

If you had to choose one moment in history in which to be born, and you didn't know in advance whether you were going to be male or female, which country you were going to be from, what your status was, you'd choose right now." This answer to his one-question test was used by Barack Obama in several of his speeches to demonstrate how humanity has made progress up until the present day.

Is he right? Beyond asking people what their preferred birth year would be in the context of such a thought experiment, it is possible to compare the attractiveness of actual birth years (and thus epochs in which to lead one's life) from official statistics. There are already a handful of indices which are, if recorded repeatedly, usable for measuring the changes in quality-of-life circumstances over time, and thus the "position" of succeeding generations in the course of history. Jamie McQuilkin, who is the winner of the 2016/17 Demography Prize, derives an additional index from national statistics in the opening article of this second part of the IGJR double issue on "Measuring Intergenerational Justice for Public Policy". He combines nine indicators: forest degradation rate, share of low-carbon energy consumption, and carbon footprint in the environmental dimension; adjusted net savings, current account balance, and wealth in equality in the economic dimension; and primary pupil-teacher ratio, fertility rate, and GDP-adjusted child mortality in the social dimension. Unlike other index-builders, McQuilkin takes great pains to lay out all the premises, definitions and data sources of his account in as clear a manner as possible, which makes his article an accessible and instructive read.

All-encompassing comparisons of the position of a generation in the "lottery of timing" are nonetheless notoriously difficult to draw. The two subsequent articles confine themselves to public policy. They both treat financial transfers between generations; but a deeper look reveals that their underlying rationale is quite different. Bernhard Hammer, Tanja Istenič and Lili Vargha use a framework of *direct* reciprocity between generations whereas Paul Kershaw (at least partly) builds upon a concept of indirect reciprocity. This is best explained when we look at the relationship between (familial) generations before the welfare state came into being. The directly reciprocal generational contract is the implicit expectation that parents will care for their children until they are old enough to care for themselves, and children will support their parents, in turn, when their parents can no longer support themselves. Here, the exchange happens between the same generational cohorts but while they are in different age groups. In their work, Hammer, Istenič and Vargha adapt this idea in the context of the welfare state, pinpointing the role of human capital-building and reproduction for the maintenance of generational contracts. The authors develop a new indicator to analyse whether there is a balance between transfers to children and transfers expected by the elderly population in the future. Their results indicate that, in most of the 16 EU countries analysed, the human capital investments in children are far too low to finance the necessary transfers to the elderly population in the future.

In the final article, Kershaw writes within a framework of a different logic: indirect reciprocity. Imagine in pre-welfare-state times

the members of three generations walking together. The daughter accompanies her mother and her grandmother as they embark on a ritual journey intended to end with the grandmother's voluntary death. The girl takes pity on her grandmother and convinces her mother to promise to care for the old woman until her natural death in exchange for a promise from the girl to do the same for her mother when the time comes. Here, the exchange does not happen between the same generational cohorts. The creditor generation cannot be paid back by the (then) deceased debtor generation. As the (previous) middle generation has become the debtor generation, the obligation is passed on the next generation (now the middle generation).

Kershaw discusses three different approaches in this framework for Canada: the elderly/non-elderly spending ratio; intergenerational reciprocity; and the ability to pay of different age cohorts.

Next to calculating some striking results, Kershaw further develops the *elderly bias in social spending* (EBiSS) as an indicator for the (un)fairness of intergenerational welfare state contracts. For the utility of cross-country comparisons, medical care spending (which is consumed disproportionately in later life) and education (which is consumed earlier) must be taken into account according to Kershaw.

Kershaw's first two stages of analysis are complemented by a discussion about the fairness of the different treatment of generations in welfare states. Since some cohorts are born into favourable eras, and others are not, it is important to examine intergenerational public finances by reference to the standard of living inherited by different age groups, and the socio-economic circumstances they currently face. In response to this, Kershaw in the third stage of his research considers how the standard of living for contemporary seniors compares with that of elderly Canadians four decades earlier; and how the standard of living four decades earlier – when contemporary seniors were young adults – compares with that of young people today. In short, Kershaw suggests that the Canadian government needs to introduce policy changes to readjust the intergenerational imbalances that are negatively affecting younger generations.

In the book review section, the first review assesses Birnbaum, Ferrarini, Nelson and Palme's *The Generational Welfare Contract: Justice, Institutions and Outcomes*. Again, the focus is on the redistribution of a welfare state's resources in time. Partly qualifying the "mainstream" thesis that public programmes, such as health care and pensions, are not affordable at their current extent in ageing welfare states, the authors put forward the hypothesis that intergenerational welfare state contracts can lead to positive-sum solutions. In the second book review, Michael Rose's *The Representation of Future Generations in Today's Democracy*, is brought to the attention of the scientific community. The book is written in German but of importance for the debate on specialised agencies for the future.

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