational reforms followed (Lindbekk, 2015). Examples are state grants and loans to students for higher education (since 1947); compulsory school extended from seven (five in some rural districts) to nine (1960s), and then to ten years (1990s); everyone entitled to attend upper secondary school (1994); and a large growth in institutions for higher education (e.g., three universities in 1950, ten in 2018).

As a consequence, average education levels rose. The six analyzed cohorts include those born in Norway, registered as residents, and alive at the end of 1990 for the 1955 cohort, end of 1995 for the 1960 cohort, and so on. Foreign-born individuals are excluded since their education would often be attained in countries with different educational systems. Norwegian-born descendants of immigrants are, however, included. They were just a tiny fraction in the earlier cohorts, increasing slightly to 1.4% in the 1980 cohort.[1]

Practically every school and educational institution in Norway is obliged to submit person-identifiable information about pupils and students to the educational register administered by Statistics Norway. Thus, with few exceptions, high-quality educational information for every individual in the six cohorts was available. Many will have reached their final educational level already in their mid-20s or before that, but interrupted educational careers which are later continued occur frequently – not a few "early school leavers are in fact late finishers" (Vogt et al., 2020, p. 2). By measuring educational level at age 35, also education obtained unusually late is taken into account in this measurement.

For classifying the educational information, the Norwegian version of ISCED, i.e., the International Standard Classification of Education, was used (Barrabés & Løstli, 2015). Three educational levels were defined: *Low* (ISCED levels 0, 1, 2, and 3), *intermediate* (ISCED 4 and 5), and *higher* (ISCED 6, 7, and 8). *Low* education covers primary schools and compulsory schooling up to ten years for the youngest cohorts, and some will also have continued in upper secondary education for some time without completing it. *Intermediate* education will imply completed upper secondary school, in either academic or vocational tracks, but little formal education above that level. *Higher* education includes all completed education at colleges or universities. The many distinctions within the *higher* category (for instance two years in college versus a PhD degree) are not highlighted in this chapter, since our main concern is differences between the low educated and other educational levels.

Table 7.1 shows that the *size* of the cohorts varied considerably, from nearly 190 000 in the 1970 cohort (born in Norway, alive and residing in Norway at age 35, i.e., in 2005) to less than 150 000 in the latest, 1980 cohort (note that each birth cohort, as stated above, includes three birth years in order to increase sample size).[2]

In Table 7.1, the educational expansion is evident for both genders, but in particular for women. The proportion of low-educated men fell from 51% in the 1955

Table 7.1 Number and educational distributions (%) at age 35 in six cohorts

Cohort	*1955*	*1960*	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*
Men						
Low educated	51.1	41.1	31.9	25.5	20.2	19.4
Intermediate	24.1	34.6	41.0	41.7	42.4	42.9
Higher	24.8	24.3	27.1	32.8	37.4	37.8
N = 100.0%	90 143	89 453	95 670	96 243	82 689	75 317
Women						
Low educated	63.1	51.1	35.1	25.1	16.4	12.9
Intermediate	12.7	21.4	31.9	31.5	30.2	28.5
Higher	24.3	27.5	33.0	43.3	53.4	58.5
N = 100.0%	87 213	86 002	91 331	92 893	80 366	72 418

cohort to 19% in the 1980 cohort; corresponding figures for women were 63% and 13%. In the 1955 cohort, the proportion with higher education was similar for men and women. Among those born a quarter of a century later, the 1980 cohort, 59% of the women as against 38% of the men had some kind of higher education. Over time, women came to be more and more dominating in shorter higher education, i.e., ISCED level 6. In the latest 1980 cohort, the proportion that had attained university master level was also higher among women (15.3%) than among men (12.9%), but there was still a slight male advantage at the PhD level.

Economic marginalization at age 35

Four indicators are used to examine economic marginalization. *Marginal work income* was defined as having less than two Basic Amounts in work income during one's 35th year. This indicates that the individual either had no employment, or, if having paid work at all, had a very weak labour market attachment.[3] The other three indicators are *disability pension* at the end of one's 35th year; receipt of at least some *social assistance* during the last two years; and finally receipt of *unemployment benefits* during the last two years.

Among men, Table 7.2 indicates relatively modest variations across the six cohorts as to the *average* prevalence of marginal work income (around 7%), having disability pension (around 3%), and being recipient of social assistance (also around 3%, perhaps slightly decreasing). Thus, in spite of the large changes in the educational composition, 35 years old men's *average* exposure to economic marginalization was, by and large, quite stable. Also, for women, the average percentage with disability pension and social assistance did not vary much, although a slight declining tendency can be spotted. As to marginal work income among women, however, the prevalence dropped – doubtlessly because the later cohorts had entered paid work to a higher degree than the earlier cohorts.

Receiving unemployment benefits fluctuated much more, with a peak for both gender in the 1960 cohort, followed by declining rates in the succeeding cohorts.

Table 7.2 Economic marginalization at age 35 in six cohorts; overall prevalence and educational differences (%)

Cohort	*1955*	*1960*	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*
Men						
Marginal work income						
Average % – entire cohort	7.2	6.8	6.2	7.2	6.8	6.8
Low educated	10.3	10.2	10.5	13.2	15.4	15.2
Intermediate education	5.1	5.0	4.6	5.7	5.5	5.4
Higher education	2.9	3.8	3.5	4.4	3.6	4.0
Disability pension						
Average % – entire cohort	2.8	2.5	3.0	2.8	2.8	4.0
Low educated	4.8	4.9	7.2	8.2	10.4	14.9
Intermediate education	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.3	2.2
Higher education	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.4
Social assistance						
Average – entire cohort	3.3	3.5	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.5
Low educated	5.4	6.7	6.6	7.8	7.8	9.0
Intermediate education	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.4
Higher education	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3
Unemployment						
Average % – entire cohort	15.5	17.8	10.5	10.5	9.5	8.1
Low educated	20.7	23.9	15.5	15.0	15.6	13.4
Intermediate education	14.3	17.0	9.8	10.0	10.1	8.2
Higher education	5.9	8.4	5.9	7.5	5.5	5.2
Women						
Marginal work income						
Average % – entire cohort	16.8	18.3	15.7	14.8	11.5	10.5
Low educated	20.4	23.1	22.2	23.0	24.3	23.0
Intermediate education	16.0	18.3	15.6	16.3	13.3	13.3
Higher education	8.0	9.5	8.9	8.9	6.6	6.4
Disability pension						
Average % – entire cohort	4.0	3.2	4.0	3.3	2.7	4.5
Low educated	5.6	5.0	8.0	9.3	11.1	19.9
Intermediate education	1.7	1.8	2.4	2.0	2.0	5.1
Higher education	1.0	0.7	1.2	0.8	0.5	0.9
Social assistance						
Average % – entire cohort	2.7	2.9	2.1	2.2	1.7	1.7
Low educated	3.9	4.6	4.5	5.9	6.3	8.3
Intermediate education	1.0	1.7	1.2	1.8	1.8	1.8
Higher education	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.3
Unemployment						
Average % – entire cohort	13.6	16.0	10.2	11.0	7.6	7.7
Low educated	17.5	20.0	13.3	13.4	10.5	11.8
Intermediate education	12.5	17.1	11.1	12.6	9.6	9.9
Higher education	4.1	7.5	6.1	8.5	5.6	5.8

Macro-economic trends are clearly the underlying reason. In the early 1990s, an international economic downturn occurred, leading to increased unemployment, especially for the younger age categories. The 1960 cohort was aged 35 in the mid-1990s and therefore particularly susceptible to the relatively poor employment situation at that time.

Thus, although some interesting between-cohort differences in economic marginalization occurred, there was also much stability, in particular as regard disability pension and social assistance for both genders, and as to marginal work income for men.

But within these overall tendencies, Table 7.2 leaves no doubt that educational inequalities *widened*. Both for men and women, marginal work income, disability pension, and social assistance among the *low educated* increased across the six cohorts. For the other educational levels, fluctuations were much smaller. As a consequence, the contrast in economic marginalization between the low educated and the other educational levels had become much more marked in the later, more recent, cohorts, than in the earlier cohorts.

Figure 7.1 summarizes this widening of inequalities in economic marginalization by displaying the percentage in each educational category experiencing *at least one* of the four types of economic marginalization. Overall, the proportion among low-educated men who experienced any type of these forms of economic marginalization rose from 32% in the 1955 cohort to 40% in the 1980 cohort. For women, the corresponding percentages rose from 38% to 48%. The figure shows how the 1960 cohort, which was 35 years old in the mid-1990s, was hit by the economic downturn. Economic marginalization was relatively high for all educational levels at that time, due to the contribution from unemployment. From the 1965 cohort and onwards, economic marginalization increased for the low educated, but decreased somewhat among those with intermediate or higher education. In consequence, educational inequalities widened and the situation for the low educated, relative to other educational levels, deteriorated.

Comments on explanations

Accordingly, the Norwegian example displays developments spanning a quarter of a century which resemble tendencies in other economically advanced countries such as the Netherlands (Gesthuizen & Wolbers, 2010), Germany (Giesecke et al., 2015), and the United States (Blackburn et al., 1989). The low educated – a category which had declined in relative size in successive birth cohorts – were increasingly faced with economic marginalization. Their disadvantageous situation in work life, compared to other educational levels, has become more marked.

How did this happen? Certainly, by a complex of causes, linked to their placement in the changing economic structure, but also due to the circumstances provided by welfare state arrangements which also influence their situation, for instance, in terms of labour market policies and access to various types of income protection.

Above, four explanations were outlined. To assess these explanations in a satisfactory way is beyond the possibilities provided by available data. Some comments can nevertheless be offered, partly by exploiting the Norwegian data material used in this chapter and partly by referring to other research contributions.

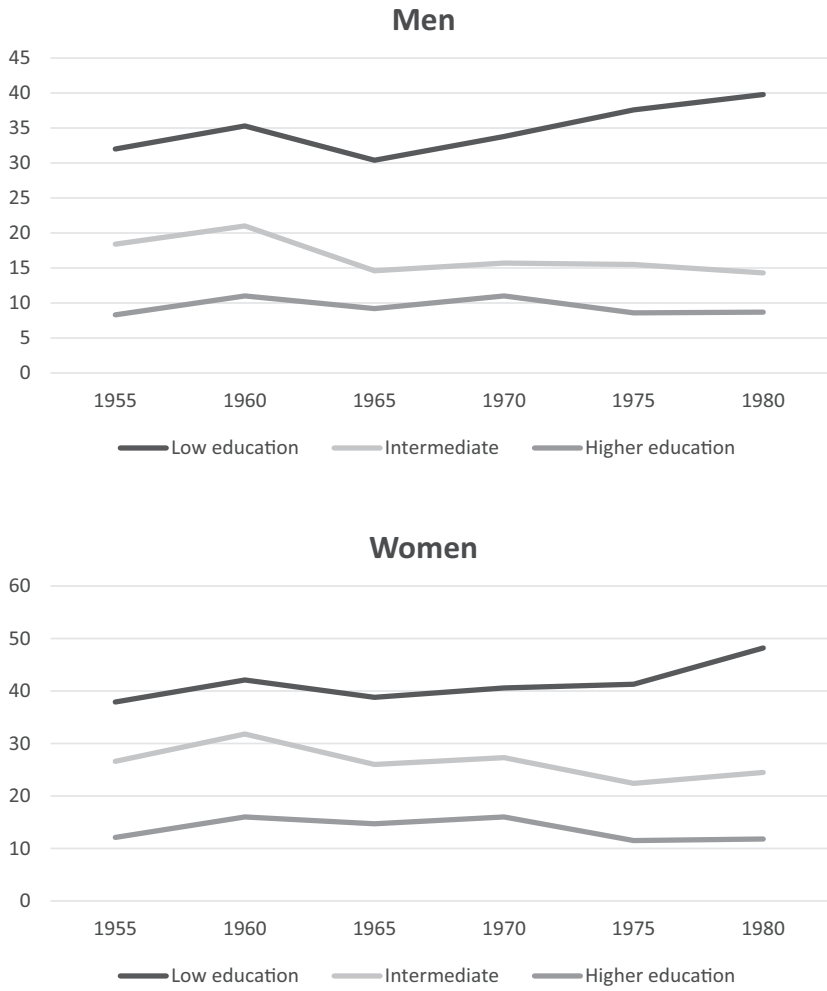

Figure 7.1 Any type of economic marginalization (%) in three educational levels, men (upper panel) and women (lower panel), measured at age 35 for six cohorts.

Displacement

First, the *displacement* explanation assumes that educational expansion has led to a mismatch between the number higher educated and the number of jobs which require higher education. A surplus of better educated will push some of them downwards in the occupational hierarchy, and job competition will aggravate labour market difficulties for the low educated. Several analyses support this explanation (Abrassart, 2015; Blackburn et al., 1989; Gesthuizen & Solga, 2014;

Gesthuizen & Wolbers, 2010; Åberg, 2003). Also, since educational credentials may lose some of their distinction when higher education has become more widespread (Araki, 2020), it could be more common among high educated to seek work in low status occupations.

Our data do not allow for a direct testing, but an indirect test is to examine whether it has become more common, across the six cohorts, for better educated to have *work incomes* that are typical of low-educated workers. Such a development could signify that the better educated, to an increasing degree, enter the parts of the labour market which used to be more or less reserved for the low educated.

Among those who were active in the workforce (defined as earning at least two Basic Amounts in their 35th year), we focus on those who were in the *lowest quartile* of the work income distribution (estimated separately for each gender and each cohort). In these employed, but low paid, strata, we expect that the low educated will predominate. The question is, however: Has their predominance dwindled as educational expansion has proceeded and the better educated have become more numerous?

Table 7.3 confirms this expectation. Across the six cohorts, the better educated constituted a growing proportion in the poorly paid parts of the employed. Among men, for instance, intermediate or higher education constituted 34% among these relatively low-paid parts of the workforce in the 1955 cohort, increasing steeply to 75% in the 1980 cohort. A similar, but even more marked, change occurred for women.[4]

Family origin

Next, the *family origin* explanation, which argues that widening educational inequalities are due to a tendency over time to deteriorated social, economic, and cultural resources among the parents of the low educated, relative to the parents

Table 7.3 Educational distributions (%) among employed with low work income*

Cohort	*1955*	*1960*	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*
Men						
Low educated	66.0	51.8	42.8	34.4	26.0	25.0
Intermediate education	23.9	35.6	43.1	47.0	49.2	50.4
Higher education	10.2	12.6	14.1	18.6	24.9	24.6
N = 100.0%	16 777	16 613	19 244	18 982	16 508	15 073
Women						
Low educated	69.9	57.6	42.7	31.9	20.9	15.1
Intermediate education	12.7	22.2	34.5	40.2	42.9	44.3
Higher education	17.5	20.1	22.8	28.0	36.2	40.7
N = 100.0%	13 402	12 910	15 506	15 975	15 239	13 755

* Low work income among the employed = lowest quartile of work income among those earning at least 2 BA; income quartiles are estimated separately for each gender and each cohort.

Table 7.4 Distributions of parents' educational levels (%) among low-educated men and women

Cohort	*1955*	*1960*	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*
Men in the six cohorts						
*Parental educational level**						
University level	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.5	2.4	3.0
College level	3.7	4.6	5.9	7.6	10.6	14.2
Upper secondary level	43.1	48.3	53.3	57.8	60.3	57.4
Compulsory level	52.4	46.2	39.5	33.1	26.5	25.3
N = 100%	45 873	36 703	30 485	24 557	16 686	14 615
Women in the six cohorts						
Parental educational level						
University level	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.7
College level	3.5	4.2	5.1	6.7	8.5	11.4
Upper secondary level	43.9	49.0	53.1	57.9	60.2	57.6
Compulsory level	51.8	45.9	40.7	34.0	29.3	28.3
N = 100%	54 733	43 870	32 045	23 327	13 195	9371

* University level = ISCED level 7 or 8 for either mother or father, or both. College level = ISCED level 6 for either mother or father, or both. Upper secondary level = ISCED 3, 4, or 5 for either mother or father, or both. Compulsory level = neither father nor mother had more than compulsory education (the tiny number with no information on parents' education included here).

of the better educated. Thus, one study, based on survey data on birth cohorts from the 1920s to the 1970s, suggests that the low educated "increasingly originate from families with unfavourable socio-economic, cultural and demographic resources" (Gesthuizen et al., 2005, p. 441).

Information on parental education, combined for both parents, when the samples of men and women in the six cohorts were aged 16, is available in our data. Table 7.4 shows the distribution of parental education for the low educated. The proportion of parents with only compulsory education among the low-educated offspring was strongly *reduced* across the six cohorts – down from 52% to 25% for men and from 52% to 28% for women. The proportion of parents with higher education (i.e., either college or university level) *increased* from a very low level in the 1955 cohort to around one in six in the 1980 cohort (17% among the low-educated men, 14% among the low-educated women).

In other words, the family origin explanation is hardly supported in these Norwegian data. The family background for the low educated, measured as the composition of parental education, has become *more diverse* over time. The proportion having low-educated parents declined markedly, while the proportion of

well-educated parents rose from trivial in the 1955 cohort to substantial in the 1980 cohort.

Negative selection

The *negative selection* explanation proposes that educational expansion results in a clustering of unfavourable *personal traits* in the shrinking strata of low educated. Increasing educational inequalities in such personal traits would in turn generate increasing educational inequalities in the labour market. Our data have no information about personal traits. Other information suggests, however, that this explanation has debateable value. Certainly, there exist educational differences in personal traits relevant for labour market success (e.g. Abrassart, 2015; Roth et al., 2015). However, the negative selection explanation requires not only that such inequalities exist, but in addition that they have *increased* during the educational expansion. As to this issue, those very few studies with relevant data we have located do *not* support the negative selection hypothesis. A Dutch study of birth cohorts from 1925 to 1970 did not find clear evidence that educational differences in "verbal ability" had increased from the earlier cohorts (when most of the cohorts attained only low education) to the later cohorts when higher educational attainment was more common (Gesthuizen & Kraaykamp, 2002, p. 202). Similarly, in the United States, educational differences in "verbal skills" *decreased* from the 1960s to the 1990s (Gesthuizen & Solga, 2014, p. 215). Studies on associations between parents' education and offspring's personal traits may also be relevant for assessing the negative selection explanation. A Finnish study (Jokela, Pekkarinen, Sarvimaki, Tervio, & Uusitalo, 2017) has showed that "economically valuable personality traits" among army conscripts varied with mothers' education in an expected way. However, differences in personal traits between conscripts with mothers having low versus higher education did not increase but *declined* across the 1962–1976 birth cohorts, alongside a marked decline in the percentage of low-educated mothers.

Discredit

Finally, the *discredit* explanation (Gesthuizen & Solga, 2014; Gesthuizen et al., 2011; Solga, 2002) suggests that educational expansion nurtures the *stereotype* that low education signifies less skills, less trainability, and other unfavourable traits. The discredit explanation does not require that the stereotypes are valid. If widespread, they attach a negative label to the low educated, which will stigmatize and hamper life chances, regardless of the truthfulness of the stereotypes. Our data do not enable enquiry into this explanation. Its relevance may be considerable, however, as there are indications that many, especially in privileged social strata, assign little esteem to, but rather look down upon, the low educated (see, for example, Abrassart & Wolter, 2020; Sandel, 2020; Skarpenes & Sakslind, 2020).

Final remarks: Will rising educational levels work?

In sum, the transformation of the educational structure since the mid-20th century seems to have had relatively little impact on the overall prevalence of economic marginalization.[5] Fluctuations in unemployment rates seem primarily connected to macro-economic trends, irrespective of how educational expansion has developed. In addition, a disturbing tendency is evident in a number of countries. Educational inequalities in economic marginalization have increased across succeeding birth cohorts since the Second World War, and the gap between the shrinking category of low educated and other educational levels has widened. How these developments can be explained is a complex issue. However, as argued above, displacement and discredit seem to be quite relevant mechanisms, while background family resources and the negative selection explanation are probably more doubtful.

For welfare states that pursue social equality, the developments described here are worrying. What policies could counter such developments? A dominant response is to strengthen educational institutions and raise educational levels. Policies enhancing education have of course a long tradition in welfare states; the educational expansion represents, in many ways, the welfare vision of a good society. Accordingly, adolescents are strongly encouraged (or pressurized) to seek more formal education. OECD, for instance, recommends that countries should be concerned about the proportion of late teenagers who are out of school instead of completing secondary education (OECD, 2017, p. 29).

Certainly, knowledge and skills are positive attributes, and there are good reasons for raising educational levels in the population. Whether policies aiming at increasing educational length for each new birth cohort will by themselves lead to reduced economic marginalization and less educational inequalities is highly dubious, however.

Such policies may embrace an illusory and exaggerated belief that more education will protect against economic marginalization. A simple illustration of this misunderstanding is seen in Table 7.2. This table covers a quarter of a century. The typical educational level for a 35-year-old individual was markedly higher if born in 1980 compared to those born in the 1950s. Nonetheless, the overall prevalence of economic marginalization has at most dropped slightly, although overall educational levels were significantly higher in the later cohorts. The total occurrence of marginal work income, disability pension, and social assistance shows few tendencies to decline – except for the prevalence of marginal work income among women, which dropped due to transitions from part-time to full-time work.

A related development is that over time, recruitment into economic marginalization has changed. When most people were low educated, the majority of the economically marginalized were low educated. When the educational distribution changes, also the educational *composition* of the economically marginalized changes. Table 7.5 shows distributions of educational levels among the recipients of disability pension, social assistance, and unemployment benefits, across the six

Table 7.5 Educational composition (%) of 35 years old recipients of disability pension, social assistance, and unemployment benefits, men and women pooled, six cohorts

Cohort	*1955*	*1960*	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*
Disability pension						
Low educated	88.1	81.4	72.9	72.5	72.2	64.0
Intermediate	6.5	12.9	18.7	19.5	21.3	28.0
Higher education	5.4	5.6	8.3	8.2	6.9	7.9
N = 100.0%	5993	4920	6549	5744	4481	6300
Social assistance						
Low educated	88.0	80.4	77.1	69.7	65.2	66.9
Intermediate	7.7	14.4	17.9	23.8	28.3	26.1
Higher education	4.5	5.4	4.8	6.2	6.4	7.0
N = 100.0%	5280	5574	4488	4736	3290	3110
Unemployed						
Low educated	74.2	59.4	46.5	33.5	28.6	26.2
Intermediate	17.4	28.4	36.3	38.0	42.1	40.1
Higher education	8.4	12.2	17.2	28.5	29.4	33.6
N = 100.0%	25 804	29 606	19 396	20 333	13 959	11 708

cohorts (for simplicity, men and women are pooled, since gender-specific trends correspond fairly well with the overall trend). Table 7.5 demonstrates that over time, the low educated are a declining proportion of those affected by these types of economic marginalization, while those with more education constitute a growing proportion. In the 1955 cohort, 88% of those who had disability pension were low educated, falling to 64% in the 1980 cohort. In the 1955 cohort, those with *more* than low education constituted 12% of the social assistance recipients, rising to 33% in the 1980 cohort. Even clearer is this tendency for unemployment benefits. In the 1955 cohort, the low educated constituted 74% of those who received unemployment benefits; 25 years later, in the 1980 cohort, it was the intermediate and higher educated who constituted 74% of the recipients of unemployment benefits.

Thus, the idea that educational expansion in itself will eradicate, or at least reduce, economic marginalization, as well as closing the gap in economic marginalization between the lower educated and other educational levels, is difficult to substantiate.

In addition, other circumstances should be taken into account. One should not overlook that the majority of the low educated, even in recent birth cohorts when they were relatively few, attain, if not a brilliant, at least a fair position in work life (cf., Vogt et al., 2020). Figure 7.1 shows that in the 1980 Norwegian cohort, more than half of the low educated (about 60% of the men, 52% of the women) were *not*, at age 35, affected by any of the four types of economic marginalization. Although disadvantaged in many ways in comparison with those with more education, the greater part of these low-educated men and women were actually employed and

had work incomes above two Basic Amounts. The median work income among the employed, but low educated, men was about five Basic Amounts (not shown in table), which can be regarded as a decent work income. Thus, the majority of the low educated coped fairly satisfactorily with the labour market.

Besides, policies that do not consider this factual labour market participation may not only misrepresent the situation. It may also strengthen the *discredit* mechanism that is one source of economic marginalization among the low educated. Policies that stress that more formal education is the key to employment individualize the problem. Their claim is, implicitly, that the reason for labour market difficulties is the individuals' own shortcomings, his or her lack of higher education, and not the functioning of the labour market and employers' failure to provide jobs that fit the less educated. A one-sided focus on education may contribute to more stigmatization of the low educated and thereby aggravate their job opportunities.

The conclusion is not, of course, that a continuing educational expansion should be hindered. However, the hope that a further rise in educational levels, for each successive birth cohort, will, by itself, do away with, or at least reduce, economic marginalization is hardly warranted. Rather, the processes underlying labour market inequalities and economic marginalization are, although complex and multifaceted, primarily rooted in the overall functioning of the economic system. They will not disappear simply by policies that raise educational levels. With respect to economic marginalization, the challenge for welfare states is how to guide and control economic forces – a challenge which cannot be solved through educational policies.

Notes

1 The *actual* number of residents in the analyzed age categories in, say, 2015 was markedly higher than the 1980 sample size, due to large immigration in recent decades.
2 How the size of a birth cohort affects life chances is a recurrent topic in generation studies that will not be pursued here.
3 Work income is the yearly sum of wages, salaries, and net income from self-employment; also sickness and parental leave payments are included as work-related incomes. Dividends, rents, other forms of income from capital, pensions, and other types of social transfers are not work income. The magnitude of the Basic Amount is adjusted to developments in overall income levels and determined by government agencies each year for use in the social security system (NAV, 2020).
4 A further support for the displacement mechanisms is provided by an additional result, not shown in the table: within this lowest quartile in the work income distribution, median work incomes varied very modestly between all the three educational levels.
5 One may object that marginal work income represents *relative* economic marginalization, not *absolute* economic deprivation. This is true, but this objection is hardly relevant with respect to disability pension, social assistance, and unemployment.

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Part 3

Historical and ascriptive generations

8 The digital generation

Representations of a generational digital divide

Idunn Seland and Christer Hyggen

Introduction

The idea of a "digital generation" and the role of information and communications technology (ICT) as perhaps the main signifier and determinant of young people's lives have been prominent in public discourse related to youth for several years. The label applied to the digital generation is often accompanied by concern about risks (Byron, 2008; Livingstone et al., 2018), such as those related to wellbeing and health (Goodyear et al., 2018; Mishna et al., 2010; OECD, 2018) and online safety and security (Dowdell & Bradley, 2010; Livingstone et al., 2018; Strasburger et al., 2010). Conversely, the advantages of digital technology and social media for children and young people, such as faster, more engaged learning, cognitive skills development, awareness of social issues, social interaction and inclusion, and civic participation and entertainment, are promoted (Poyntz & Pedri, 2018; Tapscott, 2008).

In this chapter, using the case of Norway, we ask how a "digital generation" can be identified. To investigate this question, we analyse Norwegian media reports between 2010 and 2020, mentioning the use of ICT by children and youth. In order to identify characteristics of the digital generation, we also use school-based survey data.

In the discussion, we will concentrate on the concept of "moral panic", which is a well-established research tradition within media representations of youth culture. Moral panic originally described both dramatic and dramatised public reactions to youth culture from the 1960s onwards (Young, 2008). Concern for children's and youths' digital media use and its harmful consequences parallel previous moral panic over youth culture regarding, e.g. clothes, music, political opinions, drug use, and sexuality. Common to earlier historical incidents and children's and youths' digital media use now is mass media's portrayal and accentuation of a generational divide.

The digital generation as a social generation

As discussed previously in the introduction, the concept of generation is disputed and variously applied in both popular and scientific literature. The

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generation concept has been crucial for youth research's development and is still widely referenced to distinguish children from their parents, to label certain birth cohorts or as a more thorough analytical tool to understand social change.

Various generational labels are given to young people, portraying them as cohorts with specific traits (Pickard, 2019), including labels concerning their relation to digital media and technology, such as the *Nintendo generation* (Green & Bigum, 1993), the *Playstation generation* (Broos & Roe, 2006), the *net generation* (Tapscott, 1999), or even the *thumb generation.* More recently, scholars have coined labels like the *iPhone generation* and *iGen* for certain birth cohorts, linking their behaviour and traits to specific experiences with technology. One prominent example is Twenge's claim that "the complete dominance of smartphones among teens has had ripple effects across every area of iGeners' lives" (Twenge, 2017).

It has been argued that several of these generational labels lack rigorous scientific support, precision, and adequate theoretical grounding (Furlong, 2013). The age boundaries may be stretched to suit researchers' needs, illustrating how many of these concepts and labels are elastic, fuzzy generalisations (Pickard, 2019), lumping all young people together, overlooking intragenerational differences, and nourishing intergenerational conflicts by exaggerating possible generation gaps (Woodman, 2016).

The seminal work on generations by Karl Mannheim can be seen as an effort to distinguish the sociology of generations from such generalisations. Mannheim proposed a theory of social generations in his effort to understand how German youth contested ideas from their parents' generation and how the young generation became the source of new values and new political movements (Mannheim, 1952/2001). In Mannheim's understanding, two central elements form a social generation: each generation emerges in a particular site or location, and new generational locations emerge when the ways of life of the previous generation in the same culture are no longer valued or realistic. This implies that it is not necessarily sufficient to be born at the same time to be part of a generation. To be a social generation, a group needs to share important experiences and challenges.

One particular experience shared by most Norwegian youth born after the turn of the new millennium is smartphone access and use. The first iPhone was introduced in 2007, and by 2016 most Norwegian youth owned a smartphone (Medietilsynet, 2016, 2020), allowing them to connect to the internet and access social media. Whether this shared location and experience is enough to form a digital generation by Mannheim's standard is part of this chapter's discussion. Technological change affects everybody. However, the parents of today's youth did not have this particular experience during their formative years, which could potentially create a generation gap in the sense that adults' fear an escalating pace of social change and loss of continuity between young and old generations. The idea of a digital generation merely connects these fears and anxieties to technology (Buckingham, 2006), echoing theories of moral panic and mediated youth culture.

Moral panic and mediated youth culture

One way of viewing generational divisions and conflicts arises from the study of mass media representations of youth culture and the concept of moral panic. This state of panic describes societal reactions to manifestations of deviance from rules and behavioural norms perceived as necessary to uphold the boundaries of civilisation (Falkof, 2020). Although the seminal studies on moral panic are now approaching their 50th anniversary, the tales of young substance abusers (Young, 1971), mods and rockers (Cohen, 1972), and youth gang muggings (Hall et al., 1978) continue to influence scholarly discussions on mediated youth culture (Hier, 2019; Ingraham & Reeves, 2016; Wright, 2015).

Central to these studies is the perception of the "folk devil", the evil entity threatening what is commonly considered good and safe, denoting traditional folklore logic resulting in a kind of witch hunt. In the studies by Young (1971) and Cohen (1972), the folk devil was mediated through portrayals of youth culture as ethic (norm-breaking behaviour and actual crime) or aesthetic (clothes and music) threats (Young, 2008). What follows is public outrage (i.e. panic) to varying degrees, voiced by public officials, the police, civil society, and the audience, regularly mixed with media commentaries. The culmination of moral panic is the demand to "do something", usually directed at formal regulation and/or punishment to bring the folk devil back under social control (Hier, 2019).

From its origin in the 1970s, study of youth culture and in the sociology of deviance, the empirical labelling model(s) of moral panic spread to various fields in the 1990s, theorising the discursive perception of "the other" following gender, religion, and minority studies (Falkof, 2020; Wright, 2015). The concept of moral panic was then adopted by scholars of late modernity and the consequences of industrialisation, connecting media-driven panics to societal fears of terrorism, immigration, and environmental and ecological breakdown (Ungar, 2001). By the year 2000, the concept of "moral panic" appeared both diluted and diverted until the emergence of new digital platforms dominated by user-made content and activity renewed scholarly interest in the different aspects of mediated panic-related phenomena (Hier, 2019; Ingraham & Reeves, 2016).

Falkof (2020) calls for a revitalised approach to the study of public discourse, bearing the marks of Cohen's (1972) original definition of moral panic: a condition, episode, person, or groups of persons described as a threat to societal values or interests and this threat's nature presented in a stylised and stereotypical manner. Falkof (2020) further views moral panic as a specific genre, a way of relating to a given phenomenon by giving it a familiar design with well-known tropes and narrative patterns. Falkof here maintains the ideas of folk devils violating commonly shared beliefs of what constitutes a good society, the opposing actors representing what is good and moral, the stories' almost viral qualities as they spread through media and the demand that authorities should solve the perceived problem.

Staying true to the concept's social constructionist core, Falkof (2020) proposes an interdisciplinary framework as an analytic tool to explain discrepancies

between what is empirically real and what is represented as real about a phenomenon. In the following analysis, we, therefore, use the concept of moral panic to investigate how Norwegian media's representations of children's and young people's use of ICT are conceived and if there are objective reasons for a "panic". When we apply Falkof's framework to perceptions of the digital generation, the aim is to grasp from public discourse the stories told to make sense of insecurity over technological and possibly also social and cultural change. These stories or perceptions interpreted as sense-making efforts can serve to constitute collective identities and boundaries between themselves and others (Falkof 2020, pp. 228, 232), in our case, between generations. Three of Falkof's (2020, p. 235) analytical questions are particularly relevant to our current study, here slightly revised to match our research question:

- What is being presented about the digital generation? Has this phenomenon been recognised, has it been demonised, and what, if anything, does it stand for?
- Does the presentation of the digital generation draw on pre-existing narratives about risk and threat, and, if so, what are they, and how are their generic features repeated?
- How does the presentation of the digital generation intersect with anxieties that are particular to that context or time period, and in what ways is it a part of a broader discursive frame?

The underlying presumptions and principles for these operationalised research questions are elaborated and illustrated next.

Folk devils on the internet

The critical stage in a media-driven moral panic phenomenon is the labelling of good and evil, i.e. the distance between "us" and "them", bringing the so-called folk devil to life (Wright, 2015). This image identifies the scapegoat for what is perceived to be bad or immoral, commonly associated with dispossessed groups or subcultures (Ingraham & Reeves, 2016; Ungar, 2001). When distinct youth subcultures emerged in the 1960s, their challenge to moral and behavioural norms was further spurred on by this period's rapid social changes affecting both class boundaries and the parent-child relationship (Wright, 2015).

This underlying reliance on social change may also explain why moral panics tend to recur, often following a familiar pattern. New media technologies have their own place in moral panic studies, from 1950s agony over comic books, demonisation of television and video games in the 1980s to contemporary fear of cyberbullying, teenage sexting, and internet paedophilia scares (Falkof, 2020; Staksrud, 2013, 2020). George and Odgers (2015) add to this list media coverage and parental concern over adolescents' ICT use and social and health-related risks. They find fears that time spent on devices interferes with adolescents' ability to develop effective social and relationship skills, concerns that multitasking

on devices is impairing cognitive performance and claims that device usage is causing adolescents to lose sleep. These examples may illustrate how insecurity over rapid technological and social development is projected onto youths' changed leisure opportunities and habits, driven by what is novel and offering opportunities for the emergence of subcultures in a recurring pattern.

For folk devils to be revealed to the public, moral panic stories routinely evolve around the media's use of experts or moral entrepreneurs to frame the events and offer primary definitions of what is at stake (Ingraham & Reeves, 2016; Wright, 2015). As these experts and entrepreneurs produce authoritative images of social reality (Hier 2019), scholarly interest in moral panic has typically centred on what is real and what is presented to be real in such conflicts. An exaggerated threat or the disproportionality of a given problem serves to rouse emotions associated with an actual state of acute fear, legitimising calls for action (Wright, 2015). At this stage, the image of the folk devil or scapegoat allows the problem to be fixed by punishing or putting the evil under control by law, regulation, a ban, or improved security (Falkof, 2020).

However, digital spaces and the perceived dangers of letting children, especially, go online contrast with the traditional concept of moral panics, as the object of fear literally knows no borders. Even if internet crime can be punished under national law, calls for regulation and protection will quickly encounter an international jurisdictional void. Staksrud (2013; 2020) describes how media regulatory institutions in Scandinavia and Western welfare states transformed from the 1990s from regulating, censoring and banning visual images, language, and, above all, pornography to giving advice about age-based content suitability and online protection.

Staksrud (2013; 2020) links this transformation to global, technologically driven processes where welfare states' social institutions have undergone structural, sociological changes that severely affect the relationship between the individual and society. In essence, this relationship concerns the citizen's civil, political, and social rights, where the elevation of freedom to make one's own choices both liberates and excludes the individual from formerly defining social structures historically embedded in Western welfare states. The result is that individual children or their parents find themselves alone to make choices based on a mixture of consumerism and presumptive informed rationality. According to Staksrud (2013), this naturally calls for new welfare state solutions, including educational programmes for both children and parents. The school system, non-government organisations, and the technology platforms, along with renewed and thoroughly transformed regulatory institutions, all have a place in this new market of information.

Data and methods

In this chapter, we investigate trends in the discourse on youth and digital media over the last decade, following the smartphone's introduction to most of the Norwegian youth population, by analysing Norwegian media coverage from

2010, including 2020. To investigate whether these reported trends are rooted in actual experiences among youth, we apply data from Ungdata, the nationally representative school-based youth surveys. Ungdata includes responses from 630 000 youth aged 13–18 since 2010. Ungdata cover various aspects of young people's lives, e.g. relationships with parents and friends, leisure activities, health issues, local environment, wellbeing, and school issues. In addition, the surveys include questions on media and ICT use.

Media coverage analysis

To identify newspaper articles about the "digital generation", we applied the search words *"digital"* and *"children or youth"* (in Norwegian) to the Norwegian database A-tekst (now Retriever),[1] limiting our search to 2010–2020. As this search strategy yielded more than 13 000 results, we limited the search to a three-month period every year between 2010 and 2020 and rotated the periods by the quarter of the year. This reduced our net sample for analysis to 1124 hits while maintaining the prerequisites for a randomised and representative result. Our unit of analysis is the text excerpt containing the hit for our search string, meaning that two or more references in one newspaper issue (i.e. both paper and digital, or both the front page and the editorial) are registered as individual results. Also, press releases and items from national news agencies could be picked up and included in several newspapers, thus appearing more than once in our sample.

We copied the text excerpts (usually three to four sentences), the newspaper name, and the publication date into an Excel worksheet. We then read the excerpts and applied between one and three labels to each media story based on our understanding of the context where the keywords appeared. This expanded our net sample by 57 to a total of 1181 items (see Table 8.1). We omitted text excerpts with no

Table 8.1 Categories and samples of Norwegian newspaper reports 2010–2020 from the A-tekst/Retriever database

Category	*Content of newspaper reports*	*N*
Digital threats	Harassment including, bullying, sexting, online soliciting	433
	Physical or mental health issues related to digital use	60
Digital generation	Reflections on youths' use of digital devices in situations that were previously analogue, contrast with parents	234
Digitalisation in education	Digitalisation of educational institutions to improve student learning	214
	Digital or net-based games for leisure and/or educational purposes	36
Digital competence	The need for information, good conduct, or online protection	204
Total		1181

relevant relationship between "digital" and "children or youth". We also excluded computer game reviews by adult professionals. In contrast, reports mentioning such games in relation to how youths spend their leisure time were included.

One recent typology of media stories about young people using ICT (George & Odgers, 2015) applies seven categories of parental worries. However, in our coding, it soon became evident that many news stories containing our search string did *not* mention risks. Therefore, broader categories were constructed through an inductive, bottom-up coding strategy (see Table 8.1).

In Table 8.1, our label "digital threats" overlaps with George and Odgers' (2015) description of worries about whom adolescents are interacting with online and what kind of information they share, and fear that children will be victims of cyberbullying and online soliciting. Digital bullying or cyberbullying imply that harassment or aggressive behaviour between schoolchildren takes place using electronic technology (typically on social media), providing the potentially anonymous perpetrator(s) with broader, around-the-clock access to the victim, involving a wider audience and the possibility of humiliations persisting on a digital record forever (Milosevic, 2015). Digital bullying may or may not involve sexual harassment derived from what has popularly been termed "sexting", meaning the sending, receiving, and forwarding of nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit images, texts, or videos (Lee & Darcy, 2020; Van Ouytsel et al., 2015). Items in our category "digital threats" also correspond to what George and Odgers describe as interference with offline friendships, harming cognitive performance and loss of sleep.

A digital divide between parents and children is the essence of our category "digital generation", supplemented by the digitalisation of education and gaming. Our category "digital competence", however, includes both fears that young people's online activities may leave a digital trace causing future problems and "competence" as a solution to this and the other digital risks. In the analysis, all the citations from Norwegian media were translated into English by the authors.

Ungdata

Ungdata is a large Norwegian database of school-based surveys that cover youths aged 13–18. Ungdata allows us to track developments and trends in ICT and media use among Norwegian youth. For this chapter, we apply data for the period 2010–2020. During this period, some of the questions and measurements have been changed, meaning that we have disrupted timelines for some variables. Other questions are asked for shorter periods or at single time points.

We present descriptive analyses of trends in different aspects of ICT use for all respondents, including total screen time, type of media used, digital bullying and exclusion, sexual harassment/sexting and parental involvement in, and knowledge of social media use among youth.

Screen time is measured for 2010–2020 by a question asking the respondents to estimate their total screen time outside school hours, including TV, PCs, tablets, and mobile phones.

Type of media is measured by a question asking the respondents to estimate how much time they spend every day on average using different kinds of media like TV, video games and books (2010–2020), mobile games and social media (2014–2020), and YouTube (2017–2020).

Digital bullying is measured variously in the different periods that Ungdata covers. For the first period (2010–2013), digital bullying is measured with two questions on whether the respondents have received "bullying messages" on their phones or while chatting on the internet. For the second period (2014–2016), it is measured by one question on whether the respondents experience bullying or threats from other youth via the internet or mobile phone. For the third period (2017–2019), it is measured by combining two questions on whether they have, during the last 12 months, ever been threatened via the internet or mobile phone and whether they have, during the last 12 months, ever been excluded by peers online. For the last period (2020), it is based on the following question: Are you bullied, threatened, or excluded online?

Sexual harassment is measured by a series of questions in the 2020 surveys. First, the respondents are asked whether they have sent nude pictures or sexual content to someone. Second, the respondents are asked whether they have received digital messages or images with sexual content from someone. Those who have received sexual content are asked whether they thought it was OK to receive these or not.

Parental involvement in young people's digital lives is measured with a series of questions from 2014 to 2020. First, the respondents are asked whether their parents have set limitations for their social media use. Second, the respondents are asked whether their parents know what social media platforms they use and what they know about their activities online. Third, the respondents are asked whether they hide some of their online activities from their parents.

Results

Following Falkof's (2020) framework, we first present the phenomenon "digital generation" based on the media articles from Table 8.1. We then present the perceived threats of digitalisation to this generation. Finally, we present the calls for solutions to this problem in the media coverage. To give an impression of proportionality, the media coverage is supplemented by the relevant results from Ungdata throughout the analysis.

Digital generation

Our category "digital generation" represents mostly positive or neutral news stories. We find descriptions of children and youths as "digital natives", often stating this as a fact:

> We now have the first generation of digital natives, meaning people who have grown up with the internet.
>
> (Aftenposten, 13 July 2016)

> Significant parts of young people's everyday lives take place in digital arenas.
> (Adresseavisen, 5 October 2017)

Following statements like these, newspaper reports focus on various activities or services now becoming digital to accommodate young people's needs and interests. Examples are internet shopping, movies, radio and other media services, school nurses, banking, and public information from authorities. Other stories relate to how previous analogue activities or events must evolve into digital spaces to attract the attention of children and youth, such as local libraries launching digital reading contests for children, digital youth clubs and museums introducing digital entertainment, and learning activities to attract families with children. A certain nostalgia marks these reports, reminiscing about how childhood was before the introduction of generally available digital devices. Some newspaper stories thus make a point about how theatre, storytelling, and reading aloud still attract children's attention even in a digital age.

Most newspaper stories relating to digitalisation in education are about schools introducing digital devices like PCs, iPads, or tablets in learning situations:

> Today's children are born into a digital world, and we respond to that, says principal NN.
> (Bergens Tidende, 11 August 2012)

> [The] internet and digital learning are about to revolutionise education.
> (Grimstad Arbeiderblad, 6 September 2016)

Digitalisation in schools is further related to the use of digital pedagogical tools in kindergartens, intended to stimulate basic language training for toddlers. In both sectors, significant results in terms of improved learning are expected. This optimism is particularly evident in the so-called gamification of mathematics, technology, and science in primary and secondary schools, using digital tools, apps, and contest-like modes of instruction on digital devices.

Disregarding this liberal access to digital devices in schools, newspaper reports in our sample also show that Norwegian 15-year-olds ranked just about average on the PISA test[2] on digital reading in 2015. Also, doubts about whether digital devices correlate with academic success are present in our sample. This doubt is expressed in criticism of teachers' digital competence. Moreover, newspapers publish letters from parents wanting their children to have time off from screens when in school and report on schools banning students' use of mobile phones during school hours to prevent digital bullying and stimulate face-to-face socialising during recess. Nevertheless, the overwhelming impression of media stories in this category is a drive for modernity, where digital developments in society are met with excitement and certain awe at the younger generation as compliant with this development.

As reported in the media, the digitalisation of young lives involves an increase in screen time both in and after school. Using Ungdata to track total screen time for Norwegian boys and girls aged 13–18 years for the period 2014–2020, we find that

youth spend more time in front of a screen in 2020 than they did six years prior. In 2014, 55% of the boys and 47% of the girls spent more than three hours a day in front of a screen every day outside school hours. In 2020, the number had risen to 62% for boys and 57% for girls. In parallel, the media landscape is rapidly changing and evolving with the introduction of new digital and social media. Time spent in front of a screen does not necessarily mean the same thing in 2020 as it did in 2010. Both the level of interaction with the screen and the content are changing.

Traditionally, youth have spent much of their spare time watching TV. However, this is no longer true, at least not the way it used to be. Whereas more than 20% of Norwegian youth spent more than two hours watching TV every day in 2010, this was true only for about 8% in 2020. The trend is similar for boys and girls, even if we observe a greater decline among girls than among boys. Knowing that greater numbers of youth spend an increasing total amount of time in front of a screen means that they have moved their attention towards other types of screens than the TV.

The greatest shift we observe in this period is the shift in attention towards social media. In 2014, nearly 25% of the boys and 43% of the girls spent more than two hours using social media every day outside school hours. In 2020, this applied to almost 40% of the boys and 65% of the girls.

In contrast to these trends, the number of youths spending time gaming is relatively constant. Boys dominate in this area. For the last decade, about 40% of boys have spent more than two hours everyday gaming on a console or a PC. In addition, about 14% of the boys spend more than two hours every day gaming on tablets or mobile phones. Even if many girls play games, they spend considerably less time gaming than boys of the same age.

The observations on Norwegian youth over ten years confirm the general assumptions in the media coverage on the digital generation. Young people spend an increasing amount of time in front of a screen, and the nature, content, and activities of this screen interaction are changing. Youth spend an increasing amount of time online.

Digital threats

Our category "digital threats" presents the risks involved in children's and adolescents' ICT use, as portrayed in media and reported in Ungdata. Two excerpts from our sample of newspaper articles state:

> Digital bullying is now becoming widespread in Rjukan. In the new app Ask .fm, young people no more than 12 years old are called cheap[3] and ugly.
>
> (Rjukan Arbeiderblad, 26 October 2013)

> Every day, thousands of children and young people experience bullying via mobile phones or the internet.
>
> (Raumnes, 14 September 2020)

In 2003, Medietilsynet, the Norwegian Media Authority,[4] launched its survey of children and media consumption. The subsequent biennial reports (2008–2020)

from Medietilsynet are frequently quoted sources on the prevalence of digital bullying in our newspaper sample, along with results from local Ungdata surveys throughout the period.

An academic commonly consulted by newspapers in the first half of the period under investigation is Elisabeth Staksrud, whose book *Children in the Online World: Risks, Regulations and Rights* (2013) has been highly influential in the Norwegian debate and policymaking on this subject. However, the sources most frequently referenced in the news stories on digital bullying in our sample are the private foundation Barnevakten (i.e. "The Babysitter"), established in 2000 to advise parents on children's use of media, and a campaign entitled "Bruk hue" (i.e. "Use your brain"). "Bruk hue" visited schools, public libraries, parent meetings, and other public arenas, promoting advice and warnings from Barnevakten representatives in conjunction with health professionals and Telenor, a major national supplier of digital content for children. A typical example in our material following this discourse is a local newspaper article reporting the previous night's public meeting visited by the "Bruk hue" campaign, informing parents about the risks of digital bullying and violence for children using digital platforms. The newspapers often refer to how institutions in the local community take a stand against digital bullying and encourage parents to do the same:

> Many young people live significant parts of their lives on social media, and digital bullying is on the rise. Now the school and the local police urge parents to learn more about their children's digital everyday lives.
>
> (Aust-Agder Blad, 19 November 2013)

The concept of digital bullying or cyberbullying is complex, as is the concept of traditional bullying (Englander, 2019). Cyberbullying may take several forms that are hard to grasp through surveys. However, most children and youths will know when they experience bullying and be able to report this when asked. The digital transformation of this threat implies a shift in arenas for exposure, from open bullying in school or other physical arenas to online forums, online platforms, and social media. This makes it harder for parents, teachers, and adults to monitor activities and potential threats. In addition, omnipresent social connectivity on smartphones makes it harder for victims to avoid bullying situations.

The questions used to capture digital bullying or violence in Ungdata have evolved during the observation period. The proportion of youth who have experienced digital bullying is thus not directly comparable across time. However, some important observations can be inferred from Figure 8.1. Experiences of online bullying and violence are relatively common. Digital bullying is more widespread in lower secondary schools than in upper secondary schools. There are no trends towards either an increase or a decrease within any of the observation periods, suggesting that the level of digital bullying is relatively constant over time, even if the use of social media, as well as total screen time, is rising.

Newspaper reports in our sample do not necessarily distinguish between sexual and non-sexual harassment when warning against young people's ICT use. It is important

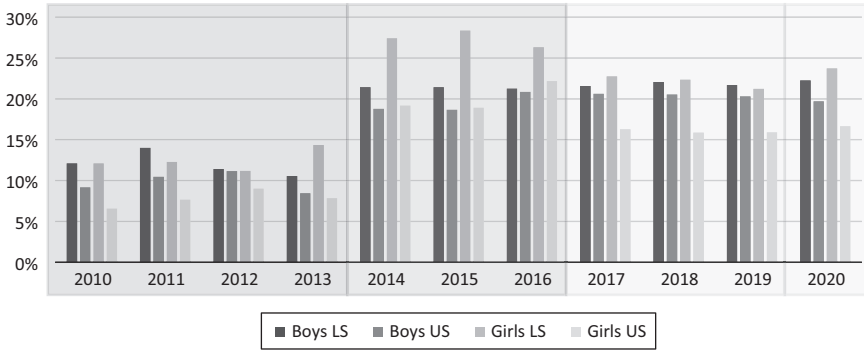

Figure 8.1 Percentages of Norwegian youth in lower (L) and upper (U) secondary schools (S) experiencing online bullying or violence 2010–2020. Period (P) 1 (2010–2013), n = 49 098. P2 (2014–2016), n = 178 623. P3 (2017–2019), n = 281 145. P4 (2020), n = 35 623.

to note that *sexting* (sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit material) may take place between consenting partners and in an atmosphere of trust and/or flirtation, intimacy, and sexual exploration and may thus have a special value for teenagers using technology with which they are comfortable (Anastassiou, 2017). However, sexting may also be coercive, non-consensual, or be accessed or requested from children by adults, which obviously contrasts with the phenomenon's potential innocence. Possible consequences of cyberbullying and non-consensual sexting overlap with feelings of shame and low self-esteem, reputational damage, negative effects on school performance, social isolation, physical discomfort, self-inflicted harm, depression, and suicide (Lee & Darcy 2020; Milosevic, 2015). Notably, newspaper articles in our sample report on a theatre ensemble touring local schools with a play on digital bullying titled "Hengdeg" (i.e. "Go hang yourself").

As we can see from Figure 8.2, sexting is not uncommon for Norwegian youth. At the lower secondary school level, about 10% of boys and 12% of girls have sent nude pictures of themselves to someone. At the upper secondary level, more than one in five have done the same. Slightly more girls have shared nudes than boys. However, many more girls than boys felt some level of pressure to do so.

In many cases, youths are also at the receiving end of sexting. From Figure 8.2, we see that girls are slightly more exposed to this than boys, and it is more common among youths in upper secondary than in lower secondary school. More youths at lower than upper secondary school find it offensive, and whereas most girls who have received images with sexual content do not think it was OK, most boys do.

Digital competence

The call for digital competence in our sample of media reports may be seen as the older generation's main response to the threat of children being victims of digital

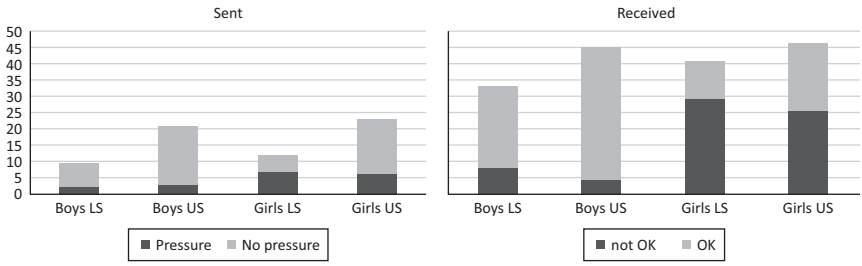

Figure 8.2 Percentages of Norwegian boys and girls in lower (L) and upper (U) secondary schools (S) who have sent (n = 14 262) or received (n = 14 154) digital sexual content, 2020.

bullying and reduced health. However, such competence is also the main response to schools' perceived shortcomings in delivering improved learning results. The two following citations are telling examples:

> Children often have good digital competence, but they may lack social competence. Do not be naive and trust your child never to be mean to anyone on the internet.
>
> (Sarpsborg Arbeiderblad, 16 October 2013)

> After the Millennium, theories emerged on how youths, being surrounded by digital tools, would learn to use them naturally. (…) Recent research shows that this is not the case: children will not automatically learn from technology how to use it in a good way.
>
> (Klassekampen, 8 February 2018)

Here, an important division in the concept of digital competence is displayed: even as children and young people will be more familiar with ICT than their parents and older generations, they may not be able to use it with moral responsibility. The former way of assessing "digital competence" is closely connected with our category "digital generation", where the use of digital devices is expected to prepare children for future working life and rapid technological development. The latter meaning of "digital competence" here relates directly to our category "digital threat". Children's and young people's immature understanding of formal rules of privacy and social norms of good conduct and moral and personal responsibility are described as the main problems behind these threats. In the newspaper reports, key solutions are emphasised as children and youth learning critical thinking and critical understanding of ICT, placing the responsibility both with parents and teachers:

> Adults should be present where children and young people live their digital lives.
>
> (Telemarksavisa, 25 February 2010)

> Digital competence is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes (…). I believe the school has a major responsibility for educating our children in these respects.
>
> (Dagsavisen, 26 September 2016)

Again, the "Bruk hue" campaign and related measures directed at parents are given media coverage. By inviting parents to these meetings, the schools encourage parents to talk to children about ICT use, to ask what happens on the platforms the children engage with, and to generally be good role models and give their children a moral digital upbringing. The following excerpt from a local newspaper written by a primary school principal inviting parents to a meeting about bullying gives a good example of this joint responsibility:

> The talk will address what we as parents may do to develop our children's good digital judgement and social skills online.
>
> (Hadeland, 29 April 2019)

The media analyses thus identify parents' role in the online activities of the digital generation as important. Common advice presented in the media is to encourage parents to take an active part in the digital lives of the digital generation. One way of doing this is to set rules for their children's social media use or talk to them to gain insight into what their social media activities consist of. Another is to place the responsibility for digital competence on teachers and schools.

As we can see from Figure 8.3, there is a clear trend towards increasing percentages of Norwegian boys and girls subject to parents who set rules for their social media use. Nearly 50% of the girls in lower secondary education agree or strongly agree with a statement about having parents that set rules for their social media use. Youths in upper secondary education are less subject to similar rules than youths in lower secondary and girls more than boys.

Most Norwegian youths agree or strongly agree with a statement about having parents with knowledge about their social media activities. More girls than boys and a higher proportion of younger than older youth have parents with knowledge about which social media platforms they are using, who they are communicating with, and what types of interactions they are part of. We observe a trend towards an increasing number of youths with parents who are involved in their social media activities.

It seems that the observed increase in parental involvement in their children's social media activities is met with an increased need for seclusion amongst Norwegian youth. The number of youth who agree or strongly agree with a statement about hiding at least part of their activities on social media from their parents is on the rise, in particular for the youngest users.

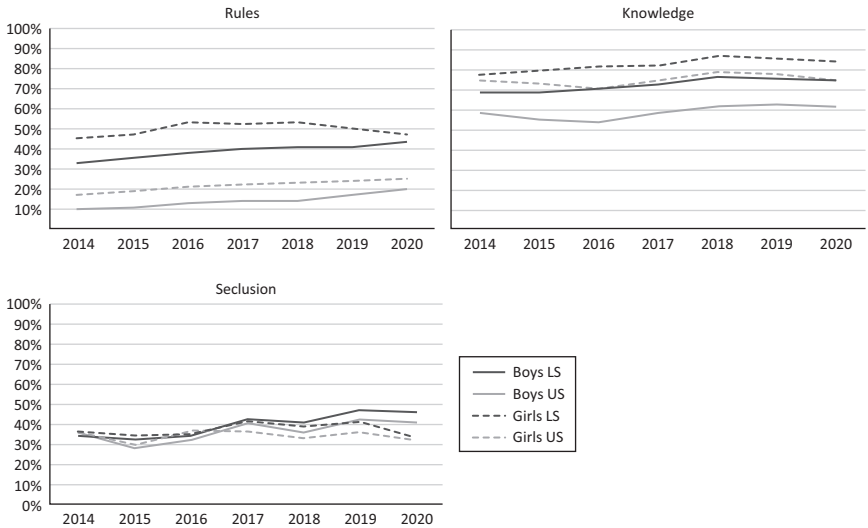

Figure 8.3 Percentages of Norwegian boys and girls in lower (L) and upper (U) secondary schools (S) with parents who have set rules for or have knowledge of their social media use or who hide some of their social media activities from their parents, 2014–2020, n = 169 212, 169 252, and 167 956, respectively.

Discussion

The perception of children's and youths' ICT use gathered from Norwegian newspaper articles from 2010 until 2020 is ambiguous, where this age group's ascendancy into a new technological reality is met with admiration, excitement, ambition, and fear. The "digital generation", a term used generously in newspaper articles, covers all these notions where something perceived as new clashes with something portrayed as old: the digital versus the analogue. As excitement rises from the modern world's general technological advancements, young people's seemingly natural engagement with this new reality is described with a certain awe. Naturally, this admiration spurs ambition, and young people are expected to be at the forefront of learning and general mastery of their digital environment.

However, as young people are expected to be technological pioneers, the possible dangers of them being insufficiently equipped upon entering uncharted digital territories also create distinct worry and alarm amongst adults, as represented by the newspapers. This worry increases with the perceived opaqueness of the digital platforms and spaces used by young people, where they can operate without parental supervision or even parents' knowledge (Staksrud, 2020). Ungdata shows that most young Norwegians have parents who know what kind of social media platforms they use and what kind of online activities they take

part in. Parents are also involved by setting rules for social media use and online activities. By observing trends from 2014 to 2020, we see an increase in parental involvement through increased knowledge amongst parents and a slight increase in the number of youths that are subject to rules regarding their use. Conversely, we observe a rising trend during the same period in the number of boys that hide parts of their social media activities from their parents.

The fear of threats to young people's safe internet use is both distinct and blurred in the newspaper stories. Digital bullying stands out as the most concrete and frequently mentioned problem, but digital bullying is entangled with a larger body of risks and misconduct generally stemming from the premise of young people being on their own on the internet, encountering things they are unequipped for or making bad choices. However, Ungdata shows that digital bullying, at least in terms of experiences of bullying, harassment, and/or exclusion, affects between 10 and 25% of the Norwegian youth population. As the consensus will be that bullying, including digital bullying, is bad, the real phenomenon may appear less overwhelming than indicated by the newspaper articles. However, this does not prevent digital bullying from being an overwhelming problem for young people being harassed (Milosevic, 2015). Sexting, by contrast, is more ambiguous in the adolescents' experiences recorded by Ungdata. About one in five Norwegian teenagers in upper secondary schools have shared nudes, and 84% of the boys and 72% of the girls did this without feeling pressured to do so. About 45% of the students in upper secondary schools have received digital sexual content, and 90% of the boys and 56% of the girls are "OK" with this. This aligns with previous research on sexting being an integrated part of young people's courting practices and explorations of sexual identity (Lee & Darcy, 2020), with a potential for non-consensual sharing and image-based sexual abuse (McGlynn & Rackley 2017).

Following the framework of a moral panic, Falkof (2020) asks what is being demonised in the media about young people's behaviour. In our case of the "digital generation", the answer is not totally clear, as the villains or folk devils are not only the individual bullies or the unknown people making or posting scary or threatening things on the websites or platforms being utilised by the children and youth. The problem is also the pitfalls of the technology itself, eliciting behaviour that one would perhaps abstain from in the analogue and commonly acknowledged more transparent world, i.e. being mean, malicious, criminal, or lewd. When Falkof (2020) consequently asks what this possible demonisation stands for, an answer would be lack of control and safety in a contemporary online world, contrasting with the offline world where children are perhaps more protected by rights and regulations than ever before (Staksrud, 2020).

This lack of control in digital spaces was first described in relation to so-called video nasties and console gaming in the 1980s (Staksrud, 2013). Interestingly, gaming takes up only a minor space in our sample of newspaper articles between 2010 and 2020, a finding that also surprised us. When gaming is mentioned in our sample, it is mostly about "gamification" of educational material and

opportunities, intended to make learning in school more interesting and palatable to the digital generation. If we ask, following Falkof (2020), whether the presentation of the digital generation might draw on pre-existing narratives about risk and threat, we see that the "video nasties" might very well be alive on social media. Here, we find a regular continuation of a pre-existing narrative bringing violence and pornography to the touch of younger children's fingertips, where previously these dangers took place in adolescents' dens in families where parents were presumed to be either absent or careless, i.e. unsuited for bringing up their children safely. The absence of parents is still portrayed as the main problem for children and youth encountering unwanted or possibly damaging experiences on the internet and may therefore constitute what Falkof (2020) has described as a broader discursive frame for panic over digital media.

Conclusion

If a generation can be identified by common experiences, children's and young people's widespread use of smartphones with built-in Wi-Fi might constitute such an experience. However, as adults all over the world acquired and adapted to smartphones at the same time, is this trait sufficient to acknowledge children and young people growing up with the internet as a distinct generation?

In this chapter, we have argued in the line of Staksrud (2013) that the surge in smartphone sales and use involving children being given direct access to the internet from their own handheld devices coincided with another similarly encompassing but less visible change concerning media regulation. All over Western Europe, institutions originally established to regulate, censor, and even ban visual images and media language expressions underwent a significant transformation towards giving advice on media content and user safety. This transformation, aligning with other welfare state institutions allowing for a broader range of individual choice, also meant that the responsibility for risks became individualised or, at least in part, removed from the same institutions. While today's children are left to make an almost indefinite range of their own choices in using digital devices online, their parents are expected to keep track of, regulate, educate on, and protect their children from online risk. This situation is in stark contrast to the parents' generation growing up in an era when state institutions for direct media regulation, with age limits and watershed rules for television broadcasting, still functioned. We suggest that this experience may actually be the real, defining common challenge distinguishing today's children and youth as the "digital generation".

A return to strict regulation of the new media landscape to protect children and young people from the harms we have described in this chapter seems to be the only consumer choice that is unavailable in the current situation. Here, other welfare state institutions have been forced to compensate. We see this compensation most typically in schools and even in kindergartens, where children are meant to be not only digitally adept but also digitally competent, meaning developing critical thinking about digital media. Again, this puts pressure on the older generation

of teachers, many of whom have not had the same experiences as young people using the internet, meaning that schools run the risk of lagging behind no matter what their digitalisation efforts are. Here, schools and parents are new allies but also possible antagonists in this new market of information, leaving room for new entrepreneurs and brokers of protection and advice, where some children may pay a high price for everybody's freedom on the internet.

Notes

1 A-tekst/Retriever is a Norwegian database covering print, online sources, broadcast, and social media https://www.retrievergroup.com/.
2 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) standardised measuring of 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics, and science knowledge. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/.
3 "Cheap" here denotes being sexually available and undiscriminating.
4 The Norwegian Media Authority (Medietilsynet): https://medietilsynet.no/en/about-medietilsynet/.

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9 The Baby-boomer generation

Another breed of elderly people?

Britt Slagsvold and Thomas Hansen

Introduction

Baby boomers, born in the years after World War II, are now entering retirement in large numbers. From being contributors to society, they are now becoming consumers of pensions and services. Because of their size in numbers, it has long been recognized that aging boomers will pose major challenges for Western welfare states. Adding fuel to these concerns is the anticipation that boomers will have higher demands and expectations than previous generations of older adults. This anticipation is underpinned by negative images of boomers, mostly promoted through popular media, of a generation, molded by the cultural and social change in the 1960s and 1970s, used to a relatively affluent and hedonistic lifestyle, and to expect control and a strong voice in society (Bristow 2015). Concomitantly, the media has often portrayed the boomers as a rather egoistic, self-indulgent, and careless group (e.g. Bristow 2015, Jønsson & Jønson 2015). Although considerable scientific attention has been paid to examine social and cultural constructions of typical Baby-boomer characteristics, little empirical evidence has shed light on the validity of the traits ascribed to the boomers.

In this chapter, we explore the ways and extent to which boomers deviate from other generations. We first discuss boomers as a generation and present some of the literature about perceptions of boomers. Next, based on data from the Norwegian study of life-course, aging, and generation (NorLAG), we explore differences in values and expectations between ageing boomers and previous generations of the elderly: Do the boomers hold higher control beliefs and more self-centered and hedonistic values? Are the differences of a magnitude that indicates a generational shift? The negative boomer narratives mostly come from young generations, implying a downward generational value gap. We thus also compare the values and expectations of the boomers with those of younger generations.

Baby boomers as a generation

The term "Baby boomers" refers to the post-World War II birth boom in many Western countries and is thus a cohort-based concept of generations. Over time the boomers have, however, come to be associated with their distinctive formative

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experiences in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which in many ways set them apart from previous generations (Edmunds & Turner, 2005). At that time many Western countries experienced dramatic social and cultural changes "crystallized by the events of 1968, from the 'summer of love' to student rebellion to political crisis and military defeat" (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007:16). Key elements of these changes include expanded consumption, leisure, and entertainment, increased educational and occupational opportunities for women. This all took place in a period of economic growth and urbanization, and was accompanied by changes in social attitudes and life styles and opposition to authorities and traditional norms regarding, e.g. gender roles, sexual relations, abortion, parenting, clothing, drugs, and, above all, the preceding generation. Choice, autonomy, hedonism, and self-expression were key values for the boomers (Phillipson et al. 2008). These historical experiences arguably had a lasting influence on their values, attitudes, and lifestyle, and explain why the boomers are often referred to as "the 60s generation" or the "68-ers".

Hence, Baby boomers as a generation are more distinct than an age cohort and can, in line with Mannheim's theory (1952), be conceptualized as a *social generation*. According to Mannheim, a generation is an age cohort that has experienced some significant social or historical events during their formative years. These shared experiences have, in turn, created a common set of behaviors, feelings, and thoughts that facilitate a shared generational consciousness. A generational consciousness is more likely to arise during times of social turbulence and rapid cultural changes. Thus, not every age cohort develops a distinct consciousness. Nor do individuals within the same generation view events and respond to historical situations in the same way, because a generation is also internally stratified (e.g. by class, ethnicity, and location). Consequently, a generation will be differently influenced by certain social and historical events and stratified by what Mannheim terms "generational units". Following Mannheim, the boomers is a "true" generation in sociological terms. Although only a minority of boomers actively participated in movements and activities at the time, most of them were influenced by the cultural and social changes, but from different locations and in different ways.

Beyond the social and cultural influences, the boomers' worldview and values are likely also influenced by their distinct socioeconomic resources compared to earlier generations. As a group, boomers have been privileged since they were born and raised through an optimistic period with steadily increasing wealth and consumption and an expanding welfare state, improved social security and health services, universally available higher education, and improved housing conditions. As older adults, they are still privileged with higher pensions and wealth than previous generations and can expect to live in better health and longer than their parents.

Two generational shifts, in the "Mannheiman" sense, have taken place in Europe during the 20th century: in the 1920s and 1970s (Higgs & Gilleard, 2010). Roberts (2012), among others, holds that after the boomers there has been no true generational shifts; the boomers' way of life has simply been continued, or even amplified, in new age groups. However, continuity is also always evident through

pronounced generational shifts, as emphasized in theories of generations. Thus, despite marked generational differences in experiences, differences in values and worldview can be exaggerated in public debates.

Images of the Baby boomers

Changed images

The Baby boomers' demographic, historical, socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics have given rise to generalized images of them. Bristow (2015:86) identifies five key attributes in current cultural scripts of the boomers: they have been *lucky*, as elderly they are *affluent*, and they are *large in numbers*. In addition, they are portrayed as *selfish* and *reckless.* The first three are facts, while the portrayal of boomers as selfish and reckless are assumptions, open to question and to be explored empirically in this chapter.

As a generation, boomers may have received more media attention than any other generation. However, their portrayals have changed during their lifetime. In their youth, student protest movements and counterculture constituted the basis. Only a minority, mostly students from privileged social backgrounds, actively participated, and they attracted much attention from scholars and journalists (Bristow, 2015). Although their image as a generation was not yet formed, the basis for the generation of 68ers or boomers was founded. Through their early and middle adulthood, their images were mostly positive and with some degree of admiration. They were in many ways regarded as pioneers and mavericks, challenging authorities and traditions, transforming lifestyles, pushing a progressive political agenda, and advocating equality, tolerance, and liberal values (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004; Phillipson et.al. 2008).

After the turn of the millennium, however, against a backdrop of growing political concerns caused by population aging and its associated cost for the welfare state, more negative connotations prevailed. Knowledge about these negative images comes mainly from scholarly reviews of popular media, journalistic articles, and political speeches and commentaries. Collectively, these reviews describe growing sentiments toward the boomers as being selfish and reckless. The media stereotyping are generalizations often ignoring the vast heterogeneity among boomers. Media does, however, both reflect and shape public view, and the negative images may contribute to create tensions between generations.

The boomers as selfish and reckless

Phillipson et al. (2008) explored images of the boomers in different written sources and found that an important part of the material dealt with the long-term damage caused by the "boomer-burden" on the sustainability of the welfare state. Boomers thus were identified as a "problem group", or, as others have described them, a "problem generation" (Leach et al 2013) that "took their children's future" (Willetts, 2010; 2019). Negative images of the boomers as selfish and reckless thus emerged, and one of the main problems behind these images and

the "boomer blaming" (Bristow 2015) was their high level of consumption, or "overconsumption".

Literature consistently note the boomers' key role in the rise of modern consumerism, with lifestyles and identities linked to freedom to spend, satisfy wants and needs, and to make personal choices (Biggs et.al. 2007). The boomers' "reckless consumption" is also an argument used by younger people in the debate about climate changes; they are held responsible for increasing climate crisis and blamed for unwillingness to take the consequences (e.g. by the young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg).

Beyond their high consumption, the key point may be their ways of spending more than the level (Phillipson et al, 2008). While their parents emphasized consumption within the "nuclear family", the boomers prioritized more individualized consumption. This divide may be exaggerated, however, as the boomers were also influenced by their parents' attitudes to consumption. Leach et al. (2013) find that in many respect boomers see themselves as a "bridging" generation, neither "frugal" as their parents nor "wasteful" as their children.

Bristow's (2015, 2016, 2020) exhaustive research on images of boomers in UK media draws attention to the moral critique of the generation and the emotional quality that it lends to the discourse of generational fairness: boomers are portrayed as problematic, not only because of their advantages and behavior, but also because of their character (Bristow 2020). She finds that attitudes recently have become more hostile, notably after the Brexit election, findings summarized in her article "The making of 'Boomergeddon': the construction of the Baby-boomer generation as a social problem in Britain" (Bristow 2016). Boomergeddon "expresses a view of boomers as a large and ageing cohort, and a generation associated with selfish, hedonistic, reckless behavior" (op.cit.:576). She also points out emerging paradoxes which demonstrate growing intergenerational conflict. One is the "paradox of longevity"; the fact that the healthy, wealthy, and presumably demanding boomers live longer and thus will increase public expenditure even more. The other is the "paradox of prosperity", which refers to boomers as hedonistic and anti-conventional as a result of their previous prosperity and therefore will expect more and thereby cause additional economic problems for society. The recent humorous, but nevertheless mean, term "Boomer Remover" as another name for COVID-19 (Wikionary) is yet another sign of this tension.

Such images emerge also in the scarce Scandinavian literature. For example, a Swedish study of media presentations finds that boomers were predicted to become a "a new breed" of care users, by projecting typical characteristics bestowed to boomers into their future (Jönson & Jönsson 2015). Although Swedish media presentations vary, boomers were broadly portrayed as privileged and spoiled, demanding and greedy, and self-aware and self-centered. Above all, they are used to getting their own way and possess the capacity to change situations to their best. As a generation they have betrayed their former radical ideas, they are numerous and influential, have dominated the labor market, and blocked opportunities for younger generations. As retirees they will put pressure on the economy. Similarly, a Finnish study notes that after the turn of the millennium,

"boomers have been attacked by members of the younger cohorts, who claim that they are a 'greedy generation' which only thinks of itself in spite of claiming solidarity with those in a less fortunate position" (Karisto 2007: 101). In Norway as well, although we lack systematic studies of boomer images, the media repeatedly portrays, often subtly, boomers as a different kind of people, as recently in a Norwegian newspaper: "The young secure the future – the old secure themselves" (Hauk, Klassekampen 2020.09.29).

In sum, while negative images of the boomers' behavior and character seem quite pervasive in many Western countries (Phillipson, 2007; Bristow, 2020), little is known about their prevalence and distribution.

The boomers as agentic and expecting influence and control

The negative image of Baby boomers summarized above primarily addresses their behavior and values – their moral. However, when they are suspected of "engineering their own luck" (White 2013), they are not only assumed to have selfish and hedonistic values that direct their priorities, they are also assumed to have the power and resources to do so. The sheer number of "grey voters" is important, and an aspect that is emphasized in discussions of generational (un)fairness (e.g. Vanhuysse & Tremmel, 2018). Another aspect, in line with the moral critique of boomers, is more psychological and refers to their purported expectations and insistence of being in control, to have it their own way. In order to act selfish and reckless, the boomers must be able to influence and exert control. While values shape aims and direct behavior, control beliefs give force or strength to act in line with the values. The assumption that boomers hold high-control expectations is mostly implicit in the portrayal of boomers as a "greedy generation". High-control beliefs, or agency, are, however, essential for acting according to individualistic values and thus a vital, yet often unspoken, part of the boomer image.

To exert influence, individuals must believe that they possess the capacity to influence, and that the environment is somehow controllable. These are two essential parts of control beliefs (Bandura 1977). Although distinct from personality traits, both values (e.g. Sagiv et al. 2017) and control beliefs (Lachman et.al. 2011) are found to be rather enduring qualities, assumed to develop in youth and early adulthood. The assumption that boomers hold high control or agency beliefs aligns with the assumption that their formative years are essential for how they are as older adults. Of key relevance here is the hopeful and prosperous era of the 1960s, and increased opportunities for education, women's labor force participation, fertility control, political activism, and civil rights – all of which point to increased expectations to have an impact on the world. These movements would have affected individuals whether they took part in them or not.

In the literature, control beliefs, or expectations, are often termed "sense of control". Although different terms are used, all refer to individuals' belief and expectation that their actions can affect their world (Mirowsky & Ross, 1998). Sense of control is a vital psychological resource, repeatedly found to predict positive outcomes such as psychological wellbeing, physical health, and mortality

(for reviews, see Gerstorf et al., 2019, Slagsvold & Sørensen, 2013). These positive outcomes are primarily related to the *beliefs* about being able to control, regardless of whether these beliefs are correct or not (Skinner 1996). Part of the explanation is that positive control beliefs increase the likelihood that individuals will *try* to exert influence. Control beliefs are unevenly distributed, found to be positively associated with education, to be higher among men than women (Ross & Mirowsky, 2002), and to decrease with age as resources and health deteriorate (Slagsvold & Sørensen 2013). Theories of sense of control are elaborate and studies extensive (e.g. Skinner, 1996; Lachman et.al. 2011). Here we are interested in sense of control in a rather crude way; as an indicator of generational differences in expectations of influence and control.

Research questions: how different are the Baby boomers?

Using the large international value surveys (European Values Study and World Values Survey), numerous studies on changes and differences in values have been published. We have, however, not found empirical studies which compare value orientations across different historical generations when they were at the same age, as we do here.

An important part of the boomer narratives is that their typical characteristics are attributed to formative experiences and that a considerable generational change in values and ways of life took place between the pre-war generation and boomers.

We thus ask: *Do values and control beliefs differ between aging boomers and the pre-war generations when they were at the same age?*

The boomers' educational level is higher than in previous generations, especially among women, and education is positively associated with more liberal values (Schwarz 2007, Dunn, 2011) and higher sense of control (Mirowsky & Ross, 2007; Slagsvold & Sørensen, 2013). To explain the "boomer character" it is thus important to take the formative effect that education may have into consideration.

We thus ask: *Do education explain some of the differences between Baby boomers and previous generations regarding values and expectations of control?*

The above-mentioned "boomer blaming", primarily voiced by younger people, stems from negative perceptions of the boomers' selfish motivations, priorities, and behavior. But how different are the boomers compared to younger generations in terms of values and control expectations? Cross-sectional studies consistently find that younger age cohorts rate individualistic values somewhat higher and traditional values somewhat lower than older generations (e.g. Borg et al., 2017, Fung et.al. 2016). Therefore, we will concentrate on three values posited to be especially characteristic for boomers, namely, hedonism, lack of benevolence, and universalism: boomers are assumed to rate hedonism higher and benevolence and universalism lower than younger generations.

We thus ask: *Do we find differences between Baby boomers and later generations in hedonism, benevolence, and universalism, and in expectations of control?*

Data and measurements

Data come from the Norwegian study of life-course, aging, and generation (NorLAG; doi:10.18712/norlag3_1) (Slagsvold et al., 2012, Veenstra et al., 2021). NorLAG is a panel survey with data from a population-based sample drawn from the non-institutionalized population. Data were collected in 2002–2003 with a sample aged 40–80 (t1); in 2007 with a sample aged 18–80 (t2); and 2017 with a sample aged 50–90 (t3). Statistics Norway collected data via telephone interviews, postal (t1 and t2) or web-based (t3) questionnaire, and register information (e.g. education and marital status). In the analyses we include respondents with information from both telephone interview and postal questionnaire. The response rate in the three consecutive waves are 67, 61, and 68%, and respectively 75, 77, and 73% of respondents (who took part in the telephone interview) returned the self-completion questionnaire (Veenstra et al., 2021).

We define Baby boomers as those born between 1945 and 1955, aged 62–72 in 2017 (t3). The literature sometimes defines Baby boomers as those born between 1945 and 1964 and distinguish between early and late boomers (e.g. Hughes & O'Rand 2004). Here we concentrate on early boomers. The pre-war generation is defined as those born between 1930 and 1940.

Table 9.1 shows the sample's cross-generational differences in gender and educational level. Among the pre-war generation (born 1939–1940) and early boomers (born 1945–1955), 50% of the sample is women, whereas women are somewhat overrepresented in the younger subsample. The educational level is higher for each generation. In the pre-war generation, 37% have more than 12 years of education, compared to 62% among the early boomers, 79% among the late boomers (born 1959–1966), and 85% in generation X (born 1967–1977), and Millennials (born 1978–1988). In analyses we use information about early boomers both from 2017 and 2007, and 2007 data are specified in parenthesis.

Table 9.1 Educational level and gender across the sample of generations (%)

	Silent/ Pre-war generation 1930–1940	*Early boomers 1945–1955*	*Late boomers 1956–1966*	*Generation X 1967–1977*	*Millennial generation 1978–1988*
Year of data collection	2002	2017 (2007)	2007	2007	2007
Women	49.8	50.2 (52.4)	56.1	56.5	58.4
Education, years of schooling					
<10	28.7	11.7 (13.7)	17.2	8.0	14.3
11–12	34.1	26.7 (28.3)	11.6	6.6	0
13–14	14.6	22.6 (23.1)	33.6	32.0	47.1
14–17	16.3	29.6 (27.4)	28.8	38.9	33.3
18+	6.3	9.3 (7.5)	8.9	14.5	5.3
N	1017	1714 (2354)	2313	2283	1519

Generational terms from "Generational names in the United States" provided by Population Reference Bureau.

Dependent variables

Values are measured by a slightly modified version of the "Portrait Value Questionnaire" (Schwartz, 2007), which comprises 21 questions that tap 10 basic values: stimulation, self-direction, tradition, conformity, security, achievement, power, universalism, benevolence, and hedonism. These are combined to represent more general value dimensions; "openness to change vs conservatism", and "self-enhancement vs self-transcendence", which again can be arranged along the dimension "individualism vs collectivism". The respondents are presented with descriptions of a person and asked how much they resemble this person on a six-point scale from "very much like me" to "not like me at all". Examples are ("It is important for this person"): "to help people around him/her and to care for their wellbeing"; "to have fun"; "to be humble and modest and not to draw attention to him-/herself". The information is collected in the postal questionnaire. Value scores range from 1 to 6 (high degree).

In the analyses of generational differences, we will comment on all value orientations, but concentrate on hedonism and self-transcendence (universalism and benevolence) because having or not having these values is part of the picture drawn of boomers.

Expectations of control is measured with the Personal Mastery Scale (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). It comprises seven questions that on a 5-point Likert scale measures agreement to statements such as "what happens to me in the future mostly depends on me", "there is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life", and "I can do just about anything I really set my mind to do". Value scores range from 7 to 35 (high sense of control).

Control variables

In the analyses we control for *gender*, as the literature finds gender differences in some values (Lyons et al., 2005; Schwartz 2007). One might also expect that cultural and social changes in their youth affected women's sense of control more than men's, possibly also their values, as increased gender equality was an important issue in the boomers' youth. We also control for *education*, as education levels are higher among boomers than previous generations and it is known to influence values in a more liberal direction. Research also consistently find a strong and positive association between educational level and sense of control. Educational level is measured in five categories corresponding to years of schooling: <10, 11–12, 13–14, 14–17, and 18+.

Analyses

To compare similar age groups (ages 62–72) in analyses of differences between Baby boomers and the pre-war generation, we use data of boomers collected in

2017 (t3) and data from the pre-war generation collected in 2002 (t1). When comparing boomers and younger generations, we use data from 2007 (t2), because this is the only wave that comprises younger adults (age 18+). Boomers in these analyses are aged 52–62.

We use analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the significance of differences across age cohort groups. We use X^2 tests to compare the proportions, and Pearson correlations to assess intercorrelations between continuous variables. All multivariate analyses use ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions. We used analyses of covariance (procedure General Linear Model in SPSS) to estimate adjusted mean levels of values and control beliefs by age groups.

Results

Comparing pre-war generation and Baby boomers: do we find signs of a generational shift in values?

In Figure 9.1, we show differences in the five basic individualistic values: hedonism (pleasure, enjoy life, self-indulgence), power (authority, wealth, preserving a public image), achievement (being successful, capable, ambitious, influential), stimulation (a varied and exciting life), and self-direction (freedom, being independent, choosing own goals).

Baby boomers rate all individualistic values higher than the pre-war generation, and the largest difference is observed for hedonism.

Boomers are also blamed for being selfish and greedy, which can be illustrated by (not holding) collectivistic values (Figure 9.2). Two of the collectivistic values

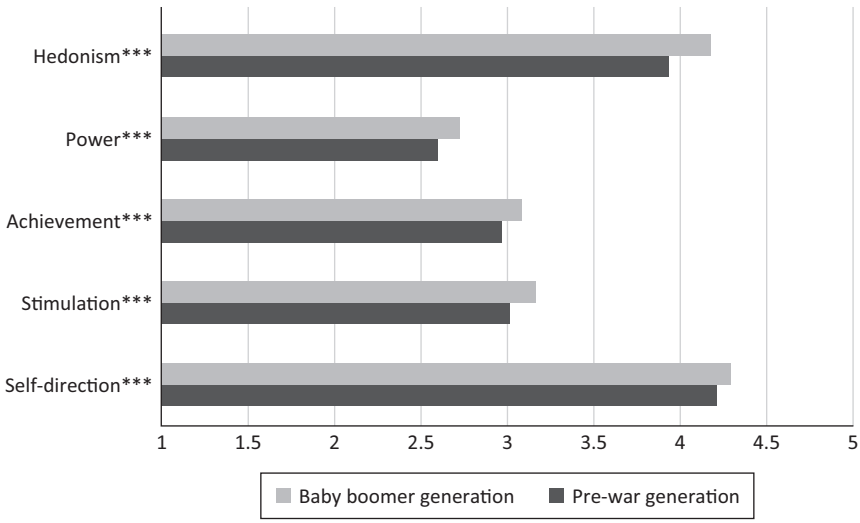

Figure 9.1 Individualistic values. Mean score in the ages 62–72. Baby boomers (measured in 2017) and pre-war generation (measured in 2002). ***$p < 0.001$

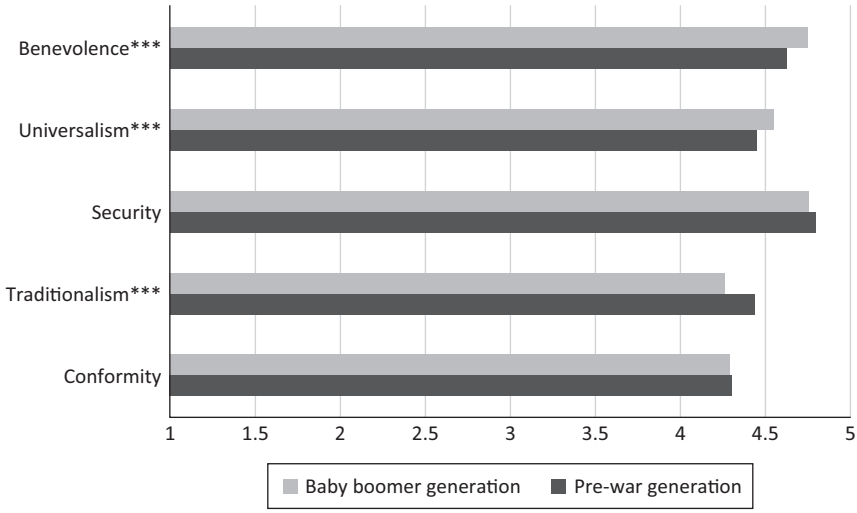

Figure 9.2 Collectivistic values. Mean score in the ages 62–72. Baby boomers (measured in 2017) and pre-war generation (measured in 2002). ***$p < 0.001$

Table 9.2 Regression of sense of control, effect of belonging to Baby boomer vs pre-war generation, gender, and education. Partial eta squared, *** p< .001

	Model 1	*Model 2*
Baby boomer generation (vs pre-war generation)	0.29***	0.25***
Gender		0.01***
Education (1–5)		0.02***
Adjusted R^2	0.29	0.31

may be regarded as the opposite of selfishness and greediness: benevolence (being helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal, responsible) and universalism (valuing broad-mindedness, social justice, equality, unity with the nature).

Benevolence and universalism are rated somewhat higher by the Baby boomers than the pre-war generation, in other words, boomers do not seem to hold more selfish values than the pre-war generation when they were at the same age (Table 9.2). However, the pre-war generation values tradition more than the boomers (being humble, accepting their portion in life, devout, moderate, having respect for tradition). This is only one of the collectivistic values that the pre-war generation rates higher than the boomers.

We also see that both generations rate collectivistic values higher than individualistic values; whereas all five collectivistic values on average are rated above 4

by both generations (Figure 9.2), of the individualistic values this is the case only for the self-direction value (Figure 9.1).

Are value differences across generations attributable to educational differences? When we take education into consideration, we find that among the individualistic values only hedonism remains statistically significant (ancillary analyses, not shown). In fact, when controlling for education, the higher emphasis on hedonism among Baby boomers versus the older generation increases somewhat, as education is negatively related to hedonism and hedonism is rated higher by the boomer generation. As for collectivistic values, we find that boomers rate only benevolence and universalism higher also when we control for education and gender (not shown).

To briefly comment on the influence of education and gender (not shown), we find that education bears significant positive associations to all individualistic values and negative associations to three collectivistic values beyond the effect of generation. Education is unrelated to benevolence and universalism. Furthermore, we find that men rate individualistic values somewhat higher than women, except hedonism, which men and women rate equally high. Women rate collectivistic values somewhat higher, except conformity, where there is no gender difference. Gender differences are slightly larger among the pre-war generation compared to the boomers. We also find significant interaction effects between generation and education for three collectivistic values; security, tradition, and conformity (which add up to what Schwartz (2007) calls "conservation"). The general notion that the higher educated are less collectivistic is stronger in the pre-war generation than among the boomers.

Comparing pre-war generation and Baby boomers: do we find signs of a generational shift in sense of control

Baby boomers report a considerably higher sense of control (mean 26.5) than the pre-war generation (mean 20.7) (when they were at the same age). This difference could, because of the relationship between education and sense of control (e.g. Mirowsky and Ross 2007), be explained by generational differences in educational level. This is, however, not the case, as sense of control is only slightly reduced when we control for education and gender. Gender and education are related to sense of control but do only marginally reduce the effect of generational affiliation Table 9.2.

Partial eta squared is more than ten times higher for generational affiliation (0.25) than for education (0.02) and gender (0.01), meaning that which generation you belong to means a lot more for the level of sense of control than do education and gender.

Comparing Baby boomers and younger generations: how different are they with regard to values?

We find a steady increase in individualist value orientation from older (the Baby boomers) to younger generations (Figure 9.3), in line with previous studies. The decrease in collectivistic values is quite modest, however (Figure 9.4).

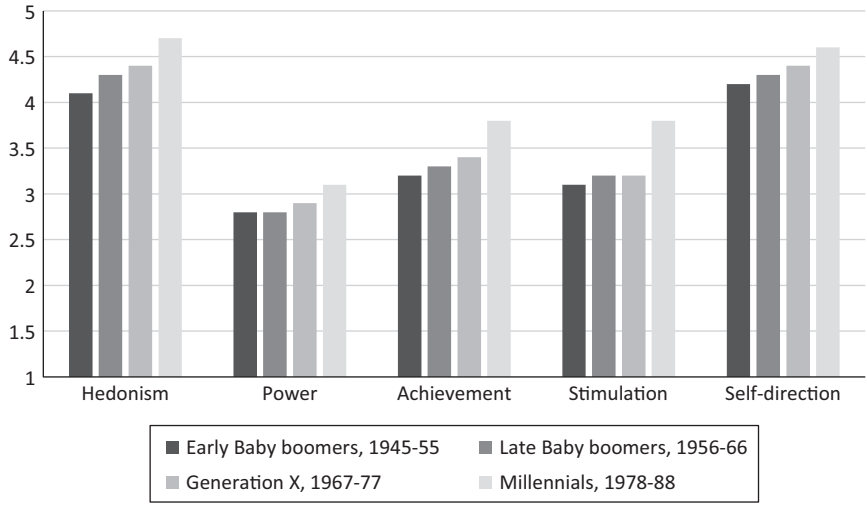

Figure 9.3 Mean levels of individualistic values across four generations. Data from 2007.

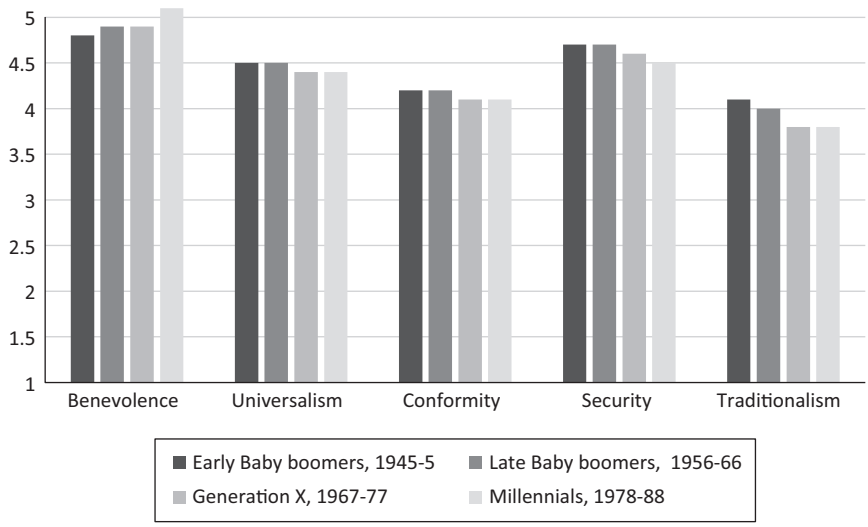

Figure 9.4 Mean levels of collectivistic values across four generations. Data from 2007.

As explained, we are primarily interested in generational differences in hedonism, benevolence, and universalism, indicative of traits that the Baby boomers are assumed to have in excess: self-indulgence and egocentrism. While the Baby boomers value hedonism somewhat higher than the pre-war generation (see Figure 9.1), the succeeding generations value hedonism even higher, and significantly ($p < 0.001$) more so for each generation (Figure 9.3).

Similarly, we find no indication that Baby boomers are less benevolent or less universalistic-oriented than younger-age cohorts (Figure 9.4). The Baby boomers are as benevolent as the generations born during 1956–1977, but somewhat less ($p < 0.001$) than the youngest generation, aged 19–29 at the time of data collection.

Differences between generations in hedonism, benevolence, and universalism remain when we control for education and gender (not shown). The effects of education come above the effects of generation, with the same tendencies as we found for the pre-war generation and Baby boomers; gender differences are small for hedonism while women value benevolence and universalism higher. Education is negatively associated with hedonism, while educational differences in benevolence and universalism is only marginal.

Comparing Baby boomers and younger generations: how different are they with regard to sense of control?

Sense of control is considerably higher among Baby boomers than among the pre-war generation (Table 9.2). Compared to younger generations however, the Baby boomers report somewhat lower control expectations (Figure 9.5), also when we adjust for education and gender. Education and gender are significantly related to sense of control beyond the effect of generational affiliation.

Summary and discussion

Since the turn of the century, aging Baby boomers have increasingly been viewed as a "problem group" for the welfare state, and their characters have often been portrayed in negative terms in media and everyday language. Shaped by their formative experiences, boomers are often depicted as hedonistic and selfish, and

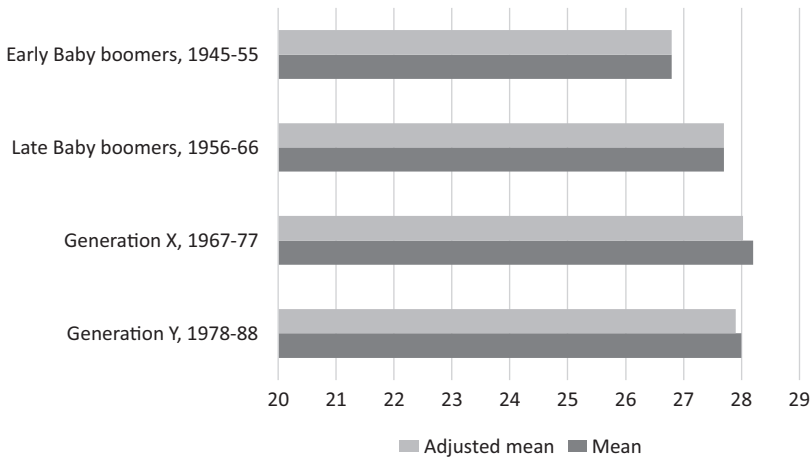

Figure 9.5 Sense of control (range 7–35). Unadjusted and adjusted mean levels across four generations.

to enter old age with higher levels of consumption and demands on the welfare state than previous generations. Researchers who have studied images of boomers have mostly interpreted them as social constructions shaped by political events and economic setbacks, and concomitant worries for the future (Phillipson 2008, White 2013, Bristow, 2015). However, despite pervasive scholarly and lay person interests in boomers' moral character, their values and attitudes have been subject to little empirical study.

Using data from NorLAG we have tried to shed light on the validity of the negative assumptions about boomers by comparing values and control beliefs across generations. We have concentrated on three values of key relevance. The first is hedonism, which taps individual emphasis on enjoyment of life, pleasure, and self-indulgence. The two other values are benevolence (being helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal, responsible) and universalism (valuing broadmindedness, social justice, equality, unity with the nature), which is the exact opposite of being selfish, reckless, and greedy.

Our first aim was to compare boomers (in 2017) with the pre-war generation (in 2002), when both cohorts were aged 62–72, and assess generational differences in values and control beliefs. Consistent with popular beliefs, boomers rate traditional values somewhat lower and individualistic values higher, with the largest difference observed for hedonism. However, the image of boomers as less benevolent and universalistic is not confirmed: in fact, boomers hold these values *higher* than the preceding generation. These unconditional (bivariate) comparisons are highly relevant as impressions of different generations are likely formed based on an overall impression, without factoring in compositional features. However, education is perhaps the feature that varies the most between the generations and that also relate to values and control beliefs. When we control for education, the only generational differences that remain significant are for hedonism, benevolence, and universalism, which means that boomers' greater individualism likely stems from the formative influence of a higher educational level.

Higher hedonism corresponds with popular narratives and notions that aging boomers have kept the lifestyle and mentality acquired in their liberated youth – a taste for pleasure and self-indulgence. Other notions, however, that boomers are selfish, reckless, and greedy are not supported, as boomers value benevolence and universalism somewhat higher than the pre-war generation. Being children of the 60s, this finding is perhaps not surprising, quite the contrary. Civil rights, anti-war, and equality were among the central values in the boomers' youth, when they assumedly acquired their values. That said, while the differences for hedonism are quite large, the differences for benevolence and universalism are quite modest, albeit statistically significant.

The most notable observed difference is for sense of control and indicates a real change in orientation, in line with Mannheim's notion of generational shifts. Having high control beliefs is obviously related to efforts to realize aims and values. People may, for example, not act on hedonistic values unless they believe they have the capacity to influence their life, or that it indeed is influenceable.

Hence, the crucial difference between the pre-war and boomer generations may be control beliefs more than values. Even with similar rating of hedonism or other values, boomers are more likely to act on them. Similarly, although individualistic values such as those for power (authority, wealth, preserving a public image), achievement (being successful, capable, ambitious, influential), stimulation (a varied and exciting life), and self-direction (freedom, being independent, choosing own goals) differ only moderately between the generations, the boomers' high control beliefs may be critical for their realization. If so, the image of boomers as clearly different from the generations before them may hold more truth than differences in values alone indicate.

The negative images of aging boomers seem especially pervasive among younger generations, implying that they perceive themselves to be less hedonistic, selfish, and reckless than boomers. These notions are not supported by our data, however. On the contrary, compared with the younger generations, boomers have lower controls beliefs, value hedonism less, and value benevolence and universalism equally high. As such, the younger is more "boomer-like" than the boomers themselves.

That aging boomers seem more individualistic and agentic than the older generation but less so than younger generations supports previous studies showing boomers to be a "bridging" (Leach et al. 2013) or "crossroad" (Karisto 2007) generation that combines attributes (attitudes, lifestyle, etc.) from both former and later generations.

Why then are Baby boomers blamed for having these negative characteristics? One reason may be a misplaced causal attribution of unequal opportunities and resources between generations, as many researchers on boomer images have pointed to (e.g. Phillipson et.al., 2008; Bristow 2015). The argument is that younger generations are blaming their relatively difficult situation and uncertain future (e.g. regarding economic conditions, housing costs, work opportunities, and climate change) on the boomers' historically selfish and reckless priorities, whereas the situation more reasonably stems from other sociopolitical events and developments. A different explanation is more psychological. We found the values of the pre-war generation to be more in line with a traditional image of old people: as having a humble and modest lifestyle, driven by duty more than pleasure and accepting one's portion in life. In this respect, the boomers violate the picture of being old; they resemble the younger generations more than the traditional elderly. As scholars have pointed out, the boomer generation in many ways rejects traditional approaches to ageing (Biggs et al., 2007; Marshall and Rahman, 2015). Their ideal of aging tends to be one of youthfulness and vitality: valuing not only activity but also realization of the self, not only health but also fitness, and not resignation but agency and handling new challenges (Marshall and Rahman 2015). We speculate that aging boomers' possible insistence on youthfulness and rejection of old age may trigger negative emotions and create or reinforce opinions of boomers' self-centeredness and irresponsibility, especially among the younger age groups. Boomers' rejection of being old may thus be one source underpinning boomer blaming. The images of generations of elderly, and

differences between them, are stereotyped and not representative, but all the same they may create strong emotions.

Seemingly, contrary to the boomer-blaming phenomenon, Norwegian studies indicate that younger generations are slightly more solidary with older generations than vice versa (Bay & West-Pedersen chapter 4; Daatland et al., 2009). One reason may be that Baby boomers are not perceived as truly belonging to the "elderly" of "old". The boomer type of the elderly may instead stir some negative emotions, as indicated in a study which found that when elderly workers were labeled "Baby boomer", they were viewed more negatively by management students than when they were labeled "older employee" (Cox et.al 2018). While the label "Baby boomer" may generate positive associations of youthfulness for the boomers themselves, the same label may trigger more negative associations for younger generations.

Intergeneration tensions and generationalism

To explain inequality and disagreements between the younger generations and the Baby boomers by prevailing characteristics and traits of their members is a kind of generationalism, i.e. a systematic appeal to the concept of generation in narrating social and political issues (Purhonen 2016). White (2013) holds that this kind of simplified and exaggerated view of generation as the cause of social and cultural problems seems to be in vogue and replaces critical explanations focusing on policy, class, or gender. The focus is, e.g., on the Baby-boomer generation instead of problems of economic inequality, access to higher education, pensions, housing, or climate changes. White (op. cit) also points to some aspects he sees as characteristic for today's "generation-talk", among others that it is strongly oriented to the future and has a sense of foreboding, which is yet to manifest. The young are the victims, the aged are the problem, and positive associations to the aged is punctured, e.g. that the boomers in their youth were campaigning for liberty and a better world.

There is a widespread scholarly concern, found in almost every article about images of boomers, that this kind of generationalism, negative imaging of boomers in the media and elsewhere, may contribute to tensions and conflicts between generations. It is thus essential to nuance or dispel the stereotypes to mitigate tensions, and here we have focused on parts of the boomer narrative. We find that although boomers differ from previous generations in hedonism and control beliefs, they are primarily like younger generations in these aspects.

Limitations

One potential caveat concerns the representativeness of Norwegian generations for those in other countries. During the last century, Norway transitioned from being among the poorer to become among the wealthiest and strongest welfare state in Europe. Norway was also a vanguard in terms of developments known as the "second demographic transition", and rather early

adopted liberal attitudes to, e.g. authorities, gender equality, sexual relations, divorce, and child-rearing. That said, the focus here is on the boomers' values and control beliefs, and these were likely formed in their formative years. Because Norway was quite similar to other countries in terms of GDP and social and cultural developments in the 60s and 70s, Norwegian boomers are probably rather prototypical of the Western boomers. The younger generations, however, have had a more fortunate situation in Norway than in most other countries. Although Norway, as other countries, is challenged by an ageing population, the Norwegian economy has been strong and able to handle the economic challenges without serious austerity policy or cutbacks in welfare. These differences may have affected younger generations' values and control beliefs differently across countries, and if so, probably by reducing younger generations' control beliefs, but hardly to a level below the Baby boomers'. However, the conditions for tensions between boomers and younger generations over economic equity may be weaker in Norway, while questions concerning climate changes and measures to handle them is certainly emerging as a topic where generationalism seems to arise – the young are pictured as the victims of boomers' reckless and greedy consumption.

The striking divide in control beliefs between the pre-war generation and the boomers warrants consideration and could reflect methodological weaknesses. Time of data collection may matter, and the fact that we compare data on older adults collected in 2002 (pre-war generation) and 2017 (boomers). Although control beliefs are rather stable, they are also affected by new experiences and changing environment (or "Zeitgeist"). From 2002 to 2017, control beliefs may have increased in parallel in all age cohorts, as shown in NorLAG data from 2002 vs 2007 (Slagsvold & Sørensen 2013). This development does, however, not influence the fact that when the pre-war generation was aged 62–72, they differed markedly from boomers at the same age, especially regarding hedonism and control beliefs.

Another, and potentially more serious, caveat concerns the stronger selection in the 2017 vs the 2002 data. While the pre-war generation is part of a representative random sample from the first wave of data collection in 2002, the sample of boomers in 2017 are "stayers" who had participated in at least one previous wave. Attrition between waves is larger for lower educated, the aged, and women (Veenstra et al., 2021). Although we control for these variables, other variables with impact on control beliefs may also influence attrition, especially physical and mental health. We have thus in ancillary analyses (not shown) used physical and mental health as additional controls and find that although these factors have strong effects on both sense of control and hedonism (but not on other values) they only marginally change the effect of generational affiliation.

Conclusion

We rhetorically asked whether Baby boomers are "another breed of older people" – regarding values and control beliefs. When comparing the boomers to the

pre-war generation, the answer is "probably yes". Our findings suggest a noticeable generational shift between the pre-war generation and boomers in control beliefs but also in hedonism. As values and control beliefs impact priorities and behavior, the boomers may be a different type of older adults than we are used to – more hedonistic, agentic, and possibly more demanding.

However, the boomers are probably much the same "breed of old people" which we will see when the next generations become old, as their values and control beliefs are similar. But times can change, often in unpredictable ways. COVID-19, which hits people 65+ the hardest, may reduce boomers' control beliefs and change their ideas of aging and old age. Climate crisis may bring about fundamental changes in values and ways of life for young age cohorts in their formative years and create a new set of common behaviors, feelings, and thoughts, i.e. a shared generational consciousness based on basically other formative experiences – which can make them to a generation in Mannheim's sense – that further on will stay with them in their old age.

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10 Social generations in popular culture

Ida Tolgensbakk

Introduction

Community making – creating groups of people who have something in common – also means creating boundaries towards the *other* (Barth 1969). Social generations today seem to be popular in the public imagination as a means of creating such boundaries. This chapter discusses how the concept of social generation – an approach originally stemming from the work of Karl Mannheim – seems to have transitioned from academic interests to popular culture. Importantly, it has also moved back into academia, with popular terms being used in scholarly works. This is not necessarily negative but definitely bears the risk of superficial and trivial analyses.

In the following, I will start by presenting Mannheim's concept of generation and the main ways it has been applied in research in the post-war decades. The different applications, not surprisingly, reveal that comparison across contexts on the basis of generational terms is bound to be difficult. My main point in this text, however, is to discuss whether we can see the contours of the idea of a social generation becoming an emic term, that is, a term used by people to self-identify as belonging to one group or the other. Does it have a place in how people view themselves in the world? I will discuss these questions by examining how social generation is used in contemporary popular culture.

Still a problem of generations

German sociologist Karl Mannheim posited in his 1928 essay on what he called the *problem* of generations that important societal events would give youth of the same age groups similar impressions, giving them something in common (Mannheim 1952 (1928)). With his approach, he suggested that we could similarly view social generations as we do socioeconomic class, or gender. The "problem" he was discussing was that of the progress of history: different birth cohorts being influenced in different ways by the same historical experiences, becoming the polyphony of thinking within the same era (Mannheim 1952 (1928):283) that together create a harmony, a zeitgeist. Mannheim's concept of generation combines the biological rhythms of birth and ageing with historical events beyond

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the individual. In doing so, he attempted to reach an understanding of how society changes – how individuals change and how individuals change society. In other words, it is a concept that merges two approaches to time: the external and the internal. The term "generation" was originally a term reserved for kinship relations: between parents and offspring, and the time passing between the two. Mannheim's use is close to the meaning of (age or birth) cohort, that is, all individuals born around the same time. To avoid confusion, Jane Pilcher suggested using the term "social generation" when referring to a Mannheimian understanding of the term (Pilcher 1994:483).

Mannheim's concept has become incredibly influential and has been referred to, applied, tested, and criticised within his own field – the sociology of knowledge – and beyond for almost a century. With what seems to be renewed interest in the concept post-2000, there is reason to take a closer look at what it has been used for. Later researchers have tried applying his notion of generation to studies of the life course, historical processes, societal conflict, and more. Different age groups will experience different historical events – such as war or technological change – from different angles. Demographically, birth cohorts rhythmically differ in size. Building on Bourdieu, June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner theorised that these rhythms will result in relatively passive generations being followed by relatively more collectively acting generations (Edmunds and Turner 2002, Edmunds and Turner 2005). Some scholars portray these processes as universal or global. Others focus on local reactions to dramatic events and developments. Importantly, the concept of social generations has moved outside of academia and scholarship and has become an everyday concept used by people to describe themselves and to discuss societal change. It has also proved extremely useful for trend research and labour market consultancies trying to understand and predict – hence profiting on – new generations of youth. With or without explicit reference to Mannheim´s concept, people will speak of "*generation gaps"*, reminisce nostalgically about "*our generation"* or put their hopes to the "*new generation"*. The term has, in short, become a way for people to make sense of their worlds, whether as scholars or otherwise.

Developments in the concept of social generations

It seems almost natural that a German writer would become interested in the issue of social change between generations after the First World War. "The Lost Generation" was the name given by Gertrude Stein to denote a group of American writers in Paris after the war, but the term has since been used to describe all those who were young during that war (and, metaphorically, all kinds of youth cohorts in socioeconomic trouble). Part of the birth cohorts that came of age during the war was literally lost – dead on the battlefields – whilst the surviving rest felt spiritually lost. Equally natural it may seem that Mannheim's text was translated to English in 1952, when another war generation was coming to terms with living in their own post-war world. However, other ways of seeing social change, and youth, were more dominant at the time: structural functionalism

and the work on youth subculture coming out of Birmingham. Scholars did use Mannheim's social generation in some research fields, but the perspective was not the dominant one. As Woodman writes, only until the years after 2000 have social generations and the writings of Mannheim had a real revival (Woodman 2016).

The main critique of Mannheim's concept of social generations as an analytical tool is that it is too vague to apply to empirical work and that it does not sufficiently consider the obvious, large intra-generational differences. However, Mannheim stressed that for individuals born within the same year span to become a generation, they must share social location. He also discussed the fact that within the same group, people may have more than one way of reacting to the same experiences – creating potential polar responses (Woodman 2016:21).

In recent decades, several efforts have been made to apply social generations to empirical data or to develop the concept into overarching theories. I have already mentioned Edmunds and Turners' work on the rhythm of active generations following passive ones. Others have, for instance, used generational concepts to overcome what they perceived as a reductionist focus on youth as a transition into adulthood (Cohen and Ainley 2000). In a critique of what they called "a new emerging orthodoxy in youth studies", France and Roberts placed the resurgence of generation as an analytical approach to the work at the Melbourne Youth Research Centre (France and Roberts 2015) and their longitudinal Life Patterns research programme. The work of the Melbourne researchers insisted on generation as an analytical framework with explanatory possibilities (Wyn and Woodman 2006). But long before the revival of social generation as an object of academic study post-2000, the concept took on its own life in popular writings. The most influential of these was the writings of Strauss and Howe, starting with the book *Generations: the History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (Strauss and Howe 1991). What has become known as the Strauss-Howe generational theory posits that history is characterised by recurring personas, four in number, changing every 20-25 years. After a completed cycle of four generations, a crisis appears. The theory is definitely not supported by empirical evidence, but this has not lessened its popularity in, for instance, management literature, marketing – and the popular imagination. Edmunds and Turner's work can be seen as one variety of this way of thinking about sociocultural generational change, although they present it in a much more serious and empirically founded manner.

I will argue that parts of the underlying ideas of Strauss and Howe – the inevitable changes that spur (or follow) generational conflict, the recurring waves of active, reactive, reactionary, and revolutionary youth groups – have struck the popular mind. They present a simple, often dramatic, way of discussing historical and social change. They offer an attractive narrative of us versus them, and (often) a call for immediate action. In his 2013 article, Jonathan White named the phenomenon "generationalism", defined as "the systematic appeal to the concept of generation in narrating the social and political" (White 2013:216). White discussed British popular writings on generation and identified five themes or ways in which generation is used in these writings: as a historical explanation, as

periodisation, as sources of community, as a moral language to identify injustice, and in discussions of social division.

Generationalism has also seeped into scholarly works. This creates conceptual cloudiness, not only when generational terms originating in an Anglo-American context is used on data from outside of the United States and the United Kingdom, or in comparative studies, but also when named social generations are taken for granted as social objects.

Globalising local (Anglo-American) terms

The generation terms that have become the most prevalent to denote youth groups in the 20th century are the *Silent Generation*, the *Baby Boomers*, *Generation X*, and *Millennials*. They are used across the Anglo-American area and are adapted in different versions in related languages and cultures. Sometimes, these terms are easily translatable and relevant to languages and cultures outside the Anglo-American area: for instance, many European countries experienced a baby boom after the Second World War, and in many countries, this was a generation that grew up to unprecedented access to education and wealth. However, the terms do not, of course, fit everywhere, and even when they fit, they may denote slightly different things.

One version of operationalising Mannheim's theory of social generations is applying current generational terms to discuss local demographical developments. One example is when Karisto, in the article "Finnish Baby Boomers and the Emergence of the Third Age", used the Anglo-American term as a starting point. He discussed how Finland emerged from the war against the Soviet Union, then the Lapland War, with an extraordinary increase in birth rates, which differs from other European countries in that it was both very large and very short (Karisto 2007). Karisto mentioned in passing that a certain subsection of Finnish Baby Boomers identify as "the 60s generation", referring to the political turmoil of their youth, but that most would refer to themselves merely as the "big age group", which is the Finnish term most equivalent to Baby Boomers. He then went on to his main point – the life course of Finnish Baby Boomers, how they changed and were changed by society through urbanisation, modernisation, and structural changes, and how they are now re-shaping older age.

Another way of using American terms for post-war social generations is explicitly re-developing them. For the Netherlands, inspired by Mannheim, Becker suggested five generations (see Figure 10.1) and argued that these may be relevant for other European societies (Becker 1997, 2000). He called the equivalent of the American Baby Boomers the "protest generation", which fits well with the way these birth cohorts are spoken of in other Western European countries. Again, some of the Anglo-American delineations and terms fit rather well, whereas others do not.

In Norway, the big birth cohorts of the first post-war years resemble those of the United Kingdom and the United States. However, the social generation of these birth cohorts has had a competing name to the English term Baby Boomers. *Sekstiåttere* – the generation of 1968 – became the general term for all those taking part in the European-wide

student-led protests of the late 1960s. Since this term has been so common, Norwegian Baby Boomers have, perhaps more often than in Anglo-American contexts, been seen as revolutionaries (and, lately, as revolutionaries failing their cause as they now retire from public life). The following generation, Generation Xers, has often been nicknamed *Ironigenerasjonen* (the Ironic Generation) in Norwegian, because of the popularity of irony and sarcasm as comedic genres of the time (effectively erasing, for instance, the environmental activism of the same age cohorts). Aakvaag is one of the Norwegian scholars most active in naming the Norwegian 21st-century generations, at one point proposing the term *Generasjon Lydig* (Generation Obedient), for the 1980-1990 birth cohorts (Aakvaag 2013). This was rather heavily debated in Norwegian media, but that term, and the similar term *Generasjon Prestasjon* (Generation Achievements), for the cohorts born around 2000 (Madsen 2018) seems to stick, at least for now. Beyond these terms, it is common in Norwegian-language social media to use Anglo-American terms to debate local and specific phenomena. This does not mean that Norwegian terms are not also used. For instance, the terms Millennials or Generation Y may be used when discussing pop cultural issues, while *Utøyagenerasjonen* (the Utøya generation, referring to the site of the terror attacks of 2011) may be used about the same birth cohorts when discussing political engagement amongst young adults.

Spain has a distinctive cultural and economic trajectory through the 21st century compared with the United States, the United Kingdom and most of Northern Europe. To a certain degree, Spain stayed out of the two world wars, but was instead impacted by a civil war from 1936 to 1939, which ended with the Franco dictatorship (1939–1975), isolating the country and holding back economic development for decades (Díez-Nicolás 2008). Díez-Nicolas, studying values, therefore proposed very different timings of the social generational changes in Spain. For instance, he named those with birth years of 1937-1951 the "Economic Development Generation" (Díez-Nicolás 2008:251). Contrary to Díez-Nicolas, Caballero and Baigorri found the Anglo-American terms useful, although with adjustments (Caballero and Baigorri 2019). They argued explicitly in reference to Strauss and Howe and chose terms that are very similar to the Anglo-American ones. To classify Spanish generations, they proposed the terms "Silenced" (born 1914-1928), "Francoist" (1929-1943), "Baby Boom" (1944-1958), "Generation X" (1959-1973), "Generation Y" (1974-1988), and "Generation Z" (1989-2003).

For the latest generational youth groups, Spanish media has proposed a variety of names, such as *Generación táctil*, referring to the youngest children of today, growing up with smartphones and digital schools. *Generación perdida* (Lost Generation) is perhaps the most commonly used term for what many other countries know as Millennials. In Spain, which was particularly hit hard by the financial crisis, these birth cohorts finished their education only to enter a labour market that had nothing to offer them. Some of these young adults now find their jobs in danger for the second time in a country particularly vulnerable to decline in tourism following COVID-19, something that has not been lost on Spanish commenters (Pérez-Lanzac 2020). Interestingly, at one point, a group of their grandparents (in family generational terms) chose the generational term *iaioflautas* (a play on the derogatory *perroflautas*, which is used to describe the young

Table 10.1 Social generational terms

The United States according to Strauss and Howe	*The Netherlands according to Becker*	*Spain according to Caballero and Baigorri*	*Norway according to Aakvaag*
1901–1924 G.I.	1910–1930 Pre-war	1914–1928 Silent	
1925–1942 Silent	1930–1940 Silent	1929–1943 Francoist	1920–1930s Gerhardsen Generation
1943–1960 Baby Boom	1940–1955 Protest	1944–1958 Baby Boom	1940–1950s The Generation of 1968
1961–1981 Generation X	1955–1970 Lost	1959–1973 Generation X	1960–1970s The Irony Generation
	1970– Pragmatic	1974–1988 Generation Y	1980–1990s Generation Obedient
		1989–2003 Generation Z	

Source: Adapted by the author from Caballero & Baigorri, 2019.

protesters against austerity measures following the financial crisis) to denote their dedication to once again protect the young.

A summary of some of the many re-developed social generational terms can be seen in Table 10.1.

"Generation" as an emic term

To a certain degree, the generalisation inherent in this method of naming generations can be useful for comparative purposes – explaining why value markers connected with different birth cohorts vary between those in Southern European and those in Northern European countries, or discussing the impact of large post-war birth cohorts in different countries. However, the act of naming is in itself powerful and should be used with caution. In the case of discussing sociocultural changes, it is perhaps more counterproductive than useful as an analytical tool. The risk of misunderstandings across cultural and linguistic borders is obvious: the Baby Boomers in Finland are not the same as Baby Boomers in the United States, and the Lost Generation in the Netherlands is not the same as the Ironic Generation in Norway. The Silent Generation refers to different age cohorts in Spain compared with what it refers to in the United States. Even when the comparative aspect is left aside, the risk of context-poor analysis and unhelpful generalisation is high. Although useful in some ways when discussing social change

as a phenomenon, it has proven difficult to operationalise as an analytical term (Aboim and Vasconcelos 2014, Eyerman and Turner 1998). However, as social generation as a concept has taken on a life of its own, it does make sense to take it seriously. It does make sense to, for instance, use the term as an entry point into an analysis of whether the beliefs the public has (or the politicians claim about) certain social generations match reality, as Slagsvold and Hansen did in this volume. I would also like to argue that there is value in studying what social generation is used *for* locally, emically, in popular or folk culture and media debates. Why has it caught on to such a degree that people use generational terms as identity markers, as pejoratives and as arguments? Speaking of generations as shorthand for complex societal phenomena is a popular way of creating clickbaits in online newspapers or stirring debate on social media and beyond around the world.

If we take Mannheim's theory of social generations seriously, we would need to consider that groups of people will have to name themselves for a social generation to be considered a social (and political) entity. This is an empirical question to be investigated in each specific case. Do groups of people belonging to roughly the same birth cohorts across places, perhaps even across national borders, gender, and class, consider themselves a group? Do they feel and express that they have something in common? In the last remaining pages of this chapter, I will show some examples of how social generational terms are used in contemporary culture.

Generation in popular culture

It does seem as if social generation as a way of expressing sociocultural belonging has become more common in popular culture (White 2013:216). Dating is difficult, but the real surge seems to be after approximately the year 2000, following (or being followed by) renewed scholarly interest. Strauss and Howe's many books on the topic have been bestsellers in the United States, and the many writers following in their footsteps have sold all over the world, whether as more scholarly work or within the self-help genre. Making analyses of the zeitgeist through naming, shaming, and/or trying to understand the current generation is big business. Psychologist Twenge published her book *Generation Me* in 2006, arguing that young adults of this generation are "tolerant, confident, open-minded, and ambitious, but also disengaged narcissistic, distrustful, and anxious" (Twenge 2006). It only took entrepreneurs Greenberg and Weber two years to publish their book *Generation We*, with the more positive view that this generation would progressively change the whole world for the better (Greenberg and Weber 2008). The Swedish consulting firm Kairos Futures was perhaps more strategic when it named its publication *The MeWe Generation*, stressing the nuances in a generation supposedly consisting of people who are "born individualist, but no hard-core egoists" (Lindgren, Fürth, and Lüthi 2005). None of these takes on the young generation seems to fit completely with any of White's five themes in British generationalism mentioned above. They are oriented towards categorising the coming generation and hence telling the future, rather than, e.g., warning of social division.

Beyond the scholarly and popular world of books on generation, other media also participate in the emerging discourse on social generations. Online media lures clicks from never-ending headlines such as "30 Things Only Those Who Are True '90s Kids Would Understand" (Prince, Undated) or "10 Indisputable Signs You're A Boomer" (Shah, 2014). These are the kinds of feel-good articles mostly created to start nostalgic discussions among readers (i.e. "Oh, do you remember?"), or debates about not being one of *those* kinds of '90s kids. They create a feeling of belonging, of being part of a group. They create a discourse similar to that of the social media phenomenon of user-created Facebook communities named "You Know You Grew Up in India in the 90s When".[1]

Generation on social media

I have conducted a simple social media analysis to obtain an overview of what generation as a concept looks like in the everyday popular imagination. Ten years ago, forums would have been the best way to find user-created communities spanning different age groups, and soon there will probably be other fields more relevant than Facebook. But at the moment, Facebook is perhaps the only place where all age groups (except the youngest) are at least somewhat present. I have concentrated on the terms related to Boomers and Generation X – again a convenience sample, as both groups are relatively present on Facebook.

These are often humour sites, but they are just as often sites for sharing pictures from that time (or a place at that time). Sometimes they start out as humour sites but develop into being groups for socialising – in the case of groups dedicated to a place, they are often popular amongst emigrants (Tolgensbakk 2017a). Being a member of such groups is, of course, mostly a pleasant online pastime, but it is also a statement. Both placing yourself in a decade and placing yourself as originating from a particular city means identifying with and making visible to others an aspect of who you consider yourself to be. Interestingly, most of these types of groups on internet forums and on Facebook are not naming themselves after social generations such as "Generation X" or the like. When referring to time, rather than place, as the identifier, people prefer to use decades rather than generations, both in English-language and Norwegian social media. Searching Facebook is not easy, and making a full comparison is not possible within the boundaries of this article. However, in January 2021, searching Facebook for open communities with "Generation X" or "Baby Boomer" in the name yielded mostly Facebook *sites*, whereas searching for communities with "70's kids" or "50's kids" in the name yielded mostly Facebook *groups*. Sites are usually created by administrators with something to sell or communicate and they have "followers". Groups are created with a community-building intention and have "members". Amongst the Norwegian-language communities, almost none is named using generations, but several use decades as a denominator, such as "Vi som husker 80og90tallet" (We who remember the 80s and 90s).[2]

Most of the generation-named communities on Facebook seem to be humour sites (e.g. "Edgy Gen-X Memes for Middle Aged Screams"[3]), but at least some of the decade-named communities seem to be intended less for humorous purposes

and more, or at least also, for socialising and bonding (such as "Grew Up in the 70s and 80s"[4]). Beyond that, they are rather similar in what activities they encourage – such as sharing high school pictures, reminiscing pop music hits, and, above all, sharing memes about how it was to be young in the chosen period.

Bonding, and bonding through boundaries

Some of the popular cultural approaches to defining social generational membership are not about bonding, but rather about the opposite – defining others or marking distance. These may be relatively benign, seemingly just explaining generational differences. Sites such as Buzzfeed have been publishing articles or, more precisely, Twitter-post collections, such as "31 Things Boomers Love That Most Millennials Just Don't" (Stopera, 2019) for several years. These are all ridiculing a chosen social generation, and create bonding through stating what we are *not*, rather than what we are. An important way of creating groups is after all to create boundaries towards the "other" (Barth 1969), and if we are to look functionally at what use the idea social generations are to the popular imagination, boundary-making is probably one of its most important traits.

An often-overlooked aspect of Mannheim's original discussion of the importance of social generations is his emphasis on how social generations are collectives created from shared experience (Purhonen 2016:97). Under certain circumstances, shared experience result in self-consciousness as a group; for Mannheim, the potential for a shared political worldview and project is of importance. Media will embrace pop psychology to diagnose Baby Boomers as being digitally ignorant or Millennials as destroying the economy. In the meantime, it may just happen that someone finds the stickers meaningful enough to spur the formation of communities, or incite actions.

After years of Boomer-Millennial debates, the genre of debating generations became a meme in itself. It was recognisable enough to be shared outside of Anglo-American social media (Tolgensbakk 2017b). In June 2020, whilst the serious media discussed whether Black Lives Matter-demonstrations and climate strikes around the world were the birth of Generation Z as a political entity, Twitter user @KWAIG quipped that she had spotted a paradigm shift – Millennials becoming the Old.

Whilst the past years have seen Millennials being blamed for everything that is wrong with young people as a group (narcissism, naiveite or otherwise), and the Baby Boomers being blamed for everything that is wrong with Old People as a group (or simply being brushed off with an "OK boomer"), suddenly, there was someone blaming a new generation for being the entitled young: Generation Z. Underneath @KWAIG's simple statement of "oh no it's happened. The paradigm shift", she shared three screengrabs of other tweets:

> GenZ doesn't know what it's like to play outside … to roam the neighbourhood untracked via smart phone. Us Milennials were the last to have a REAL childhood. We were free and proud of our streets. Like in the movies. Goonies never die!

> GenZ has been subjected to the most mindless apps, app celebrities.
>
> Older millennials like myself had the privilege of growing up where we didn't reach for our phone every minute.

All the tweets visible in the screengrabs (quoted above) are statements of belonging. The tweeters are all positing themselves as Millennials with better childhoods, upbringing or just common sense compared to the coming generation. Even the statement above the three tweets she captured can, strictly speaking, be seen as a way of placing oneself in a community – that of the one who realises that Millennials are growing old. @KWAIG is from Glasgow, and the tweets she commented on are from New Yorkers. But the audience interacting on her reaction was from all over the world. At the time of this writing, the tweet has reached 26 000 likes and received more than 6000 retweets. Important for the discussion in this chapter is that the tweet has been found meaningful enough to be retweeted by Scandinavian, Spanish, and Dutch tweeters.

Conclusion

Media discourses on social generations may be entertaining, but from a scholarly point of view, researchers should be cautious when using popularly named social generations in their analysis. With the possible exception of Baby Boomers – as so many countries involved in the Second World War had a literal boom of babies in the late 1940s – generalising across local contexts will lead to more possibilities for misunderstanding than anything else.

I believe that there is reason to be very careful when using social generations in analysis, and perhaps even more when conveying results from demographic studies to the public, to avoid confusion and generalisation. On the other hand, it may be that the public finds social generation terms to be meaningful stickers, something that defines them as individuals or makes them feel that they belong to a larger community. If that is empirically the case, if these concepts are emic to those groups and communities we study, it makes absolute sense from an ethnographic point of view to delve into the opportunity for exploring imagined communities beyond the classic categories.

The uses and abuses of Mannheim's ideas about social generations – long after his essay ceased to be the sole association to the term – are a reminder of the creative life academic terms take on outside of academia. We need to be wise about how to use popular enthusiasm around that in a productive way. At the same time, it is possible to be enthusiastic about, and look closely at how people use social generations to negotiate their own place in the world.

Notes

1 Facebook site started in 2010, 160 000 followers per December 2020.

2 Created in 2014, with 1900 members, which is rather big for a non-commercial Norwegian group.
3 Created in 2017, with 12 000 followers as of January 2021.
4 Created in 2017, with 304 000 members as of January 2021.

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11 Solidarity and tension across generations in welfare democracies

Asgeir Falch-Eriksen

Introduction

As both a distinct and interconnected depiction of modern social life, social generation has never become a lasting branch of theoretical discussion. Classic contributions are notably frequently referenced, especially Karl Mannheim's seminal essay "On the Problem of Generations", published first in 1928 (Mannheim, 1952). Other contributors, such as Talcott Parsons, Shmuel Eisenstadt, or Norbert Elias, have also contributed to the sociology of generation and have embedded their contributions into their more significant social scientific contributions. Nevertheless, relatively recent publications show promise in developing the concept of generation further, such as Aboim and Vasconcelos, who embed their contributions in Foucault's scholarly tradition. They argue for a concept of generation as a product of "discourses of difference" rather than Mannheimian "generational units" as the dominant force of social change (2014). Purhonen utilises the scholarly tradition of Bourdieu to argue against the unhealthy usage of ascriptive generations, so-called generationalism, to claim generational shifts where there are none (Purhonen, 2016). I would thereby argue the call remains for attempting to build more elaborate theoretical accounts on the sociology of generation, contributing to a richer conceptual framework to provide a more accurate explanation.

Empirical research on generation nevertheless abounds, and it makes no sense referencing the lot here. The variation is broad, from studying welfare states' impact on different concurrent generations; how politics affects specific generations worse than others; how distinct generations build solidarity and change while others remain complacent and harvest the fruits of social cooperation and stability; how cultural types such as Boomers, 68-generation, and Millennials are brackets of birth cohorts carrying a normative insignia, what Mannheim referred to as *entelechies*, identifying who they are and what social change they stood for; and how family generation, lineage, kin, local community, and coping through life-courses is affected by the social change are the tip of the iceberg of examples on research topics that draw on a concept of generation one way or the other. However, a common denominator is a reliance on rather general and unspecified concepts of generation or conceptual oversimplifications, such as mere birth cohorts or mothers. While doing so is perfectly fine, it nevertheless does not do

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justice to generations' role as socially embedded groups (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014; Bristow, 2016; Pilcher, 1994). This chapter, however, is overburdened as a theoretical contribution and will start broadly with a concept of social generations as a birth cohort embedded into the social order, and in this sense have the same point of departure as Mannheim (1952) and Eisenstadt (1971), and others (See Bristow, 2016). The social order that generations are embedded into will be treated as conflict-free networks of individuals who interact collectively to solve problems and coordinate action, which abides by known action norms with corresponding generalised behavioural expectations.

The normative composition of order, and the character of what brings individuals together across generations, depends on the underlying mechanisms of social order. Through time, the normative composition of order should be expected to fluctuate and change character as new generations arrive. Hence, although order prevails across generations and contains a normative composition of solidarity that is basic to order itself, new generations feed into order and contribute to shaping another, dubbed as more current and ongoing solidarity. Social generations, then, carry with them a specific solidarity. The social order, then, consists *first* of mechanisms of interaction that can establish order, while *secondly and simultaneously* producing a specific type of normativity that participating individuals subscribe to in a solidaristic fashion. *Third*, with concurrent social generations, birth cohorts carry with them interests and needs specific to each cohort and where in the course of life they are.

This chapter will borrow from Eisenstadt's "From Generation to Generation" (1971) and how he leans into the functionalist approach of Talcott Parsons. Eisenstadt seeks to explain social generations' role as a modern phenomenon and a challenge to social order (Eisenstadt, 1971). He aims to describe the prevalence of social order, its stability, provided concurrent birth cohorts and the tensions and conflicts they bring with them that need to be resolved to secure social order through time. Correspondingly, a traditional concept of generation, as kinships, is in this sense inadequate to capture the complexity of social interaction through the life-course embedded in complex social systems, whereas birth cohorts become more manageable. Furthermore, kinship-like approaches to generation analysis do not become sufficiently accurate to explain social changes throughout the events affecting persons throughout their life-courses and how generations continuously contribute to social order within modern complex societies. This is even more apparent provided the rate and pace of social change, and how it affects large population groups of birth cohorts and how birth cohorts affect both social change and the political-normative composition of the welfare state all the time (Eisenstadt, 1971; Giddens, 1991).

In this chapter, by first using Eisenstadt as a stepping stone, we will understand social generation as a normative-political and sociological concept in combination, which can be used to explain social order and the development of a political order through democratic self-government. Hence, each social generation is not only partaking in their own lives but also participating according to a civic republican ethos in collective decision-making and coordination. Through

this effort, each generation also becomes authors of legislation, regulation, and administrative implementation of welfare state policies and programmes. The generation concept must be able to explain the prevalence of social order and the legal order of a welfare state and how welfare programmes and policies are transferred across generations with seemingly slow-moving changes. We will *first* elaborate on the context provided by modernity and what implications complexity plays. *Second*, we will lay out the motivation for establishing order. We will draw on what Parsons referred to as the "Hobbesian problem of order" to explain how motivation towards order cannot be reduced to rational self-interest but will need a concept of mutual understanding. *Third*, we will draw on the motivational force to establishing order and explain how social order is also a normative expression of a sense of morality, which will be referred to as solidarity. *Fourth*, we will elaborate on how a concept of solidarity becomes transformed through democratic law-making to a welfare state, and how we must speak of social solidarity as embedded in a fluctuating social order, and a version of it embedded in the welfare state as political solidarity. *Fifth* and last, we will introduce tensions and change within the order and how that shapes and reshapes solidarity.

Social generation as a modern concept

The first step is to extrapolate a concept of "social generation" that can explain social change within modern and complex societies, such as the advanced welfare states. Complexity is predominantly caused by processes of modernity, such as system differentiation, increased division of labour, pluralism of lifestyles, and so on (Giddens, 1991; McCarthy, 1985). This claim on increased complexity has only increased in strength (Habermas, 1988, 2015). That social generation is a modern concept was a point was stressed by Eisenstadt explicitly but is also represented in Mannheim's elaboration on the sociology of generation. Eisenstadt referred to social generations in non-kinship societies, a dubious term he used to denote modern societies. He argued that modern industrialised social orders with a highly differentiated workforce, and with active governments solving collective problems of decision-making and coordination, allocate roles where citizens interact with no "regard to the familial, kinship, lineage, ethnic or hierarchical properties of those individuals" (Eisenstadt, 1971). Generation, conceptually, takes on a new form and new type of relevancy for understanding modern social orders, one that is detached from kinship roles. It focuses instead on individual life-courses and how they are embedded in social reality, on the one hand, and how politics affect individuals in their capacity as generations, on the other. He continues to connect modern interaction to generalised rules of expectations on a systemic societal level rather than fixed on roles and shared meaning. Carrying membership within the social order itself, operationalised as citizenships, is distributed to all and does not depend on the descent. Also, citizenships and groups of citizens become autonomous groups interconnected to collective decision-making and coordination and become the object of political allocation (Eisenstadt, 1971).

The kinship model is still relevant within the modern society, but on a micro-level, describing the familiar "taken-for-granted" context of each individual, that is, their lifeworlds, and where interpersonal relations characteristically presuppose a shared moral approval as the basis for intersubjective understanding. A modern individual's lifeworld "reproduces itself only through ongoing communicative actions … [the] lifeworld embraces us as an unmediated certainty, out of whose immediate proximity we live and speak" (Habermas 1996a:23).

Kinship is predominantly an unavoidable fact of human life and alludes to local social networks where each person is embedded. Kinships, however, are characterised by behavioural expectations that are not justified from one local kinship system to the next. Social interaction thereby has a local fusion of what is normatively permissible and what is acted upon that is not compatible with modern stable social interaction across kinships in a wider social system. For interaction to be stable within societies consisting of kinships, and even families, what is deemed permissible action from a normative perspective must be tried and tested and accepted on a societal level. In kinships, stabilised expectations towards others are developed in intimate relations, and these expectations towards others will last irrespective of tensions and challenges. The intimacy pervading kinship-internal expectations provide social connections with clear action patterns and identity roles. Generational belonging in kinships denotes expectations in interaction that reflect their roles as child, parent, or grandparent. Among the kin's members, stable expectations to other members are related to familiar background knowledge and shared moral approval of how to live life and are developed and acted upon only relevant to the kinship in question (Habermas, 1996a).

Processes of modernisation all pull away from traditionalistic and kinship-based social orders. Well-known processes are labour differentiation, the epistemic disenchantment of shared knowledge and meaning, increased social complexity, and reasonable pluralism (Eisenstadt, 1971; Giddens, 1990). Modernisation is nevertheless not occurring in a vacuum but is pulled by the social system itself, and most often, there is a type of mutuality of expectations that makes it possible, namely a shared agreement that stipulates that a particular developmental path is desirable. Through shared respect of religious authority or metaphysical worldviews, what once kept societies together has gradually been pushed aside from their dominance and replaced with alternative ways to establish social order. What is implied is a shared composition of norms that generate general solidarity within the social system and maintain order (Rehg, 1994).

Motivation towards order across generations

The second step is to explain the motivating force of individuals to orient themselves towards social order as a conflict-free network of individuals bent on interacting collectively. To do this, we can invoke the well-known situation of double contingency. This is a hypothetical experiment in theoretical sociology replicating the so-called Hobbesian problem of order. Talcott Parsons designed the problem to capture a challenge to sociology on explaining the emergence of

social order from within a situation of uncertainty, danger, and disorder, something that Thomas Hobbes does in Leviathan (Parsons, 1951a). To Parsons and the Hobbesian problem of order, individuals who are motivated only by rational self-interest seemingly can establish the social order we currently live in. In contrast, social order depends on a predictable adherence of individuals to social norms that need to be genuinely understood collectively and understood similarly from one person to the next.

In the situation of double contingency, both individuals' actions are conditioned by how the other acts. How should they act to solve the problem of order, to deal with existing contingencies, where insecurity is caused by the uncertainty of action choices of the other? If you do not know who the other person is, it can constitute a danger to engage, and the rational thing to do is not engage. The only thing you do know is that the other person is also most likely driven by self-interest. How can they generate expectations towards each other that make interaction safe and predictable, eventually leading to order? What makes your peer lower their guard and begin to trust and cooperate to create and coexist within a societal order?

In its basic form, double contingency consists of two individuals engaged in interaction for the first time. At this time, they have no reason to trust one another, leaving order too big of a risk to take provided individual self-interest is the only action-norm available to those involved. If more individuals engage, the contingencies increase exponentially. To Parsons, the establishment and prevalence of order demanded an additional element that is not reducible to rational self-interest and can establish order. He referred to it as a typical "value-orientation" and public accountability mechanism in action choice (Parsons, 1968). However, Habermas goes beyond value-orientation while attacking Parsons' lack of "cognitive procedures and theory of meaning" and locates the solution to the problem in the development of language itself. Within the notion of public accountability, Habermas argues, lie both the need for and a key purpose of communication. Through the properties of communication, individual agents carry the cognitive resources to solve the problem of order. To Habermas, language internalises and normatively binds individuals in interaction (Habermas, 1987). As individual agents must trust others during interaction, language provides individuals to be communicatively motivated to coordinate action through mutual understanding.

If those engaged want to have a solution to the problem of order, a regular answer, and which depends on the potential within language, is to learn and know what to expect of others by way of interaction (Baier, 1986; Luhmann, 1979). This is another way of arguing that social order presupposes individual members motivated for interaction through stable behavioural expectations developed through mutual understanding (Habermas, 1987). Developing workable expectations that individuals can act on can thus incrementally establish and expand the number of workable expectations, i.e. those expectations that become confirmed through interaction, and expand social order. Expectations utilised to handle the dangers of contingencies will depend on the normative character of the motivating force of interacting agents within the order and how they have established mutual

understanding regarding what action norms are legitimate and what to expect of others.

Within social order, the expectations that keep order are normative, fallible, and in constant fluctuation. To Parsons, as we also invoke here, individuals become socialised into carrying a disposition towards acting on shared behavioural expectations and becomes the culture the specific individual belongs to (Heath, 2001). As social order prevails through time, we can begin to understand that the changing character of norms is a change among those that carry them and constitute social order. Perhaps the difference is not significant from one year to the next, but ten years apart, then we can expect a variation of how norms are conceived, their substantial meaning, what norms correspond to what expectations, and so on.

This is how social order can be, it is argued, carried through time by concurrent social generations. Depending on specific social generations, i.e. specific birth cohorts, we can locate what norms can be argued are internalised and contribute to order and maintain order through time. Hence, each social generation carries their version of social order, whereas the complete order can merely be understood by studying all generations simultaneously alive.

Changes in norms express a cross-section of concurrent generations, where successive birth cohorts simultaneously express their conception of mutual understanding. In this scenario, multiple sources of friction among generations can occur. Still, most have to do with how mutual understanding is conceived and how each generation paddles their interests in a scenario where they need to establish mutual understanding with others.

Mutual understanding and solidarity

The components needed to explain order, and how norms develop and how a nexus of expectations is built that individuals apply during interaction belong to the broader and more general discussions on social interaction. Here we will focus on how individuals interact through basic communication to explain social order by having individuals motivated towards mutual understanding and solidarity to avoid disorder, danger, and a "brutish and short" life. Expectations that individuals carry can be directed towards generally applied action norms where one can expect that others choose to act upon certain action norms instead of other norms.

Expectations gradually become settled through interacting individuals seeking out mutual understanding, despite contingencies, to continuously secure social integration of order (Habermas, 1998). The expectations become tacitly embedded in order, carried by individuals across concurrent generations, and continuously applied. The nexus of expectations simultaneously also express a settled mutual understanding that becomes a normative expression of order that is general solidarity (Rehg, 1994). As interaction proceeds throughout a social system, the defining characteristics of viable expectations are observed to be used by interacting individuals. We can thereby observe social generations and how they act upon, conceive, and respond to age-sensitive expectations, i.e. expectations they apply because of where they are in life. Once expectations express

mutuality, agreement, or even overlapping interests, they can become intersubjectively applied through interaction and used to anticipate others' behaviour. Mutual understanding of expectations is a stable and intersubjective concept of affirmed mutual behavioural patterns among interacting agents (Habermas, 1996a, 1998).

When interacting agents apply expectations, they are directed towards specific action norms that individuals may choose from "as temporally, socially, and substantively generalised behavioural expectations" (Habermas, 1996a). Expectations are thereby considered a basic component to action norms and become revealed once norms have become articulated. You interact by following what a specific action norm prescribes; we simultaneously claim to act upon expectations others have towards your action. Expectations thereby carry a shared and stable set of norms maintained and acted upon through mutual understanding among interacting agents. On the greater scale of social order, valid norms consist empirically of those action norms that have been passed down through history and that have been found acceptable and continuously acted upon because it is expected and because you expect it from others.

In this learning process, generations play a significant role, and by analysis of social generations, we can unveil the nexus of expectations, both as social generations and as concurrent generations. Birth cohorts always have a shared temporal event horizon. From a welfare state perspective, each individual from a specific birth year run through their lives, becoming confronted by the same type of welfare state regulation. When you view each birth cohort that overlaps one given year, each social generation has a different event horizon compared to where in life you are. In 2021, a person born in 1945, a person born in 1975, and a person born in 2005, all simultaneously become affected by the welfare state, but from different perspectives. They are motivated differently towards reaching mutual understanding; they also carry with them norms to act upon due to where they are in life. Each generation shares certain necessary contingencies that they bring with them into the process of affirming and reaffirming order. So mutual understanding constantly is in fluctuation due to how social generations, as a significant organising mechanism to social order, engage in interaction.

If a social system has established order, we can assume that a sufficient number of norms have reached the status of mutual understanding, so a relatively stable interaction can proceed. Those norms that guide actions take on a moral significance, and the social system becomes more dense. With a corresponding density of norms reached by mutual understanding, the more morally significant the social system becomes for the individual harbouring it. This is what will be referred to as general solidarity; and the higher the degree of individual conformity to solidarity, the more stable and socially integrated the social order. The higher the intersubjective orientation towards a common normative value set within a social order, the more the solidarity becomes embedded.

General solidarity emerges and is reaffirmed as a continuous and reflexive outcome from interaction (Rehg, 1994). It is also a multi-level concept. The *first* level alludes to solidarity related to mechanisms of social interaction that can establish social order. The *second* indicates the specific normative versions of solidarity that

a given social order provides. Hence, the first level is fundamental and treats solidarity as part of the human potential for living social lives. It is both a motivating force for interaction and ensures social integration of social order. In this way, the concept of solidarity is interlinked with the ability to create mutual understanding among peers within the social system, ensuring that they are motivated to become more integrated. Solidarity becomes the outcome of "joint involvement" across social networks, social relations, and social interaction (Habermas, 2015). In the situation referred to as double contingency, upon interaction, A and B both carry expectations towards the other, and also action norms that can answer the expectations in a manner the other can agree to (Habermas, 1987, 1992; Parsons, 1951b). The "joint involvement" settles that A has demanding expectations towards B's actions. B is confident that A will behave reciprocally in the future if needed towards the choice of action that B takes. Then, on an analytical level, individual actor A or B's action norms become intersubjectively harmonised as the interaction proceeds. By elaborating on this level of solidarity, we can also unravel that certain interaction types can have a disintegrative effect on solidarity. This is especially so if breaches in mutual understanding become observed and that once again contingencies become visible, danger arises, and you no longer know what to expect of others. The mechanisms underpinning how social order is established is a precondition for general solidarity. By studying shared norms, we can unravel how the mechanism operates to produce solidarity in the first place, not only the combination of premises needed to explain how mutual understanding is built but also the motivation to act upon mutual understanding.

The second level of solidarity is parasitic upon the first level, and combined, they will be referred to as general solidarity. Here, solidarity is the normative expression that the norms take and which interacting agents have mutually agreed to. Solidarity on this level serves the dynamic function of bridging the individual's ethical decision-making on one side to that of norms carried by all individuals constitutive of social order, on the other. It is the material normativity of personal motivation for joint involvement. If a claim upon action reaches the mutual understanding, its corresponding action norm can become incorporated into the social order and become a motivation for joint involvement in interaction. In this way, each individual's ethical enterprise, in the sense of how that person wants to live life, becomes separate from but simultaneously encapsulated by the acceptability of the normative order of the social order (Habermas, 1996a; Rawls, 1971).

Whenever breaches of mutual understanding occur on the first level, or whenever participants disregard the moral imperatives of solidarity on the second, however minor it is, tensions arise, and the character of social bonds begin to disintegrate. Typically, this is a necessary dynamic for the re-production, re-integration, and affirmation of solidarity and is a motor for change.

The second level of solidarity can even be distinguished into more types of solidarities, depending on the roles norms have to certain sub-groups of the social system itself (Rehg, 1994). For instance, take social generation as a point of departure. A specific generation can carry a specific solidarity that a birth cohort adheres to as they go through life. Furthermore, concurrent generations at

a certain time can be dubbed as a current solidarity as it is the general solidarity at a particular time.

Social order becomes a platform of shared expectations among individuals and social generations that originate and develop according to efforts of forming mutual understanding upon what action norms to choose from among interacting agents. If this platform shakes, i.e. that we no longer can expect others to act upon shared action norms, one becomes...

> … confronted by the alternatives of switching to strategic action, breaking off communication altogether, or recommencing action oriented towards reaching understanding at a different level, the level of argumentative speech.
>
> (Habermas, 1999, p. 24)

If expectations towards others break down, we are again left with our rational self-interest, in a situation of contingencies, and motivation towards mutual understanding regarding expectations must develop anew.

In a complex world, it has become a truism that each actor become interdependent in order to get by. Thus, the number of situations characterised by contingency has increased (Luhmann, 1979). A modern society even presents hidden contingency, in that there are many aspects of an individual agent's life that the agent is unaware that it depends upon. This holds especially in modern complex societies, where social order is built upon mutual understanding that you cannot be a part of. The potential of successes or failures of others, known or unknown, whom we interact with and that affect us are crucial for many outcomes in our daily lives.

Generation-specific norms

Here we are preoccupied with double contingency situations and how contingency compels us to establish mutual understanding concerning action norms to establish social order among concurrent generations. If some of these four rules become violated, mutual understanding regarding what action norms to proceed with, and ultimately the composition of solidarity, will not have a solid foundation. Disagreement will make intergenerational contingencies visible, and action-coordination again will become challenging due to disorder.

Intersubjective and stable action norms cannot be maintained if what is correspondingly expected does not apply any longer. So the interconnection between expectations and social norms is imperative for the order to prevail. If what is expected, for instance, between conjoined social generations no longer applies, then the social order must become revised. The only way to re-establish order is to discursively involve anyone who must abide by the action norms that are to be agreed upon – those who collectively constitute the order – and once again establish mutual understanding. If not, action norms would not be established upon a mutual understanding, and there would be no incentive for others to act upon them; coincidentally, nobody would know what to expect, and order would not be established.

Including everyone affected by the action norm in the process of argumentation is equivalent to instilling accountability of the outcome of that particular communication upon all participants. Each participant, irrespective of generational belonging, must expect that everyone affected by the action norm could raise a claim to test its validity, all in the effort to secure that an action norm is reached through mutual understanding. If action norms are to establish order, false and weak expectations must be eradicated and replaced by general expectations achieved through mutual understanding. Action norms aim to generate order and have a coordinating effect through mutual understanding of what interacting agents will be likely to do, want, and act upon in the future.

Mutual understanding concerning action norms is a coordinating mechanism in interaction, and basic to the coordinating effect of mutual understanding is confirmed expectations and that norms are acted upon. Mutual understanding that validates action norms also let interacting agents know what to expect from one another. Order can thus be established by way of the coordinating effect that expectations provide in interaction.

> The aim of reaching understanding (Verständigung) is to bring about an agreement (Einverständnis) that terminates in the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal comprehension, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another.
>
> (Habermas, 1999, p. 23)

Social order is not established by mutual understanding alone but from the expectations established towards the action norms others choose to live by. It is by these actions that mutual understanding becomes reached and confirmed.

As participants representing social generations enter this discursive environment, knowing it involves raising criticisable validity claims, each participant of a social generation becomes obligated to follow the outcome due to the illocutionary force carried by a mutual understanding. Each participant of any social generation should accept the outcome as participants in discourse and develop as part of the normative composition of intergenerational solidarity. The participants in discourse bind themselves in the presence of all to take the propositional content of the accepted action norm into account in how they subsequently interact. This illocutionary obligation is a consequence of participating in validating action norms. It is an "obligation relevant to the sequel of interaction … inasmuch as it establishes between speaker and hearer an interpersonal relation that is effective for coordination" (Habermas, 1984, p. 296). Hence, validating action norms, needed for action coordination, depends upon the illocutionary force of speech acts. By reaching mutual understanding of action norms, expectations can be shaped and applied during interaction to create order.

To sum up, in search of mutual understanding, individuals within social generations assume that each generation will argue their self-interests. The resulting agreement, among concurrent generations, will stand as the valid action norm for further interaction until a conflicting but reasonable valid claim is raised and

creates tension. Social integration of this kind is driven forth by the "illocutionary binding energies … to reach understanding" and makes solidarity imperative as you can expect others to act predictably (Habermas, 1996a). If a new assertion enters public discourse, its claim can shake and replace former agreements and establish new norms that again feed into the social order. In this manner, unknown expectations can develop within order. This dynamic is not necessarily ensuring a "better" direction. No matter what the binding force of solidarity may look like, social order is an empirical set of norms that members of the social order subscribe to.

Pluralism and complexity as key source of tensions

Social orders are constantly in flux. As social order responds to individuals seeking to coexist and solve problems together, and as social generations are introduced and take part in order, they also bring with them new concepts and interests that ultimately change the composition of order and the character of solidarity. Social generations can thereby bring specific tensions that influence how concurrent generations shape mutual understanding. Established action norms can be challenged and cause questioning whether or not expectations can be applied accurately or if formarly workable expectations need to be thrown out of what constitutes order altogether. To illustrate the effect of tension, younger social generations can have specific needs and interests that older generations do not have and which the younger generations seek to embed into a welfare state. Or, if democratic law-making has managed to stabilise social order into the legal order, tension within social order can spill over to cause a legal order not to respond adequately. There are especially two main traits with modern complex liberal democracies that cause tension to and within order: (1) reasonable pluralism and (2) increased societal complexity, and especially through work and epistemic differentiation.

Reasonable pluralism, *first*, deals with the consequence of liberal societies granting liberty rights to each citizen to act upon and choose a way of life, a lifestyle. This leads to reasonable pluralism of world views (Rawls, 1993), and within welfare democracies, it "is the normal result of its culture of free institutions" (Rawls, 1997). The establishment of constitutional protection of individual liberty thus becomes a hallmark of "free institutions". Reasonable pluralism also shapes social generations where birth cohorts travel through time and become offered opportunity sets they can act upon relevant to their position in time. How reasonable pluralism worked 20 years ago is not similar to how it works today. Only the share magnitude of reasonable choices on how to live life has grown, but many also fall out, for instance, due to technologies that are phased out, leaving certain lifestyles and work places out of reach. The climate crisis is one example that we can expect that certain ways of life become phased out. Equally, the gradual realisation of and the implementation of reasonable pluralism has rationalised and intellectualised earlier common religious or sacred worldviews and left them fragmented. In Weberian terms,

the disenchantment of the world has left it open for individuals to strive for whatever reasonable conception of good they might choose (Weber, 2004), and which do not violate an equal distribution of such a choice, which ensures others also can choose their conception of the good. The gradual disenchantment ethically neutralises societal order to the degree that it can encompass different reasonable worldviews. The process has been a hallmark of transition from traditional to post-traditional societies and liberated successive generation as time goes by.

Since individuals can choose how to live life, different possible choices will vary continuously according to what individuals want out of life. It will lend pressure to those action norms that have previously been agreed upon. Certain action norms will diminish, contested and reconsidered, while new norms can begin to take shape that one day could receive general recognition. In such a manner, reasonable pluralism will constantly challenge the existing set of action norms and the behavioural expectations associated with the action norms. The fact of reasonable pluralism still provides tension to order (Rawls, 1993).

The *second* is about collective problem-solving and coordination through the steady growth of societal complexity. Modernisation processes ensure the differentiation of functional subsystems that also reproduce themselves (Bohman, 1996; McCarthy, 1985). As each of these reproduces themselves, they differentiate into further subsystems that simultaneously also intersect across functions. Examples of such spheres are economy, educational systems, and organisation of politics (Luhmann, 1979). For instance, how social generations are left with options to participate in a market economy relative to access to resources and demand leaves a current marketplace responding to generational shifts. Also, the educational systems are set to reproduce and reinvent social norms as those educated further develop and reinvent education corresponding to new knowledge and new technologies.

The increase in complexity shares with the increasing variety in reasonable pluralism a growth in the number and type of reasonable action norms individuals can choose from and what needs they have, and what interests they possess. In this respect, it is a steady growth in the number of general expectations within an order, which leaves pluralism and increased complexity as key to understanding how tensions arise.

The welfare state and political solidarity

The need to achieve and make valid claims across many types of value spheres facilitates the logic of communicative rationality and the need to reach a mutual understanding that can lead to, and become, crafted into a legal order of a welfare state.

> Modern law can stabilise behavioural expectations in a complex society with structurally differentiated lifeworlds and functionally independent subsystems only if law, as regent for a "societal community" that has transformed

> itself into civil society, can maintain the inherited claim to solidarity in the abstract form of an acceptable claim to legitimacy.
>
> (Habermas, 1996a)

Expectations can become stabilised by embedding them as rules in a legal order, and from where they become reference points on what to expect from the welfare state itself. Each citizen becomes able to hold the legal order as a reference point for what to expect from the welfare state and from others. Hence, a legal order can be referred to as having the ability to stabilise the social order's general expectations into legislation, regulation, policies, and welfare programmes. We can thereby argue that the solidarity within the social order can become enacted as legislation as political solidarity responds to the social order's actual solidarity.

For the legal order to have this potential, it must be established through a law-making procedure that includes the vindication of claims raised through legal-political discourses that include all those constitutive of social order (Habermas, 1998). As public deliberation commences, citizens can raise claims that combined can express the needs and interests specific to social generations in their capacity as members of a social generation. If a legal order is crafted that reflects solidarity within the social order, it can be argued that the legal order is stable and expresses concurrent democratic agreements of what action norms one can expect others to abide by.

As a result of modernisation processes, the variety of action norms within a social system has become insurmountable. This holds true even for the welfare state's organisation and how politics has developed such a state to serve any individual's needs throughout history. Nevertheless, social generations represent individuals of the same age that meet challenges simultaneously and thereby carry certain interests collectively. For instance, the need for kindergartens, high-quality public schools, age-related health care, retirement benefits, etc.

A welfare state is one way or the other embedded into a legal order, and it is activated as individual citizens raise a claim on satisfying needs or interests as a matter of right (Goodin, 1986, 1988). They carry rights to different benefits (e.g. unemployment or disability), education, in-kind assistance, and so on. However, a welfare state is set to secure a decent level of wellbeing for each citizen, no matter where in life that individual is. Hence, depending on what social generation you are, certain specific benefits are made for you and not others. As you travel through life, you have certain rights as a child that you lose as adulthood ticks in and so on. However, as the welfare state is stabilised through legal rules, it would provide for the same type of interests and needs, and through the same type of rights, forever. Hence, the democratic *ethos* of self-government calls for amending how the welfare state addresses the ever-fluctuating needs and interests of generations that come.

A welfare state, embedded in a legal order, brings out the internal and necessary tension between the legal- and social order. One *de facto* general solidarity is embedded in the social order, while another *de jure* solidarity is stabilised into law. Once general solidarity within the social order fluctuates, it creates tension

to the normative order stabilised into law, i.e. a tension between general solidarity within the social order to political solidarity (Habermas, 1998; Rehg, 1994). The tension alludes to the dynamics of democratic politics to resolve tensions by addressing social change and making welfare state provisions more accurately targeted to generations' needs and interests. The rule of law and the potential disintegration between the positivized welfare state structure of the legal order, and the character of solidarity of the social order, calls for changes to the political order. Since social order is continuously in flux, the welfare state is expected for must change as a legal order can only replicate social solidarity into political solidarity at a particular moment in time and stabilise one particular version of it at the time (Habermas, 1996a).

When there is no tension between the legal order and the social order, it can be argued that the social order and the solidarity it carries are also embedded in the legal order as political solidarity (Banting & Kymlicka, 2017). This is very hard to achieve perfectly due to fluctuation. Still, welfare state democracies carry a legal form with the potential for a driving thrust to stabilise expectations residing in social order into the legal order through political craftsmanship. Consequently, tension arises from the fact that solidarity within the social order always can become stabilised norms embedded in the legal order. As the legal order stabilises expectations at one moment in time, the social order develops away from what was once stabilised. Being politically vigilant and upholding a claim on the democratic legitimacy of the welfare state, the social order requires a commitment to incorporate behavioural expectations within the social order continuously and correctly into the legal order or dissolve those legal norms that are wrong. Accordingly, it is a matter of political craftsmanship to what extent solidarity is embedded in the welfare state and whose specific solidarities are given priorities and how.

Across generations, we can argue that whenever legislation is set to organise, maintain, and enforce work inclusion that was made 20 years ago, new social generations have other work types to go to; they have different educational backgrounds, thus carrying new types of expectations to what the welfare state is set to do. Incorporating new expectations into the legal order can push the legal order once again in the direction of being in line with solidarity or merely adjusting legislation to fit the specific solidarity of any given social generation. However, an unavoidable consequence of having ruling majorities, with certain generations due to how the system is set up, in charge, the complete general solidarity of the social order will never become embedded all at once into a legal order. It will always be imperfections and tension and a need for political craftsmanship.

The dynamics of political craftsmanship

Democratic rule of law implies some version of the Rousseauan civic republican liberty bestowed on each to partake in self-government (Habermas, 1998; Rawls, 1993). A hallmark is that concurrent generations simultaneously engage in public discourse revolving around their self-interests and needs.

Tension can arise between how to prioritise among generations' needs and interests through designing new legislation, regulation, policy, and street-level practice, which constitutes the legal order, on the one hand, and match the basic and current solidarity of the prevailing social, order on the other (Habermas, 1996b). Since the social order in itself can become stabilised into law by way of answering the behavioural expectations of individuals in their capacity as a member of a generation, it becomes possible to approximate the social order by studying the political-legal discourses on the welfare state's legal development, and how interests and needs are mitigated and answered within the welfare state scheme.

At any point in time, the social order can be studied through the lens of democratically forged law assumed to be genuinely democratic. A legal code from 2009 can be said to be the attempt to stabilise an order constitutive of concurrent generations in 2009, and this can be compared to, for instance, 2004 or 1994. However, as time progresses and new generations begin to shape expectations towards others, new societal norms that seem insignificant in the past can become dominant in a future order. For instance, social generations born after 2010 will have a completely different view on how public service operates technologically. There is perhaps no need for social service offices like earlier, and perhaps hospitals become more mobile. Hence, erupting from the facticity of different social generations within the social system itself, new expectations can, as already argued, penetrate, develop, and put legitimate pressure on the legal order from the outside and change how it works, and thereby change how the welfare state works. Thus, tension arises between solidarity, on the one hand, and the type of solidarity that is settled within the legal order, on the other. As democratic welfare states are concerned, tensions must be alleviated to avoid escalation into conflict. Hence, political craftsmanship must stay vigilant to ensure that the legal order stays aligned with the solidarity the social order prescribes and the respective current solidarities that push themselves through everyday politics. Order will develop and be different in 1992 from what it was in 1982, and if the legal order has not changed with it, democratic law-making does not follow. If, for instance, a ruling class also is conjoined social generations, and reaping the benefits of certain welfare state benefits, it undermines the principle of popular sovereignty, set to provide each social generation relatively equal representation to its share number of individuals.

Once each individual is constitutionally inserted as a citizen into the democratic procedure of law-making, a welfare state can be designed to answer each individual's needs and interests according to their rational self-interest (Habermas, 1996a). This implies that certain birth cohorts will have certain needs other birth cohorts do not need, such as pensions or kindergartens or education. Although certain solidarities in this manner can be specific to certain social generations and vary through time, a formal principle of justice that upholds each person's right to partake in self-government implies that individuals, across generations, also have a right to have their interests and needs met equally (Goodin, 1988; Shapiro, 1999).

Conclusion

To explain the prevalence of a welfare state, one that can withstand tensions and conflicts, a concept of generation must explain social integration processes that develop, affirm, and continuously reaffirm a level of solidarity to be operative in the welfare state itself and to ensure system integrity, supportive of a welfare state, across time. What is implied is a certain level of social integration and trust to be observed within and among generations at a specific cross-section in time in a social order. Individuals of different birth cohorts willingly internalise and act upon shared social norms as a matter of solidarity. Solidarity in this vein becomes the denomination of normative thrust that belongs to society's background consensus (Rehg, 1994).

It is possible to view the ideal type of the democratic welfare state as a political expression of the normative self-understanding of solidarity that permeates a particular community's social order. This occurs, ideally, as the composition of the popular sovereignty within the realm of social order becomes perfectly aligned to the political scheme of redistribution within the welfare state. To reach such an aim, democratic politics and law-making draw upon those action norms that dominate and stabilise them into the welfare state construct.

In such a scheme, generations play an imperative role as the operative expression of the different entries of engagement a welfare state has throughout the life-course. To each social generation, constituted by citizens of the welfare state, the welfare state addresses them universally according to a principle of equality. An advanced welfare state democracy thereby can establish a welfare state system that draws on social solidarity within the social order to develop a stable system of political solidarity. When the two solidarities are in harmony, we can argue that the welfare state system delivers on what is expected from across generations. Hence, expectations towards the welfare system emanate within a social order, directed at the political order. The tension becomes a denomination of the distance between what is expected and what is delivered.

If, on the other hand, there is a discrepancy between what a social generation expects and what the welfare state delivers, tensions arise. These can be everything from trivial tensions to conflicts and crises. However, when we apply a generational perspective that has the birth cohorts as a point of departure, it becomes imperative to view the tensions that arise from the social generation's perspective if specific cohorts are more in tension with the welfare state than others. Concurrent social generations can have different relations towards the welfare state, some generations potentially experience more harmony between social and political solidarity than others.

A constitutional democracy, with a welfare state embedded into it, passes through history as each generation of citizens continues to pursue and reaffirm its normative intent to uphold social solidarity, continuously overcoming tensions that contest the pillars of the welfare state. Although the organisational expression of the welfare state changes in character and responds to the population's needs, a fundamental set of redistribution norms, as a temporally delimited conception of

solidarity, prevail across generations. As a welfare state lasts across generations, it cannot be claimed to be the need for a redistribution scheme at a cross-section in time. The agreement across generations stands as imperative as reflecting the social order itself and what people want.

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12 Generational analysis of the advanced welfare state

Asgeir Falch-Eriksen and Marianne Takle

Introduction

To study the advanced welfare state democracy through the prism of generation is a way to connect social change across time to tensions between the social reality of generations and the welfare state (Eisenstadt, 1971). As times pass, generations develop and change the normative composition of social order (Mannheim, 1952), and the welfare state must adequately addresses their needs and interests. Without such changes, tension might arise as a consequence of citizens in their capacity as a generation becoming governed by laws not suitable to their reasonable interests and needs. In a democracy, it is a fundamental principle of self-government that laws and regulations are authored by those who have to live by them if the system of government is to cash in on its promise of democratic legitimacy. If the generation, enforcement of welfare state policies, on the one hand, and their claim on upholding a democratic principle, on the other, have sparked tensions, then an approach that unravels tensions between generations and generations and the welfare state recommends itself for vigorous empirical analysis.

Central to the need for an increased focus on generations is also the increased rate of social change across time and how social change affects citizens in their capacity as social generations or kinships (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2009; Habermas, 2015). During the last 15 years, Europe has been through a financial crisis, increased immigration, and is currently locked down by the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the pandemic is over, society will again go back to the prevailing climate crisis. These are only the massive challenges ensuring social change. These are all the other effects of a globalized economy, new media, migration, international legal structure, the genuine global character of the economy, shifting loyalties across borders, etc. Challenges are lined up confronting generation after generation, and which also threaten the welfare state itself.

Moreover, the number of citizens affected by social change has not only increased, but these changes can leave a vast number of citizens at a detriment. The latter point fuses a generational analysis with a normative-critical aim in that detriment is sought avoided. Such an aim alludes to the resilience of a welfare state, the meaning of having it and the level of wellbeing it promises to uphold across generations (Goodin, 1988; Moon, 1988). Central to such an analytical

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approach is the role of time, and temporal location, either from the point of view of a birth year or from the point of view of different personal roles across a life-course (Wohl, 1979).

Across generations, citizens' private and family lives have gradually become symbiotically linked to advanced welfare states, and "needs-talk has been institutionalized as a major vocabulary of political discourse" (Fraser, 1989). How administrative bureaucracies have been coupled to welfare-state programmes depends on epistemic development and a highly educated workforce to meet generations' new needs and interests (Goodin, 1986). On the one hand, the welfare state has taken on tasks previously belonging to the private realm through administrative authority's coordinating forces (Habermas, 1990). On the other hand, the private domain engages according to a civic republican principle of self-rule to ensure collective problem-solving and coordination of the welfare state. The merge of these processes leads to the particular manner of self-government the welfare state represents.

The interpenetration of welfare state programmes into the private domain, and how it is continuously developed make a generational analysis of the welfare state increasingly relevant and also more complex. This is underlined as welfare state democracies have grown into mass societies, with a high degree of universalism and equal access as a matter of right (Goodin, 1986; Shapiro, 2007). The welfare state itself has changed the run of generations and, as stated, established a symbiotic relationship to individuals throughout their life-courses and the roles of generations (Bristow, 2016; Fraser, 1989).

The welfare state relates to individual citizens in their capacities as a member of different types of generations through their age and their generational roles: either as young, adult, or old; working age; as born a specific year; as a parent; a mother; or a grandfather (Eisenstadt, 1971). By viewing the democratic welfare state as a response to generations' needs and interests, the welfare state becomes linked to different concepts of generation, which further makes such a concept fruitful for generational analysis (Bristow, 2016). This is crucial because many challenges to the welfare state have different consequences depending on what generation a citizen belongs to. To the equation of the increasingly complex welfare state system within democracies and its interconnectedness with its citizens' private lives, tensions become a pulse of how well the welfare state system develops. If tensions abound, the system designs of government are flawed itself. Still, if tensions are addressed and met continuously, the welfare state works according to its democratic intent as part of everyday politics.

Generation concepts in welfare state studies

In this volume, we have applied four different types of generations: social generation, kinship generation, historical generation, and future generation. Our analyses take one or more of these concepts as a point of departure and studies what tensions arise within the welfare state. This can include tensions between generations or between different generations and the welfare state and its relation to

social change or pressures. To each of the generation types, we can point towards specific conceptual links to the welfare state.

Social generations are understood as socially embedded birth cohorts inserted into what Mannheim refers to as the "social interrelationships in their historic flux" (Mannheim, 1952). This implies sharing the same temporal location and historical, cultural conditions, and processes with equal age peers. As the welfare state gradually has created increasingly more complex bonds between citizens, and between the state and citizens, so has each social generation through time become increasingly interconnected with the normative-political construct of the nation-state, and made the welfare state an intricate part of citizen's identity and how they chose to live life. Thereby, as time has gone by, a welfare state democracy has become solidified through public approval (Banting & Kymlicka, 2017).

The welfare state is not only merged into citizen's way of life, thoroughly affecting each social generation as they age (Fraser, 1989), but it is also designed to a certain extent to meet different generation-specific challenges. Concerning social generations, it becomes a matter of age-specific policies and welfare state programmes. As shown in Chapter 3, problematizing generational conflicts between the young and the elderly concerning family- or pension benefits, age-specific benefits receive support across social generations.

Typically, following social generations as birth cohorts, or conjoined birth cohorts into clusters of social generations, can teach us lessons of why certain social generations fared better than others, as shown in Chapter 7, where different sets of social generations through time show how public efforts to combat marginalization and social inequality has been less efficient and that new approaches are needed to reduce marginalization and ensure social inclusion.

Kinship generations involve the local community's generation complex that individuals are born into, and its nucleus is the hierarchical parent-child relationship (Pilcher, 1994). However, kinship denotes more than a biological bond between generations; it also involves the family and social communities where the family is socially embedded. Within kinships, a member has different roles and different expectations towards the welfare state. As with social generations, kinships have many generation-relevant challenges in their interconnection to the welfare state. For instance, Chapter 5 shows how challenges arise towards parents' formative role in child-rearing, particularly how migrant parents struggle with child-rearing expectations. From this volume, we can learn the traditional manner in which generations within families define roles and work together to seek a life independently.

Social generations and *kinship generations*, although conceptually separated, are intertwined in that citizens belong to both, one way or the other. As the welfare state can be viewed as a product of what Habermas refers to as the colonization of the lifeworld, what belonged to the lifeworld of traditional societies, and especially to conduct social control and secure social integration, is gradually transferred to the administrative state by way of the steering media of power (Habermas, 1990). Hence, as a welfare state democracy, and with its purposive-rational logic, aimed at taking over traditional tasks of the family and kinship, and

thereby making the welfare state into a socially coordinating mechanism, it affects citizens in their capacities as both social generation and kinship differently. As a family member, what defined kinship roles, gender, class, and ethnicity becomes interlocked with the faith of what social generation you belonged to. As shown in Chapter 6, they find that young adults who want to become homeowners still become homeowners irrespective of policies that restrict mortgage-lending and the increase in house prices, all while not receiving inter-familial transfers of money from parents.

Historical generations involve using labels to denote a specific trait with certain age cohorts. These labels are often applied to describe what Mannheim refers to as a generational style of generational units, depicting the dominating part of a social generation that ensures social change (Mannheim, 1952). What is implied is to label the driving force within a series of social generations, which generates either a phenomenon or a social change. Historical generations are qualified through historical research and where the members of the social generations would subscribe to. Purely ascriptive generations should be avoided, that is, the use of labels that are merely ascribed to specific birth cohorts to capture specific changes or phenomenon.

As we show in this volume, Boomers in Chapter 9 and Digital generations in Chapter 8 are examples of historical generations, while the labelling of Millennials and generation Z in Chapter 10 are examples of ascriptive generations. From these chapters, we learn about the historical generations, which typically denominate a set of conjoining social generations that signify social change or represent a particular phenomenon. After studying social change and social generations, these labels are applied to general trends in the welfare state's development. What we can do today, compared to what Mannheim practically could do, is to locate generational units and generational styles that are more subtle. Hence, labels can be a tool to describe how social generations cope through time. Furthermore, labels can capture how certain social generations experienced, and with a formative impact, welfare state legislation, policies, and street-level efforts.

Future generations cannot be studied per se, but applying such a perspective establishes an analytical tool for the analysis of sustainability and resilience of the welfare state, and what is called upon to ensure the prevalence of the standard of wellbeing across time. From such a perspective, one can alternate or combine the social generation analysis with kinship analysis. This means that the challenges to future generations are the current generation's priority of those who are not yet born (Tremmel, 2009). As we show in Chapter 4, such priorities are contested, and the time aspect is crucial. By giving priority to the wellbeing of people who are not yet born, one accentuates the future rather than the historical traditions, which the national welfare state builds on. The concept of future generations involves a future-oriented mindset that will become more important as people who will be born in the future will be increasingly dependent on current democratic decision-making controlling for ecological limitations.

Why generational analysis?

A generational perspective to studying advanced welfare states is critical because of at least four interconnected societal phenomena. The *first* is the character of each citizen's needs and interests in their capacity to be part of a generation. The needs and interests of generations can be assumed are the sum of all individuals of similar age at one specific age that are predominantly rationally motivated to reach decisions on what is in their own best interests, and would want to engage in public discourse on how the welfare state works according to their own reasonable claims (Heath, 2001; Moon, 1988; Thompson, 1988). We can thereby speak of generational self-interest, which is how a social generation's needs and interests can develop across time throughout life-courses, change in character, and eventually stand in a potential tension or conflict with other generations or with the welfare state itself as to how their interests and needs are met.

Over time, as new age cohorts reach a specific age, their needs and interests can have changed compared to earlier age cohorts when those cohorts were at the same age, leaving the welfare state in slight disharmony with citizens' expectations from one generation to the next. As a welfare state is designed to meet certain needs and interests and uphold certain stabilized expectations and not others, how such policies and programmes are designed becomes both a product of the time they are implemented and the generations responsible for designing them. Some policies and programmes that were in harmony with the expectations of those affected by them at one moment in time can be in disharmony as time goes by and new generations come through. As an engine of social change, generational self-interest can spark the need for change and development of the welfare state.

The *second* is that risks confront individuals across generations differently (Beck, 2013; Habermas, 2013). If you are a young child, you will be differently affected by massive societal events than, for instance, an elderly. Either it is a financial crisis, increased migration, climate change, or a pandemic, and many of them simultaneously can have profound impacts across concurrent generations. As time has progressed, crisis and risk have become a large part of societal challenges facing both the welfare state and the generations within it in different ways. For instance, many European countries were affected harshly by the financial crisis in 2008, and austerity measures followed. This means that certain generations might have needs that are not met by the welfare state where it used to because the welfare state simply cannot deliver.

Another example is the COVID-19 pandemic, which clearly will impact certain generations more than others. Social changes are massive, where working generations are losing employment, children are in lockdown for months at the time, and work-life is going digital at record speed. The welfare state was never prepared for answering each of these generational needs. Hence, there is a difference between the social reality of behavioural expectations of the generations experiencing detriment and what the welfare state can. This eventually alludes to the wellbeing a welfare state is set to guarantee and what is actually provided.

If the discrepancy is too large and the welfare state does not provide what it is designed to provide, tensions will rise, and conflicts may occur.

Third, the pace of social change is significantly driven by combined digitalization processes and globalization. Mannheim (1952) was concerned with the importance of the acceleration of social change for the realization of the potential in the generational location. He contended that slowly changing communities have no new generational unit sharply set off from the predecessors, while too greatly accelerated tempo might lead to mutual destruction of the generational units (Mannheim, 1952). However, the current tempo of social change is faster than ever. This leads to the spread of norms and expectations that form generations across the world, which might lead to the development of a kind of "global generation" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2009).

Fourth, the increase in complexity and pluralism implies the growth of the number and variety of action norms that individuals can choose from (Giddens, 1991; Rawls, 1993). Processes of modernization and work differentiation cause social complexity. These processes ensure the differentiation of functional spheres that organize social reproduction. Examples of such spheres are economy, educational systems, and welfare state politics. Individuals provide the increase in pluralism as they exercise their right to choose how to live their lives freely and the migration of individuals and cultural ideas that become increasingly inserted into the social fabric. This can create needs that did not use to be there, but need a welfare state can be expected to meet (Goodin, 1986). The outcome is a steady growth in the number of viable action norms within societal order. Hence, what binds society together becomes more complex.

Each of these societal phenomena, but also various combinations of them, develops tensions that confront the everyday lives of citizens and sparks change. They can also have devastating consequences to the resilience of the democratic welfare state and how it copes with addressing the needs and interests of citizens in the future. Yet, how different generations are affected by and cope with meeting these challenges is at the core of social change and self-government. Studies of social change, value transmission, social mobility, and the cultural and social integration of immigrants must cope with generational relations. What is crucial to such studies' future, though, is that the generational approach is applied with generation as a multifaceted concept, pertaining to all aspects of life where individuals take part in a generation. In this manner, a generational approach can become a prism for analysis.

Where to apply a generational analysis

By being allowed to go deeper into how generations cope within the welfare state, irrespective of what concept of generation you carry into analysis, we can unveil tensions and unmask the needs and interests of new generations that were not there earlier. We can follow generational changes, how transitions go by on a much smaller level than earlier. For instance, incremental social changes from one social generation to the next, but that becomes large in a decade, incremental

changes in role patterns in kinships, how certain roles differentiate (among, e.g. mothers, child, elderly), unmasking increases in needs from one generation to the next. By applying different generations' concepts, we can measure generational changes in every crits and cranny of the welfare state.

Hence, the social change occurring on a generational level, although small, can be located and studied, if not to unveil how generations are inserted into welfare states and how the welfare state affects certain generations, but to critically study to help solve challenges facing advanced welfare states to salvage it when faced with tensions and significant conflicts. A generational approach thereby lends itself to an increasingly more advanced study of welfare state development. We can briefly illustrate four central areas of where to apply generation analysis:

1. Legal development and implementation: Between where citizens reside in social reality as part of a generation and the advanced welfare state is a democratic legal form that can bridge the alleged will-of-the-people within the societal order to the legal architecture of the welfare state as it is developed through democratic law-making. Democratic law-making stands to be imperative in aligning political solidarity with social solidarity carried across generations; how laws are developed, enacted, and implemented becomes crucial for each generation inserted into the social fabric. As time goes by and new generations reach new life phases and become addressed by the welfare state, tensions may arise between stabilized legal norms that carry the welfare state policies or programmes and reasonable expectations towards the welfare state. If the tensions become too large, the democratic legitimacy the welfare state depends on becomes questioned.
2. Policy analysis: By applying a generational approach to welfare state policies, it is first and foremost to study "public agency over activities that are socially valued", and that can affect any kind of generation (Selznick, 1985). Policies can affect kinship generations differently than different social generations, and also, future generations can, as they often are, be omitted from policy considerations altogether. In advanced welfare states, we must consider that public policies operate in complex organizations within even more complex social systems. This can imply, *among other things*, that policies often cross sectors, they involve plenty of efforts within organizations and among personnel, have no definite scope but are somewhat vague and open-ended, the purpose and aim may change over time, thrust is caused by a web of decisions in a network of decision-makers, they can materialize in organizations or regulation. They may also consist of non-decisions (Hill, 2005). In brief, how policies affect generations can vary and spark different types of tensions that must be mediated to avoid erosion of solidarity within the political construct of the welfare state.
3. Professional practice and service designs: Most of the welfare state's distribution of goods and services are effectuated through decision-making by professional practitioners on street- level and who meet the service users, the user groups, and the clients (Elster, 1992; Lipsky, 2010). A great deal

of the potential of a welfare state and how it addresses its citizens' needs as part of generations are achieved on street-level. It can be the social worker, the medical practitioner, or the teacher, but they all work on street-level and distribute welfare state resources. As most professional practices claim to be knowledge-driven and belonging to welfare state bureaucracies, professions are the toolbox of a welfare state and how it addresses needs and defines needs (Goodin, 1986).

4. Societal challenges: The last areas we will point at are the societal challenges that citizens are concerned with and that challenge their daily lives. They are either elderly, youth, migrants, women, poor, drug users, or people with disabilities or health problems; to map and unveil how their lives progress defines the needs of the welfare state, and it is imperative for the welfare state to address needs and interests as they are carried by those affected rather than those who designed the policy or the programme. Hence, if the welfare state does not redesign, continue to adapt, it will fail to provide for those who carry reasonable needs and interests.

Solidarity in advanced welfare states

Solidarity, irrespective of how deep it runs, establishes some level of interconnectedness to other individuals belonging to a collective social order, a "we" that persists across generations and that new generations become introduced to (Heath, 2001). Solidarity thereby involves some level of mutual recognition, and a continuous inclusion of new generations into a civic culture with civic engagement through public use of individual autonomy to "share in governing a political community that controls its fate. Self-government in this sense requires political communities that control their destinies" (Sandel, 1998).

Our point of departure is that democratic governance is at the heart of what makes a generational approach central to understanding how the welfare state works and how it is kept resilient despite social change, tension, conflict, and crisis. A legally regulated welfare state system, where societal norms are stabilized into legal form and through implementation, brings out the internal and necessary tension between the welfare state system and the fluctuation in the societal system it governs (Habermas, 1998). The tension alludes to the dynamics of the democratic rule of law and the potential disintegration between the positivity of the legal order and government and what is expected from the point of view of social solidarity.

A welfare state democracy is set to respond to citizens' needs and interests in their capacity to belong to social generation or kinship generation. Implicit to any type of democratic governance, which constitutionally guarantees each citizen equal access to self-governance, has the potential of crafting legislation, developing regulation, and ensuring implementation that politically aligns with the type of solidarity that defines the normative composition of societal order. Through democratically enacted legislation, the promise of democracy is to let a civic republican principle of popular sovereignty govern how new legislation

and regulation comes about as a matter of collective self-realization and self-rule (Banting & Kymlicka, 2017). If such a fundamental principle is upheld, the welfare state can be understood as the product of generations' needs as they progress through time. Social solidarity, then, can be crafted into a stabilized representation-dubbed political solidarity (Rehg, 1994).

Treating the welfare state as a constitutional democracy that combines self-rule with the protection of each citizen's fundamental rights is to embed a counterfactual into what generation analysis is about. Perfect welfare democracies do not exist. However, every advanced welfare state democracy carries these ideals as a constitutional backbone to how collective coordination and problem-solving is supposed to work. It opens up the approach to critically investigate how a welfare state fares concerning allowing generations' access to self-rule and see whether their interests are given due weight or not. Most likely, certain generations will have a more significant influence than others. We could even expect certain blind spots of generations lacking welfare state services to their fullest extent as they are not politically engaged. This is, in particular, the case with children and elderly, who constantly are not represented as themselves but are at the mercy of others claiming to channel their needs and interests.

The motivation of each individual's public engagement is what establishes the bridge between the negative liberty of each, where its personal preferences reside, and are acted upon privately, to the positive liberty through the individual's "public use of reason" (public autonomy) (Berlin, 1958). Acting upon positive liberty is when each individual is partaking in social solidarity and accepts the liberal ethos of basic freedoms, something that implies a right to remain solidaristic on the one side, guided by certain collective actions, but on the other have the right to remain strangers to one another if that is the choice. This type of republicanism is very often the case in major advanced welfare states, namely that citizens have the right to choose for themselves how to live their lives and also how to engage in self-rule through public discourse, voting, representation, and so on (Habermas, 1996; Thompson, 1988).

Tensions between social reality and the welfare state

Several generational studies have focused on tensions and conflicts between generations. While Mannheim concentrates on the role of social change through generations, conflicts and tensions are at the core of Norbert Elias' studies (Connolly, 2019). Elias (2013) shows how tensions and conflicts arise between generations through the opening or closing of channels for young people's opportunities, in terms of life opportunities, meaning, and upward mobility. He sees these as an outcome of societal change in which wars, revolutions, economic development, and peace are central (Elias 2013).

In this volume, we concentrate on tensions and less on conflicts, by toning down the level of friction and disagreement as definitional traits of social generations. We instead identify and explain social change as a consequence of tensions between generations and between generations and the welfare state that are to

be expected within pluralistic and complex modern welfare state democracies. The challenges to the contemporary welfare state, albeit very consequential, have fewer leading to full-out conflicts between generations or between generations and the welfare state, such as the youth rebellion in the 1960s. In contrast, social changes are incremental, and the tensions that arise have normally minor consequences for the welfare state.

To what extent and how can tensions be good if we strive for a solidaristic welfare state? To illuminate this, our point of departure is how the welfare state is the outcome of democratic self-governance. A democratic welfare state, in an ideal sense, is set to affect each individual equally according to a formal principle of law (Goodin, 1988; Rothstein, 1998). This implies that not only are laws, regulations, and implementation meant to affect equally in equal cases and unequally in unequal cases, according to a principle of law, but also the democratic ethos suggests the welfare state is supposed to meet the interests and needs of its citizen continuously and irrespective of what social generation the citizen belongs to (Dahl, 1983).

On the one hand, as the welfare state provides services, it meets a fixed generational need and interest, specified into the welfare state construct as a stabilized fixed norm. On the other hand, those who carry interests and needs carry them irrespective of a welfare state and do so from a flexible social reality, one that does not necessarily correspond to what the welfare state does. The distance between what the welfare state responds to of interests and needs through its regulatory programmes and policies and what constitutes the social reality of generations' interests and needs becomes an indicator of tension. The further away a welfare state democracy is from adhering to the needs and interests of certain generations, which is a social reality that a welfare state's normative core purpose is set to respond to, the more tensions there are. A similar use of the duality between social reality and regulation is often used by legal scholars such as Habermas (1996). Still, here we transfer the same duality from the legal system alone onto a broader concept of a welfare state governed by the rule of law, welfare state programmes, policies and complex welfare services, and street-level bureaucracy.

As social norms always are in flux and potentially can create tensions, each social generation is expected to be represented in democratic public discourse on welfare state programmes and policies and contribute to altering how the welfare state works by aligning the political order of the welfare state to fit the social reality it governs. Of course, this is an ideal and counterfactual view of how welfare state democracies works, but these principles of democracy, representation, and citizenship nevertheless constitute an ideal most advanced welfare states democracies subscribe to and which they are very often formally obligated to abide by through constitutionally established principles of democracy and popular sovereignty and human rights (Rothstein, 1998; Thompson, 1988).

The opposite of tension is when the social solidarity and political solidarity are aligned and that the welfare state operates according to expectations. This is hard, if not impossible, to achieve perfectly due to the constant fluctuation of social reality. However, democratic rule-of-law as a legal form carries a potential

for a driving thrust to stabilize generalized behavioural expectations into the legal order through political craftsmanship (Habermas, 1996). Hence, a principle of popular sovereignty has built into itself the potential for establishing harmony. It is a function of mechanisms pertaining to the role of democracy and the normative intent of having democracy altogether, namely to secure the self-government of the people (Thompson, 1988).

To reiterate, as generations progress through time, any given generation will carry with them certain alterations of how they expect a welfare state to work and what a welfare state is set to alleviate. Over time, and as new generations continuously come along and gradually eschew the tension between what is reasonably expected from a welfare state and what the welfare state provides, a welfare state democracy gradually loses its claim to legitimacy as it does not respond to those it governs. The opposite can also happen, namely that the tension can also be alleviated from one generation to the next. However, over time, social change is expected, and corresponding welfare state schemes' changes are called upon. In this manner, how tension develops across time, how it is democratically addressed has been a core engine of welfare state development (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005; Rothstein & Steinmo, 2016). What constituted a discrepancy that past generations democratically sought to engage and address established a specific welfare state policy that in itself can lead to tensions as new generations that carry a new version of social reality are addressed by the welfare state. For democratic rule-of-law to once again govern the new generations, these tensions, wherever they are, must be alleviated and once again become aligned with the societal norms that exist within the social system the welfare state is set to serve (Habermas, 1996).

Generations at the genesis of the welfare state

As long as there are tensions between what is reasonably expected from a generation towards the welfare state and what the welfare state provides, the welfare state is not aligned with the solidarity it draws upon in legitimizing welfare state programmes and policies as democratically imposed. To reach such an end, self-government must redesign and continue to develop to fit the needs and interests of concurrent generations as they develop over time. The redistribution of goods and services addressing needs and interests of citizens throughout their life-course and in their generational life-phase capacities as child, parent, working-age, or retired, establishes an interconnection between the generation a citizen belongs to, and the advanced welfare state democracy. As a welfare state is structured around the needs and interests of different types of generations and the role it plays in redistributing goods and services to meet these needs and interests, we should also accept the call for a more precise research agenda applying generational analysis. The aim is to better inform welfare state policies and programmes about challenges ahead, potential conflicts, and ongoing tensions. Citizens' needs and interests will remain predictably related to the type of generation the citizens fit into, albeit the very role of generations might shift. As welfare states

can be argued to answer the needs and interests of a citizens' generation, we can argue that the welfare state also can be explained according to a generational perspective.

The opposite seems rather to be the normal case, namely that welfare state research seeks to understand how the welfare state impacts generations (See, for instance, Birnbaum et al., 2017; Daly, 2020; Riekhoff, 2020). This research is obviously valuable, but it is not applying a generational perspective to draw specific lessons from the welfare state pertaining to generations itself. Not only does it reverse what is explained with what explains, but it also runs the possibility of disconnecting the welfare state from its societal foundation and the citizens who feed into it through self-government. Applying a generational perspective implicitly treats the welfare state as intrinsically linked to how individuals live their lives and choose to coordinate and solve problems collectively across generations, hence, providing both meaning and purpose to undertaking generational analysis. The generational approach increases in strength through a principle of popular sovereignty and the interconnection it establishes to the welfare state democracy from the perspective of social order. This argument holds merits irrespective of what type of democracy we are speaking of, whether it leans towards, e.g. communitarianism or cosmopolitanism.

This volume has attempted to draw attention to an approach to study the advanced welfare state that speaks directly to much of the purpose of having a welfare state altogether – namely to serve individuals as they pass through life, with their age-relative needs and interests. To concentrate on doing so implies an attempt at kickstarting a research agenda using various concepts of generation as the point of departure for analysis.

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