KU LEUVEN

FACULTEIT SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

Welfare deservingness and welfare policy. New perspectives on popular deservingness opinions and their interaction with welfare state policies

Tijs LAENEN

Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de graad van Doctor in de Sociale Wetenschappen

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Onderzoekseenheid: Centrum voor Sociologisch Onderzoek (CeSO)

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SUMMARY

In the present times of 'permanent austerity', in which various structural challenges–such as globalization, population ageing and mass migration–continue to threaten the financial sustainability and social legitimacy of modern welfare states, the issue of welfare deservingness is once again high on the political agenda. Despite the considerable progress made in recent years by a growing body of research trying to improve our understanding of the welfare deservingness opinions of citizens, some important knowledge gaps remain. This book makes at least three much-needed contributions to the literature on popular welfare deservingness.

First, the book brings greater conceptual clarification to the welfare deservingness framework, by introducing a number of conceptual distinctions that have, for the most part, remained invisible in previous research. Most important in this regard is arguably the conceptual boundary we draw between deservingness *perceptions*, defined as the way in which people evaluate or 'score' policy target groups on different deservingness criteria, and deservingness *valuations*, referring to the (relative) importance people attach to such criteria. Other conceptual distinctions include the one between absolute deservingness and relative deservingness, and the one between welfare deservingness and welfare support. By providing such conceptual clarity–on a theoretical level, but also in the empirical analyses–we hope to encourage future researchers to talk 'with' rather than 'past' each other, using a common language. Ultimately, this will help to improve our collective understanding of the (causes and consequences of) popular deservingness opinions.

Second, the book brings more empirical examination to the welfare deservingness framework, by embarking on several hitherto underexplored empirical pathways:

(a) The book puts the welfare deservingness framework into a broader perspective, by systematically comparing it with alternative explanatory frameworks (e.g., self-interest and ideology) in empirical models.

(b) The book reports the results of several cross-national studies that provide valuable insights into the relationship between deservingness opinions and contextual characteristics (e.g., economic indicators).

(c) The book not only investigates popular attitudes towards some of the most contested and least-deserving policy target groups (e.g., the unemployed), but also towards groups alleged to be highly deserving of social welfare (e.g., the elderly).

(d) The book examines how deservingness opinions relate to public support for the social *obligations* of welfare recipients (e.g., job-seeking requirements), which has been given little scholarly attention in a research field that has been concerned primarily with the link between deservingness and support for social *rights* (e.g., the right to an income benefit).

(e) The book pioneers the use of qualitative methods (i.e., focus groups) to study popular deservingness opinions.

Third, the book brings popular deservingness opinions closer to the institutional context in which they take shape, by studying their relationship with welfare state policies. By way of introduction, we expose a close correspondence between public opinion and public policy that has been present throughout the history of social welfare. Opinion-wise, we show that compared with the old, the sick and the disabled, the able-bodied and working-age unemployed are seen as relatively less deserving (but not undeserving) of social welfare. Policy-wise, it seems that welfare states have tended to offer less generous and more conditional social protection to the same groups that are considered least deserving by the general public. According to the book's overarching heuristic model (see Figure 1.1), this is the result of a reciprocal relationship between popular deservingness opinions and welfare state policies. On the one hand, deservingness opinions affect, through various mechanisms of policy responsiveness, how welfare policies are designed and implemented. On the other hand, welfare policies also influence popular notions of deservingness through various mechanisms of policy feedback. Finally, the empirical part of the book uncovers a number of theoretically meaningful associations between popular deservingness opinions and the design features of real-world welfare state policies (e.g., their universality, generosity and conditionality): both at the macro-level of welfare regimes and at the meso-level of welfare schemes.

PART I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

1 INTRODUCTION: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN WELFARE DESERVINGNESS AND WELFARE POLICY

TIJS LAENEN

Society lays a modest table at which all can sup and a high table at which the deserving can feast.

Kenneth E. Boulding (1962: 83)

More than half a century after it was first written, Boulding's (1958) argument that 'society lays a modest table at which all can sup and a high table at which the deserving can feast', serves as an excellent one-sentence summary of the present book. As should become clear in the course of the introduction, Boulding's statement is reflected in both public opinion and public policy on social welfare.[1] Opinion-wise, past attitudinal research has consistently shown that even though people generally consider most of their fellow citizens to be deserving of social welfare, some particular groups–notably the old, the sick and the disabled–have always been considered more deserving of it compared with the able-bodied unemployed of working age. Policy-wise, it is argued that welfare states have, throughout history, tended to offer somewhat more generous and less conditional social protection to those groups that are deemed most deserving by the general public. The core proposition of this book is that the remarkable congruence between public opinion and public policy in the social welfare domain is no coincidence, but can instead be read as the product of a reciprocal relationship between popular deservingness opinions, on the one hand, and social welfare policies, on the other. After clarifying how Boulding's quote manifests itself in public opinion as well as in public policy, the introduction concludes with the presentation of a heuristic model and an outline of the remainder of the book.

1.1 BOULDING IN PUBLIC OPINION: ALL ARE DESERVING OF SOCIAL WELFARE, BUT SOME MORE THAN OTHERS

For several decades now, the welfare attitudes of ordinary citizens, and their causes and consequences, have been a topical object of academic study. In spite of its longstanding tradition, the world of welfare attitudes remains rife with ongoing debates about–to mention just a few issues–the causal relationship between welfare opinions and political predispositions (Jaeger, 2008), the institutional embeddedness of such popular preferences in welfare regimes (Larsen, 2006), the effect of the state of the economy on people's welfare generosity (Blekesaune, 2007), the interrelations between the different dimensions of welfare state legitimacy (Roosma, 2016) and the role played by self-interest in welfare opinion formation (Sears & Funk, 1991). Amidst all this controversy, one of the most consistent and well-documented findings is that some social welfare policies are more popular than others: in particular, those targeted at the old, the sick and the disabled vis-à-vis those geared towards able-bodied people of working age. One of the first to expose this strikingly stable pattern in public support was Coughlin (1980), who found that in the six industrialized nations included in his pioneering review of public opinion polls, old-age pensions and healthcare were far more popular than unemployment benefits and social assistance. To emphasize that this rank order cuts across national borders, time periods, ideological divides and class cleavages, Coughlin (1980) called it a 'universal dimension of support'. In the years to follow, the same empirical pattern was observed time and time again in a multitude of public opinion studies, conducted in different countries and different years, and using a broad variety of data and measurements (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Blomberg & Kroll, 1999b; Cook, 1979; Ebbinghaus & Naumann, 2018; Gilens, 1999; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Goldschmidt, 2015; Hills, 2002; Jaeger, 2007; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2013; Jordan, 2013; Mau, 2003; Pettersen, 2001; Rothstein, 1998; Svallfors, 1991, 2004; Taylor-Gooby, 1985, 2001, 2011a; van Oorschot, 2006a; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a; Wendt, Mischke, & Pfeifer, 2011).[2]

Why, however, are welfare policies targeted at the old, sick and disabled more popular than those aimed at the able-bodied unemployed? Contrary to the consensus that exists around the empirical pattern, the issue of how to explain that pattern has sparked much more scholarly debate. According to Cook and Barrett (1992), there are at least four major explanations as to why some social welfare programmes are supported more than others. The first explanation is rooted in the oft-cited idea that citizens support those welfare programmes that they are most likely to benefit from. Because nearly everyone is destined to grow old and runs the risk of becoming ill or disabled, self-interest logic dictates that welfare schemes such as old-age pensions and healthcare receive tremendous public support (Jaeger, 2007; Jensen & Petersen, 2017; Wendt et al., 2011). Becoming unemployed or living in poverty, by contrast, tend not to be seen as social contingencies to which all are equally susceptible, but are known to disproportionately affect the lower socioeconomic strata (Jensen & Petersen, 2017; Korpi & Palme, 2003). As a result, the upper and middle classes are not as likely to consider unemployment and social assistance schemes as good value for their (tax) money, and accordingly, express lower support for them. The second explanation starts off from the antipode of self-interest in welfare attitudes literature: ideology. The core argument is that social welfare programmes for the working-age, able-bodied unemployed go against the conservative-ideological doctrine that all those who are capable of working should do so in order to be self-sufficient and not dependent on state welfare (Gilens, 1999; Mead, 1986; Murray, 1984). Programmes for the old, sick and disabled, by contrast, offer benefits to those who are–either permanently or temporarily–*incapable* of work, and thus garner support across ideological divides (Jensen & Petersen, 2017; Wendt et al., 2011). Previous research has indeed shown that while almost all–from egalitarians to anti-egalitarians, from collectivists to individualists and from liberals to conservatives–agree that governments are responsible for providing old-age pensions and healthcare, there is much more ideological opposition to unemployment benefits and social assistance (Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Cook & Barrett, 1992). The third explanation emphasizes popular performance evaluations and assumes that citizens support those welfare programmes that they believe function well in terms of effectiveness, cost efficiency, administrative complexity, procedural fairness, etc. (Rothstein, 1998). Prior studies suggest that unemployment and social assistance benefits are judged to perform worse than pension, healthcare and disability schemes, especially with regard to perceived fraud and abuse, presumably because they are typically more selective in design and/or are targeted at groups that the public see as less trustworthy (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Roosma, van Oorschot, & Gelissen, 2014b).

The trustworthiness argument already touches on the fourth and final explanation, which is at the core of this book and holds that welfare programmes for the old, the sick and the disabled are more popular than those for the able-bodied unemployed, because the former are deemed by the general public to be more *deserving* of social welfare (Larsen, 2006; van Oorschot, 2000, 2006a). More specifically, the old, sick and disabled are evaluated much more favourably on five crucial deservingness dimensions underlying citizens' welfare preferences: Control, Attitude, Reciprocity, Identity and Need; also known as the 'CARIN criteria' (van Oorschot, Roosma, Meuleman, & Reeskens, 2017). A brief comparison between the elderly and the unemployed should, for now, suffice to illustrate the deservingness logic. First, it is obvious that the two groups hold disparate positions on the continuum of personal control: while old age is a biologically-determined life event, joblessness is a condition that stems from someone's (lack of a) position

in the labour market, and can thus be attributed to structural (e.g., economic downturns) and/or individual (e.g., laziness) causes (Jensen & Petersen, 2017). Second, the stereotypical public image of the grateful, docile pensioner stands in stark contrast to the mental picture of the more deviant, out-of-work youngster (the attitude criterion) (Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015; Larsen, 2008b). Third, a common assumption is that the elderly have contributed more to society than the unemployed during their active labour and parenting careers (the reciprocity criterion) (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006a). Fourth, people generally find it easier to identify with the elderly than with the unemployed, simply because nearly everyone has some kind of personal contact with the former and most of us will grow old ourselves (the identity criterion). Last, the elderly are often perceived to have special age-related health needs in addition to their financial needs, and are therefore evaluated more positively on the need criterion (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006a). Even though this book focuses on the deservingness explanation, it does not disregard the other explanatory frameworks, as they are clearly not 'mutually exclusive' and 'each makes its own unique contribution to our understanding of support for social welfare' (Cook & Barrett, 1992: 56). Because the explanatory power of a theoretical framework is only assessed to the fullest when it is compared with that of alternative frameworks, throughout this book the deservingness explanation of public support for social welfare is juxtaposed with the competing, or put differently, the complementary explanations of self-interest, ideology and performance evaluation.

It is crucial to note, however, that even though the able-bodied unemployed are seen as *relatively* less deserving, they are generally not judged to be *undeserving* in an absolute sense[3], and the social welfare programmes targeted at them may be *relatively* less popular, but they are not *unpopular* (Appelbaum, 2001; Mau, 2003; Wendt et al., 2011).[4] Prior studies consistently demonstrate that most citizens do feel some sympathy and concern for the fate of the able-bodied of working age, and demand that governments provide them with welfare benefits and services. Just a few examples should serve to illustrate this pivotal point. In the American context, Cook and Barrett (1992) unearthed a clear bifurcation between, on the one hand, a number of extremely well-liked social welfare programmes for the old, sick and disabled (i.e., Medicare, Medicaid, Supplementary Security Income and Social Security), and on the other hand, some *comparatively* less popular programmes for the able-bodied unemployed (i.e., Unemployment Insurance, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Food Stamps). However, there is strong, underlying support for *all* social welfare programmes, including those for the working-age, able-bodied.[5] Most Americans were in favour of either increasing or maintaining Unemployment Insurance (87 per cent), AFDC (84.5 per cent) and Food Stamps (75.6 per cent), and, perhaps even more remarkably, about one in three otherwise notoriously tax-averse Americans reported a willingness to pay higher taxes in order to avoid cuts in AFDC. A second example takes us from the United States to post-communist Europe, where, as shown by Lipsmeyer (2003), unemployment policies received markedly less public support than healthcare and old-age pensions across different countries, age cohorts and income levels. Nevertheless, in most of the post-communist societies investigated, vast majorities also considered it to be governments' responsibility to provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed, and relatively large proportions felt that spending on unemployment benefits ought to be increased. Likewise, Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003: 423) concluded that 'the general picture among the industrialized nations studied is one of *overwhelming* [emphasis added] support for welfare state policies for the sick and old, and *generally positive* [emphasis added] attitudes towards welfare

policies for the unemployed' (see also Fraile & Ferrer, 2005). A third and final example zooms in on the Netherlands, where Roosma and Jeene (2017) observed that the disabled are not only granted more social rights than unemployed people and social assistance recipients, but are also shown considerably more leniency when it comes to the work-related obligations they are required to fulfil. Even so, about 60 per cent of the Dutch public felt it was society's duty to endow the unemployed and those on social assistance with financial aid, despite being reminded of welfare retrenchment and the scarcity of resources. What these examples suggest is that, to paraphrase Boulding (1958: 83), the general public seems to want society to set a modest table for all, including the able-bodied unemployed, but a high table for the deserving.

1.2 BOULDING IN PUBLIC POLICY: ALL RECEIVE SOCIAL WELFARE, BUT SOME MORE GENEROUSLY AND LESS CONDITIONALLY THAN OTHERS

Setting a modest table at which all can sup and a high table at which the deserving can feast[6] seems also to have been standard policy practice throughout the history of the welfare state. From the early poor laws to contemporary and well-developed welfare states, the same groups that are considered highly deserving in the public's view (i.e., the old, the sick and the disabled) have very frequently been offered more generous and less conditional social welfare compared with those deemed less deserving (i.e., the able-bodied unemployed) (Cook, 1979; Gans, 1995; George, 1996; Jeene, 2015; Katz, 1989; van Oorschot, 2006a; Watkins-Hayes & Kovalsky, 2016). This does not mean, however, that the able-bodied have been left to fend for themselves. Welfare societies do put considerable effort into catering for their needs as well, and with the establishment of minimum income protection schemes, try to ensure that no one falls below the lower limit deemed necessary to live a dignified life. Nor does it mean that the old, sick and disabled are given preferential treatment over the able-bodied always and everywhere (i.e., in each country, in each year and in each policy domain). The case made here is that the centuries-old policy distinction between the old, sick and disabled on the one hand, and the able-bodied of working-age on the other, should be read as a *general pattern* characterizing the historical development of social welfare provision. As will become clear, that distinction dates back to the early poor laws, has manifested itself throughout the development of modern social security into the post-war 'golden age' of welfare expansion, and has surfaced once again in the more-recent 'silver age' period of permanent austerity and welfare retrenchment/recalibration.

Although the origins of the modern welfare state are most often traced back to chancellor Bismarck's attempt to protect the German empire from the much-feared threat of socialism, through the introduction of social insurance, many European countries had already established public systems of poor relief a few centuries earlier. Most poor laws drew a sharp distinction between the deserving, impotent poor (who were completely incapable of work due to old-age, sickness or disability and were given alms and care in charitable poorhouses or through outdoor relief) and the undeserving, able-bodied poor (who were either sent to workhouses, where they were forced to work under appalling conditions, or were banned altogether from the local community) (Cook, 1979; De Swaan, 1988; Gans, 1995; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Kahl, 2005; Katz, 1989; Watkins-Hayes & Kovalsky, 2016). After the initial poor laws came the gradual introduction of modern social insurance legislation, during which the deservingness distinction

seems to have persisted. Just as women and children are supposed to be saved first on a sinking ship, the old, the sick and the disabled were the first to have social insurance schemes geared towards them. Across Europe, unemployment insurance was generally introduced much later than the social insurance that covered professional injuries and occupational diseases, sickness, disability, maternity, old-age and survivorship (Pierson, 1999).[7] Also in the realm of social assistance, the elderly and disabled were often covered well before the able-bodied, working-age population (Goedemé & Marchal, 2016; Hubl & Pfeifer, 2012). According to Berghman (1999: 17), this is because 'legitimacy is easier to obtain for social contingencies that refer to categories that are taken to be deserving. Hence the unemployed, on whom doubts are most pronounced, are last to be taken care of' (see also Hubl & Pfeifer, 2012; Kangas, 2000; van Oorschot, 2006a). Interestingly, the same thing is happening all over again in much of the Global South, where most countries have by now put in place old-age, survivors', disability, sickness and work injury benefits, but quite a large number still lack unemployment insurance (Kangas, 2012; Social Security Throughout The World, 2018).[8] In a similar vein, Ben-Bassat and Dahan (2016) show that across the globe, it is also way more common for states to constitutionally commit to social security rights for the aged and disabled than to guarantee those rights to the unemployed.

Now that we have seen that the old, sick and disabled were treated less harshly in early poor law times, and that the social security schemes targeted at them were generally introduced first, the question remains as to whether in contemporary welfare states, they also receive more generous and less conditional social protection compared with the able-bodied unemployed. In (comparative) welfare state literature, three types of policy indicators–each with its own strengths and weaknesses–have been used to measure welfare generosity: social expenditure, social rights and benefit recipiency (Otto, 2018; van Oorschot, 2013). The interesting thing is that despite the fact that they represent very different conceptual approaches and use very different data, all three types of indicators point to the same overall conclusion: there is some evidence suggesting that welfare schemes for the old, sick and disabled are indeed more generous than schemes for the able-bodied unemployed. Social expenditure data, to begin with, consistently show that most countries spend far more on old-age pensions and healthcare than they do on unemployment benefits and social assistance (Boeri, Börsch-Supan, & Tabellini, 2001; Castles, 2009; Goldschmidt, 2015; Trickey & Walker, 2001; van Oorschot, 2006b). This remains true when the spending figures are adjusted for structural needs, such as the proportion of the population above the retirement age and the number of registered unemployed people (see Appendix 1.1). Of course, even when disaggregated and needs-adjusted, social expenditure is at best a very crude measurement of welfare state generosity (Clasen & Siegel, 2007; Green-Pedersen, 2004). A much more fine-grained approach, as it is often framed, is to look at legislative features such as eligibility criteria, benefit levels, duration and coverage–which have often been combined into composite generosity indices. The most well-known social rights index is without doubt Esping-Andersen's (1990) de-commodification index, which aims to measure the extent to which social welfare entitlements enable citizens to live independently of market forces. What Esping-Andersen revealed is that, on average, across the 18 industrialized democracies included in his study, old-age pensions de-commodified citizens to a greater extent than sick pay, which in turn, de-commodified people more than unemployment benefits. Scruggs and Allan (2006), who replicated and slightly altered Esping-Andersen's index, but also composed their own benefit generosity index, found the same de-commodification ranking order, in which old-age pensions

rank highest, followed respectively by sick pay and unemployment insurance.[9] In a similar vein, Korpi and Palme (2003: 433) show that, on average, across the same 18 industrialized nations in the 1930–1995 period, 'the lowest replacement rates are found in unemployment insurance, while work accident insurance clearly has the highest rates, with sickness cash benefits as the intermediate category'. A similar pattern also unfolds in the realm of social assistance. Categorical social assistance schemes for the old or disabled, where they exist, often provide higher benefit rates and entail less stringent means tests than general social assistance schemes for the able-bodied, working-age population (Goedemé & Marchal, 2016; Hubl & Pfeifer, 2012). However, the social rights approach to welfare generosity has been criticized for taking for granted that what is written in formal law corresponds to what is happening on the ground in everyday policy practice (Otto, 2018; van Oorschot, 2013). In other words, social rights indicators might tell us more about the paper reality than they do about the social reality. For that reason, some scholars have turned to (administrative or survey-based) benefit recipiency data to measure welfare generosity.[10] Even though the land of benefit recipiency is still very much an uncharted one, it also shows signs that the old, sick and disabled receive more-generous social welfare than the able-bodied unemployed. For example, using data from EU-SILC, van Oorschot (2013: 241) concludes that 'in nearly all countries, amounts are highest for older-age related benefits. Second highest are the amounts for health-related benefits (sick pay and benefits for disabled workers), and for survivor benefits. There are smaller amounts for unemployment benefits, while amounts for social assistance benefits are generally lowest' (see Otto, 2017 for somewhat similar results).

After the 'golden-age' of welfare expansion, when full employment was within reach and public resources appeared plentiful, came the so-called 'silver age' of permanent austerity, during which several structural problem pressures (e.g., chronic unemployment, population ageing and economic globalization) generated ongoing processes of retrenchment and recalibration of the welfare state (Pierson, 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2004). Some systematic studies of welfare retrenchment seem to suggest that the knife of austerity has cut deeper for the able-bodied unemployed than for the old, sick and disabled (Goedemé & Marchal, 2016; Green-Pedersen, 2002, 2001; Korpi & Palme, 2003; Lee, Jensen, Arndt, & Wenzelburger, 2018; Nelson, 2007).[11] This does not mean, however, that there has been no retrenchment of, for example, old-age pensions, healthcare schemes or disability benefits–there certainly has (Myles & Pierson, 2001; Wendt & Thompson, 2004; Whiteford & Whitehouse, 2006). What it does mean is that unemployment benefits and general social assistance for the working-age population seem to have been the first to be scaled down, whilst they were also the last to be rolled out. In his in-depth study of retrenchment in Denmark and the Netherlands during the 1982–1998 period, Green-Pedersen (2002, 2001) showed that in both countries, unemployment benefits were retrenched far more rigorously than old-age pensions.[12] Through the coding of an enormous amount of legislative welfare reforms over an even longer time span, Lee and colleagues (2018: 17) confirmed that in Denmark, and also in Britain, 'unemployment insurance has experienced many more cutbacks than pensions, which have seen just as many expansions as cutbacks'. Likewise, Nelson (2007) found that as a general rule, old-age pensions faced fewer and less extensive cutbacks than unemployment benefits in 18 industrialized countries between 1990 and 2002. Further, Korpi and Palme (2003) showed that once benefit levels started to be curtailed (which was around 1985), unemployment insurance was generally hit harder than sickness and work accident insurance in most of the industrialized world. Also within the field of social

assistance, it has been argued that categorical schemes for the old have been far less vulnerable to retrenchment than schemes for the able-bodied, working-age population (Goedemé & Marchal, 2016). However, a few other observations seem to run counter to the argument that the able-bodied unemployed have seen the worst of welfare retrenchment. For example, Jensen, Arndt, Lee and Wenzelburger (2018) showed that this might have been the case in Britain and Denmark, but not in Germany, where unemployment benefits were not retrenched to a greater extent than pensions, and also not in Finland, where the reverse was even true. Further, in Green-Pedersen's analyses (2002, 2001), disability benefits were left largely untouched in Denmark (and were thus, in contrast to unemployment benefits, not curtailed), but not in the Netherlands, where they were actually retrenched more than old-age pensions and unemployment benefits.[13] Likewise, Nelson (2007) did not report sizable differences in the extent to which unemployment and sickness insurance have been retrenched in his sample of industrialized nations. This should illustrate once more that the preferential policy treatment of the old, sick and disabled over the able-bodied unemployed reflects more of a broad and general pattern characterizing welfare state history than a universal truth that holds always and everywhere.

However, in the silver age of the welfare state, retrenchment is not–as pointed out by van Kersbergen, Vis and Hemerijck (2014)–'the only game left in town'. Equally important are processes of welfare state recalibration and restructuring, of which the so-called 'activation turn' is arguably the most profound (Bonoli, 2010). In the past few decades, there has been a gradual but penetrating shift of focus in contemporary welfare states from passive social protection to active encouragement of labour market participation, or as Cox (1998) puts it, from the welfare state as a safety net offering income security to the welfare state as a trampoline towards (re)employment (Betzelt & Bothfeld, 2011). Despite the fact that activation has come in many different shapes and sizes, and has therefore become somewhat of a one-size-fits-all umbrella term, there is some scholarly agreement that most activation policies fall into one of two broad categories (Dingeldey, 2007; Taylor-Gooby, 2010; Watts & Fitzpatrick, 2018). On the one hand, 'enabling' activation policies are geared towards the sustainable enhancement of human capital and employability, most often through (typically voluntary) participation in public employment services and training programmes. On the other hand, 'demanding' activation policies are based on the rigorous enforcement of all sorts of work-related obligations imposed on benefit recipients, so as to push them towards employment as soon as possible. There can be little doubt, though, that the entire paradigm shift towards activation has concentrated almost exclusively on the able-bodied unemployed (Lødemel & Trickey, 2001), who have not only been the primary beneficiaries of enabling activation, but also–and perhaps even more so–have been the prime targets of the demanding side of the activation story. It is a well-documented fact that there has been an exponential increase over the past few decades in the volume and strictness of work-related obligations that the able-bodied of working-age are required to fulfil in return for receiving unemployment or social assistance benefits (Clasen & Clegg, 2011; Clasen, Kvist, & van Oorschot, 2001; Knotz, 2018; Lødemel & Trickey, 2001). In most welfare states, claimants are–now more than ever and often from the first days of unemployment–being forced to accept jobs well below their educational or previous pay level, to tolerate ever-longer commuting times, to rigidly document and evidence their job-seeking activities and to comply with the many other work-related duties policymakers see fit to impose.

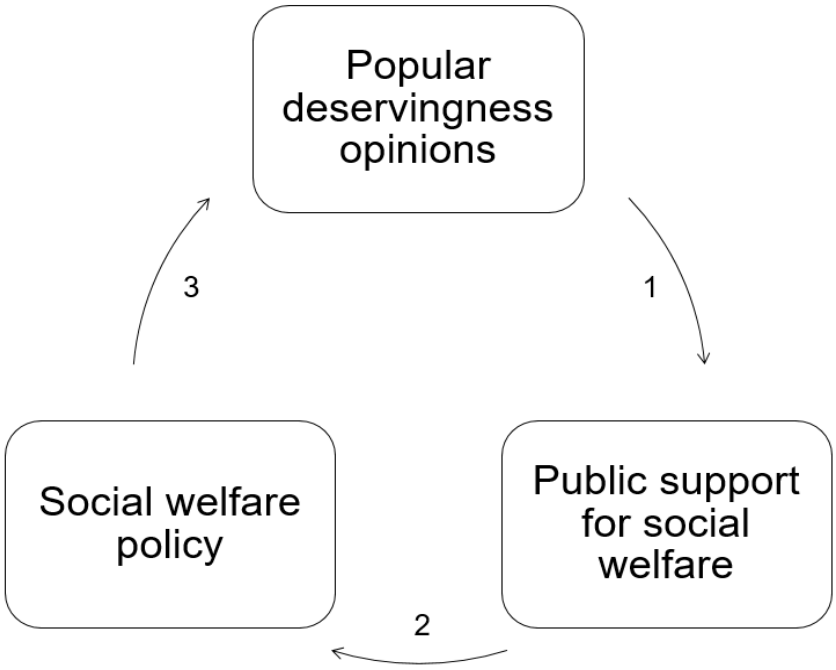
In recent years, however, sickness and disability schemes seem to have been catching up with unemployment and social assistance benefits in terms of welfare conditionality (Larsen, 2008b; Trickey, 2001; Watts & Fitzpatrick, 2018). While it is certainly true that activation policies are increasingly being targeted at the sick and partially disabled, these groups are at the same time much more frequently exempted from fulfilling demanding work obligations (Eardley, Saunders, & Evans, 2000; Sharp, 1999; Trickey, 2001; Watts & Fitzpatrick, 2018). Further, the fully disabled (i.e., those considered completely incapable of work due to ill health) and the elderly have remained largely 'off limits' when it comes to activation policy. Raising the statutory retirement age, or incentivizing voluntary pension deferment, are sometimes conceived as activation measures, but once in receipt of a pension, the elderly are left unbothered. For the time being, it seems unthinkable that pensioners will be required to perform, for example, some kind of workfare-based community service in return for the cash benefits they receive from society. One of the standard arguments against such proposals, closely related to the deservingness criterion of reciprocity (van Oorschot, 2000), would undoubtedly be that pensioners should not be burdened with obligations because they have earned their right to old-age financial assistance through the contributions they have made in the past. However, even for the elderly who receive a pension benefit without having worked a single day in their life, such as spouses with derived pension rights or non-EU newcomers in receipt of an old-age assistance benefit, policymakers seem reluctant to introduce such demanding activation initiatives. It thus seems that there is something about the elderly as a group, perhaps their high level of deservingness, that has shielded them from the activation discourse that has swept across the modern-day welfare state.

1.3 HEURISTIC MODEL AND OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Everything written above points to a remarkable congruence between public opinion and public policy in the domain of social welfare. Those groups that the public consider most deserving of social welfare appear also to receive more generous and less conditional benefits and services compared with those groups deemed relatively less deserving–not always and everywhere, but as a general pattern cutting across welfare state history.[14] In this book, it is argued that the close correspondence between policy and opinion is the result of a reciprocal relationship between popular deservingness opinions and social welfare policies. On the one hand, popular deservingness beliefs affect public support for social welfare, which through various mechanisms of policy responsiveness in turn shapes how welfare policies are designed and implemented. The most obvious and most frequently mentioned policy responsiveness mechanism is arguably that of (re-)election. In a democracy, policymakers are to some extent responsive to the public's wishes (in this case, their deservingness opinions) because they want to win votes and gain office (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Burstein, 2003; Page & Shapiro, 1983). According to this point of view, policymakers, driven by electoral considerations, are inclined to design more beneficial policies for target populations with a more positive popular image, such as the elderly, the sick and the disabled (Cook, 1979; Schneider & Ingram, 1993; van Oorschot, 2006a). However, self-interested re-election motives are only one piece of a larger, more complicated story. As we show in the next chapter, there are several other policy responsiveness mechanisms connecting popular deservingness opinions to social welfare policies. On the other hand, through various mechanisms of policy feedback, welfare policies also have the potential to shape popular notions

of deservingness. Once enacted, social policies act as norm-setting and norm-enforcing institutions that might determine which deservingness criteria citizens attach importance to (Larsen, 2006; Lowi, 1964; Mau, 2004; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2017; Rothstein, 1998). When citizens consider who should get what from a means-tested social assistance scheme, for example, the criterion of need presumably plays a particularly pivotal role. However, welfare policies can also influence how target groups are evaluated on the different deservingness criteria. (Larsen, 2006; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). For example, in the case of workers' social insurance, citizens are likely to realize that benefit recipients have contributed through work, and thus rank reasonably high on the criterion of reciprocity.

Figure 1.1 Heuristic model: the interaction between welfare deservingness and welfare policy



Note: (1) welfare deservingness theory; (2) policy responsiveness theory; (3) policy feedback theory

The reciprocal relationship between popular deservingness opinions and social welfare policies, in which there is continuous covariation (Weissberg, 1976), is summarized in a simple and straightforward manner in the heuristic model displayed in Figure 1.1. Of crucial importance is that the model is an explicitly heuristic one, meaning that it serves mainly as a theoretical blueprint of the book rather than as an empirical model that will be examined in its entirety. That would require extremely fine-grained and high-quality time series or longitudinal data of both popular deservingness opinions and social welfare policies, which are unfortunately unavailable at present. Instead, the primary purpose of the heuristic model is to provide a general theoretical framework in which all empirical chapters can, in one way or another, be situated. It is, in other words, the metaphorical glue that holds the book together.

Chapter 2 elaborates much further on the contents of and the interrelations between the three major social science theories that make up the heuristic model: welfare deservingness, policy responsiveness and policy feedback. The first part of Chapter 2 zooms in on the core framework of the book, namely deservingness theory, and argues that it needs more of two seemingly separate but in fact closely related things: conceptual clarification and empirical examination. After that, we relate welfare deservingness to the perspectives of policy responsiveness and policy feedback.

Chapter 3 then acts as a bridge between the theoretical framework and the empirical chapters, by specifying and justifying how the three core concepts of the book's heuristic model–public support for social welfare, popular deservingness opinions and welfare state policies–have been operationalized. In doing so, we also clarify how the book addresses most, but unfortunately not all, of the conceptual and empirical lacunae we have identified in the existing literature.

Chapter 4, which is the first empirical one, looks only at the middle component of the heuristic model: public support for social welfare. In the chapter, we argue that there are sound theoretical and methodological reasons to reassess the oft-cited and pervasive idea that when it comes to social welfare, most citizens–across geographical, temporal and social-structural boundaries–tend to give preference to the old over the sick and the sick over the unemployed. Based on data from the International Social Survey Project (ISSP), the main conclusion is that this so-called 'universal dimension of support' (Coughlin, 1980) is less universal than is generally assumed in existing literature. Not only did we find a substantial number of welfare egalitarians, who chose not to differentiate between the old, the sick and the unemployed, we also found that the likelihood of ranking the old and sick higher than the unemployed is contingent on the country in which a person lived, the year in which they were surveyed, and above all, the social-structural groups they belonged to. However, among those who did discriminate between the groups, the majority gave the lowest priority to the unemployed. This is one of the reasons why some of the other empirical chapters focus on the particular social risk of unemployment.

Chapter 5, for one, examines popular attitudes towards the social rights (i.e., welfare generosity) and social obligations (i.e., welfare conditionality) of the unemployed. Using Belgian survey data, the chapter concludes that generosity and conditionality appear to be two sides of the same coin, because the two factors are negatively correlated and most of their respective attitudinal drivers are quite similar in strength, yet opposite in direction. Furthermore, it is shown that in addition to self-interest and conventionally recognized ideological beliefs such as egalitarianism and individualism, popular deservingness beliefs–measured here in a novel way–are particularly influential in shaping people's welfare preferences. A stronger emphasis on criteria of deservingness, such as control, attitude and reciprocity, considerably lowers support for social rights and strengthens support for social duties. In terms of the heuristic model, Chapter 5 only examines how popular deservingness beliefs are associated with public support for social welfare, without also relating them explicitly to welfare policies.

Chapter 6 zooms in on popular deservingness beliefs, but also addresses their connection to support for social welfare and welfare policies. This chapter is one of the first examples of adopting a qualitative approach to the study of welfare deservingness, in the belief that qualitative

methods are particularly well-suited to address two hitherto unanswered questions in deservingness literature: (1) Which deservingness criteria, if any, do people *spontaneously* apply when discussing matters of social welfare?; and (2) What concrete *meanings* do abstract deservingness criteria have for people, and how do they apply them? Using focus group data gathered in Denmark, Germany and the UK, we show that citizens made explicit reference to the deservingness criteria of control, reciprocity and need (not to attitude and identity), but also to a number of 'context-related' criteria (e.g., equality/universalism) that fall outside of the deservingness framework because they refer to the broader context instead of to the characteristics of welfare targets. Our findings also suggest the existence of an institutional logic to welfare preferences, as the focus group participants to a large extent echoed the normative criteria that are most strongly embedded in the institutional structure of their country's welfare regime. In the liberal UK, for example, financial need was the guiding criterion, while in corporatist-conservative Germany it was reciprocity.[15]

Chapter 7 follows up on the idea of the institutional embeddedness of welfare attitudes, but shifts the focus of analysis from macro-level welfare regimes to meso-level income benefit schemes. The chapter's main contribution is the development of a theoretical model that postulates that the link between the institutional design of an income benefit and its public support is mediated by three types of popular perceptions: self-interest, programme performance and welfare deservingness. Based on Dutch survey data, the first part of the empirical analysis suggests that these intermediate perceptions are meaningfully related to the institutional set-up of three differently organized benefit schemes in the Netherlands. People's emphasis on deservingness criteria, for example, appears to be in accordance with the normative principles embodied in the benefit schemes. That is, whereas the reciprocity criterion is stressed most with regard to workers' unemployment insurance, the need criterion is clearly most important for the social assistance scheme. The second part of the analysis shows that all three types of perceptions affect public support for welfare allocation to the target groups of the benefit schemes. The higher citizens' perceived self-interest in a welfare programme and the better its perceived performance, the stronger the support for the distribution of public resources to its target group. Further, the more strongly a person emphasizes the criteria of reciprocity or need, the more he or she opposes welfare provision.

Chapter 8 builds further on the relationship between welfare deservingness and welfare policy by examining how unemployment policies–and their degree of selectivity, generosity and conditionality in particular–feed back into popular deservingness perceptions concerning the unemployed. Using data from the European Social Survey (ESS), our results show that comparatively generous and unconditional unemployment policies fuel the perception that most unemployed people have a relatively good standard of living and are not actively looking for a job. Europeans who hold such deservingness beliefs are also considerably less supportive of government responsibility to ensure a decent standard of living for the unemployed, net of their social-structural background and ideological orientations. These findings suggest that one of the policy recommendations most often made by international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU)–that is, to make unemployment benefits less attractive by lowering the benefit levels and increasing the work requirements–could potentially, and perhaps counterintuitively, boost public support for unemployment provision in the long run.[16]

However, as a precautionary note, it should be mentioned that the cross-sectional nature of the data limits our ability to demonstrate empirically that the causal chain actually runs from public policy to public opinion, instead of the other way around.

The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for Chapter 9, which comes closest to the policy responsiveness part of the heuristic model. The starting point for the chapter is the absence of fierce public resistance to the retrenchment of unemployment insurance that has taken place in Denmark and the Netherlands over the past 30 years. The lack of public opposition is somewhat puzzling, because both the Dutch and the Danish unemployment schemes have traditionally had relatively large and well-organized welfare constituencies. The core argument put forward in Chapter 9 is that in addition to the waning power of the trade unions, the role of changing ideas concerning the need for reform and the successful application of elite blame-avoidance strategies, the relatively harsh deservingness assessment of the unemployed among the constituencies of unemployment insurance has been pivotal for the absence of strong resistance. Using Dutch and Danish survey data, the chapter demonstrates this mechanism by showing that large numbers of the constituencies of unemployment insurance (which is operationalized as self-reported benefit receipt and experience of unemployment), evaluate the unemployed negatively on the deservingness criteria of control, attitude, reciprocity, identity and need. These deservingness perceptions are, in turn, strongly correlated to support for reducing the social rights of the unemployed and expanding their social obligations.

The final chapter concludes by summarizing the book's most important contributions to welfare deservingness literature. For each contribution, we highlight some of the main findings and their implications, but also identify remaining knowledge gaps and offer promising avenues for future research. For example, one of the book's major contributions is that it puts the welfare deservingness framework in a much broader perspective, by comparing it in unprecedented detail with alternative explanatory frameworks. In the empirical part of the book, we show that deservingness opinions have a strong and stable impact on support for social welfare–one that often outweighs the impact of other, well-established explanatory factors (i.e., self-interest, ideology and performance evaluations). The broader implication of this finding is that deservingness should perhaps be added as a third protagonist in the welfare attitudes scene, next to the two 'traditionally recognized' others: self-interest and (political) ideology. What the book lacks, however, are empirical examinations of the intricate ways in which the different explanatory factors interact with one another; which is an important task for future researchers.

Before proceeding to the next, theoretical chapter, however, three concluding remarks should nuance and put into broader perspective the deservingness argument presented in this book. First, we acknowledge that deservingness is only one factor shaping public support for social welfare. As argued above, alongside popular deservingness opinions, self-interest considerations, general ideological beliefs and performance evaluations may also be of crucial importance in understanding public support for social welfare. This implies that policy responsiveness and policy feedback mechanisms do not only work through deservingness, but also through some of the other well-known drivers of welfare attitudes (see for example Larsen, 2006: 14; Wendt et al., 2011: 22). Second, public opinion is only one–and presumably not even the most important–factor shaping social policy; there are of course many others (Burstein, 2018).

In the case of welfare retrenchment, for example, there are several alternative explanations besides public opinion as to why some social security schemes are more vulnerable to cutbacks than others, including programmatic characteristics such as the degree of universalism (Nelson, 2007; Pierson, 1994), mode of financing (Anderson, 2001) or administrative structure (Bonoli, George, & Taylor-Gooby, 2000), but also schemes' connection to the labour market (Green-Pedersen, 2002) and the political power of their respective target groups (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Third, social welfare policy is just one factor shaping deservingness and welfare support. There are many other contextual determinants of popular welfare attitudes, including demographic developments, such as population ageing, migration and ethnic heterogeneity (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Larsen, 2011; Naumann, 2018), cultural influences, such as a country's religious or ideological heritage (Alesina & Fuchs-Schündeln, 2007; VanHeuvelen, 2014), political discourse (Svallfors, Kulin, & Schnabel, 2012), media coverage on social welfare (Larsen & Dejgaard, 2013), and last but not least, the state of the economy (Blekesaune, 2007). One of the most established findings in deservingness literature, for example, is that higher levels of unemployment tend to trigger public awareness that the jobless are not personally responsible for their plight but are victims of circumstance (the criterion of control), which in turn increases public support for government-sponsored unemployment provision (Jeene, 2015; Larsen, 2006). Together, these concluding remarks should, above all, make clear that despite its explicit focus on deservingness, this book neither denies nor ignores alternative explanatory frameworks. Deservingness is, after all, only one–albeit a very fruitful–analytical lens through which to explore the complex world of social welfare.

Notes

[1] To make it clear from the start, the focus of this book is on *social* welfare, defined here as directly provided welfare benefits and services for which governments bear some political responsibility (e.g., old-age pensions, healthcare, unemployment insurance, disability benefits), and not so much on its close relatives: fiscal and occupational welfare (Sinfield, 1978; Titmuss, 1958).

[2] However, see Boeri et al. (2001) for some contrasting findings.

[3] It is here that this book differs from much–mainly American–literature that makes a dichotomous distinction between the deserving poor and the undeserving poor (Appelbaum, 2001; Gans, 1995; Katz, 1989; Watkins-Hayes & Kovalsky, 2016). In our view, deservingness is a continuum rather than a dichotomy, ranging from 'very undeserving' to 'very deserving', with a host of in-between positions (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017).

[4] This is in line with the conclusion drawn by many independent researchers that public support for the welfare state, and the various programmatic components it comprises, tends to be strong and stable (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Coughlin, 1980; Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Taylor-Gooby, 1985).

[5] As shown by Gilens (1999) and others (Smith, 1987; Soss & Schram, 2007), one glaring exception in the US context is 'welfare', which in the American sense of the word refers to means-tested public assistance for poor, often female-headed, single-parent families, and receives very little public support in American society.

[6] To 'feast' is admittedly somewhat of an exaggeration, as welfare schemes rarely provide citizens with an abundance of resources allowing them to live a life of luxury. Nevertheless, Boulding's terminology does help to make the point that the old, the sick and the disabled are often given more generous social welfare than the able-bodied unemployed.

[7] One could argue that the relatively late introduction of family allowances/child benefits, often even after unemployment insurance, deviates from this chronological pattern. However, although many commentators have claimed so, there is less evidence that children, or alternatively their parents, are particularly deserving of social welfare in the public's mind (Wendt et al., 2011). One important issue in this regard is that having children is often regarded as a private rather than a public responsibility (Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Svallfors, 1991).

[8] However, it should be noted that in developing countries, social security benefits are often reserved for privileged civil servants, whose tenure tends to preclude the need for unemployment provision. Further, the relatively large informal economies that exist in these countries might render the organization of contributory unemployment insurance particularly difficult. However, the same could of course also be said of other social insurance schemes, such as many contributory old-age pensions and disability benefits (Brady & Bostic, 2015).

[9] In our view, both Esping-Andersen (1990) and Scruggs and Allan (2006) actually overestimate unemployment benefit generosity and underestimate pension generosity. For unemployment benefits, both used the replacement rates during the initial six months of unemployment, when benefits are at their most generous. Had they opted for replacement rates over longer-term unemployment, a different picture would have emerged, as most unemployment benefits are degressive; that is, they decline with longer periods of unemployment. The main issue with the pension generosity index is that it only takes public pensions into account, and thus completely ignores the fact that many countries have multi-pillar systems in which public pensions are topped up with private and occupational pensions that are officially not 'public', but nevertheless tend to be heavily regulated and subsidized by governments.

[10] Another way to get closer to policy practice is to study how generously different target groups are treated by street-level policy administrators when formal legislation leaves room for discretion (Altreiter & Leibetseder, 2015; De Wilde, 2017; Knegt, 1987; Schram, Soss, Fording, & Houser, 2009; Thorén, 2008; Watkins-Hayes & Kovalsky, 2016).

[11] In addition to such systematic evidence, there is also plenty of anecdotal evidence–which is nevertheless usually provided by welfare state experts–that unemployment benefits were hit particularly hard in the era of welfare retrenchment when compared with old-age pensions (see for example Raven, Achterberg, Van Der Veen, & Yerkes, 2011 for the Netherlands; and Taylor & Taylor-Gooby, 2015 for the UK) or sickness/disability benefits (see for example Cappelen, Cappelen, Kuhnle, & Tungodden, 2018 for Norway).

[12] In Denmark, pensions were actually expanded to a considerable extent.

[13] However, before treating this as an anomaly to the deservingness distinction, it should be noted that most commentators agree on the exceptional and extreme generosity that used to characterize the Dutch disability system (*Wet op de arbeidsongeschiktheidsuitkering, WAO*). The system was so easily accessible, so generous and so unconditional that by the mid-1980s, an astonishing 7% of the working-age population in the Netherlands was on disability benefits. Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that Dutch disability benefits suffered serious downscaling (Hoogenboom, 2011; van Oorschot, 2006b).

[14] We are certainly not the first to point out the close correspondence between deservingness and welfare policy (Cook, 1979: 40; Cook & Barrett, 1992: 95, 144; Handler & Hasenfeld, 1991: 11; Hubl & Pfeifer: 2012; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015: 14; Skocpol, 1992: 149; van Oorschot, 2006a: 23–24; Watkins-Hayes & Kovalsky, 2016: 199).

[15] In social-democratic Denmark, it proved impossible to single out one dominant normative criterion. Instead, the Danish participants seemed torn between the criteria of need, reciprocity and equality/universalism.

[16] Another oft-cited policy recommendation–i.e., to increase reliance on means-tested targeting in social security provision (Schoukens, 2016)–might be less consequential for public opinion on unemployment benefits, as the degree of selectivity does not appear to be related to popular perceptions concerning the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DESERVINGNESS, POLICY FEEDBACK AND POLICY RESPONSIVENESS

TIJS LAENEN

Public policies and social constructions of groups interact in a reciprocal manner so that they mutually affect each other. A changed social construction of deservedness can precipitate change in policy, and, alternatively, public policy can alter constructions.

Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram (2005: 8)

Welfare states offer social protection to millions of people across the globe. They have penetrated deeply into the everyday life of ordinary people, and account for a considerable proportion of national budgets. Because of its tremendous salience, the welfare state has been an obvious object of study for a vast number of scholars coming from a variety of different disciplines. In this book, the analytical lens is focused on one particular topic that has intrigued many welfare state scholars: the welfare attitudes of ordinary citizens. How to explain such attitudes may seem an easy question to ask, but it is a much harder one to answer. From its inception, two major explanatory frameworks have acted as the protagonists in the welfare attitudes scene: self-interest and ideology (Funk, 2000; Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989; Jaeger, 2006b; Kangas, 1997; Linos & West, 2003). Many other explanatory factors have lingered backstage, but they have never quite made it to centre stage. The self-interest framework argues that welfare opinions are essentially a matter of cost-benefit analyses: people support those programmes from which they (and their social networks) benefit most and for which they pay the least amount of taxes. According to the ideology framework, citizens do more than calculate personal gains and pains, and are also driven by general ideological predispositions expressing their deep-seated values and worldviews. However, despite their prominent status, these two explanatory frameworks–even when combined–tend to explain only a fraction of the individual variation in welfare attitudes (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Dallinger, 2010; Gelissen, 2001a; Svallfors, 2004; Wendt et al., 2011). Several studies have concluded that self-interest, typically captured by means of social-structural characteristics (e.g., age, gender and income), exerts relatively little influence on people's support for social welfare (Gilens, 1999; Taylor-Gooby, 1985; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017), and is thus 'in no way close to the full story behind the patterning of welfare attitudes' (Svallfors, 2012: 226–227). Even though ideological beliefs such as egalitarianism, individualism and left-right political orientation definitely add something in terms of explanatory power (Jaeger, 2008; Kinder & Kam, 2010; Svallfors, 2013), a large proportion of the variation in welfare attitudes remains unaccounted for (Calzada, Gómez-Garrido, Moreno, & Moreno-Fuentes, 2014).[1] As pointed out by Cook and Barrett (1992: 182), 'there is clearly more to understanding public support for social welfare than can be explained through political predispositions'. Thus, it seems that the scholarly search for the individual-level determinants of popular welfare attitudes is far from over.

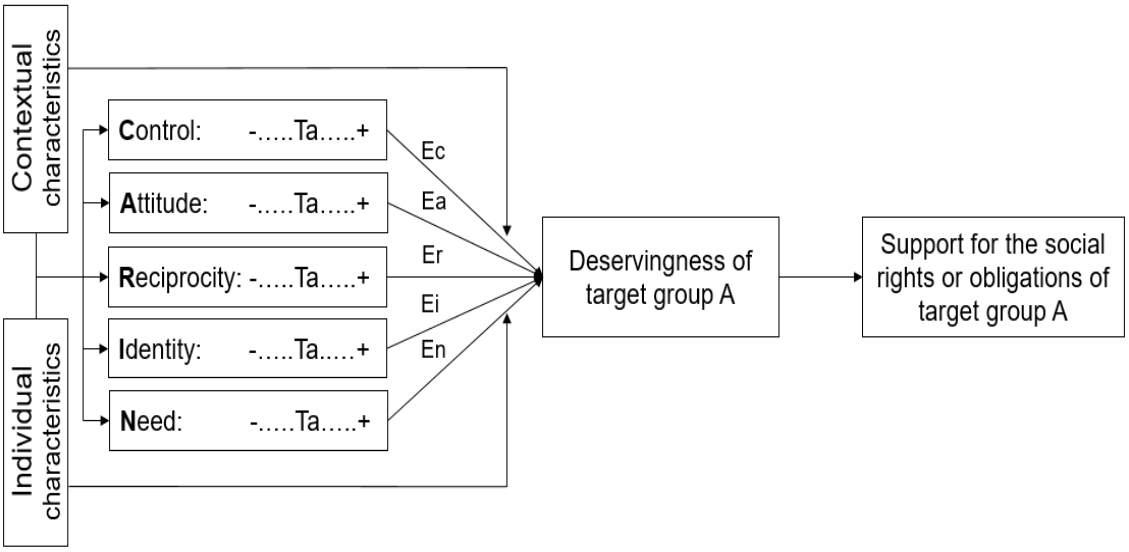
This book emphasizes the important, but perhaps underrated and understudied, role played by popular opinions about welfare deservingness (Jeene, 2015; Larsen, 2006; van Oorschot et al., 2017). This does not mean, however, that self-interest and ideology are considered *irrelevant*; they simply seem *less* relevant than they are usually given credit for. Nor is it the suggestion here that deservingness is the only, or even the best, alternative explanatory framework. Others have, for example, pointed to factors such as performance evaluations (Calzada & Del Pino, 2008; Cook & Barrett, 1992), different types of trust (Edlund, 2006; Kumlin, Wollebaek, Fladmoe, & Steen-Johnson, 2017; Svallfors, 1999) or anti-immigrant prejudice (Goldschmidt, 2015; Kinder & Kam, 2010; Muñoz & Pardos-Prado, 2017). Instead, deservingness is conceived here as one of the many possible factors to take into account when explaining support for social welfare. This is certainly nothing new; deservingness already featured in some of the earlier welfare attitudes studies. Among the very first was Cook (1979), who pinpointed deservingness perceptions as an important reason for some social welfare groups and some social services enjoying higher (or lower) levels of popular support than others. Also in Coughlin's (1980) groundbreaking review of public opinion studies, deservingness was often referred to, albeit somewhat implicitly. The

exceptionally high level of support for old-age pensions found in the United States, for example, was ascribed to the fact that pensioners are perceived as a needy group (the need criterion) that has made considerable contributions to social security (the reciprocity criterion). According to Coughlin (1980: 60-61), 'the notion of "need" and "the deserving poor" continues to be a touchstone of American attitudes, also in other areas of social policy'. In a similar vein, Taylor-Gooby (1985: 29-30, 44) argued that in addition to 'considerations of self-interest […] judgements about the desert of different groups are also likely to play a part' in explaining support for social welfare. Throughout the 1990s, several–mainly American–studies continued to recognize that deservingness is an important explanatory factor underlying welfare support (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Gilens, 1999; Groskind, 1991, 1994; Will, 1993).[2]

It was not until van Oorschot's seminal work (2000, 2006a), however, that the notion of deservingness also found its way to the European mainland and turned into a more structured theoretical framework. Based on earlier studies (Cook, 1979; De Swaan, 1988; Will, 1993), van Oorschot (2000) identified five crucial criteria underlying popular welfare preferences, which he then used to explain why the public consistently ranks some groups (such as the old and the sick) higher than others (such as unemployed people and immigrants) when it comes to social welfare (van Oorschot, 2006a, 2008). Since then, many others have used van Oorschot's deservingness criteria as a solid foundation on which to construct theoretical propositions and empirical analyses (Buss, 2018; Hrast et al., 2018; Heuer & Zimmermann, 2017; Jeene, 2015; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; Kootstra, 2016; Larsen, 2006, 2008b; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2019; van Der Aa, Paulus, Hiligsmann, Maarse, & Evers, 2018). The preliminary peak was reached in 2017, with the publication of a book devoted entirely to the issue of welfare deservingness (van Oorschot et al., 2017), which concluded that 'the deservingness framework is a highly relevant and fertile theoretical lens through which to study the legitimacy of public policies' (Meuleman, Roosma, & van Oorschot, 2017: 350). The same book also advanced a heuristic model, which it borrowed from Jeene (2015), and which is used here (in a slightly extended version) as a theoretical starting point (see Figure 2.1).

In short, the deservingness model suggests that public support for social welfare policies is to a large extent contingent on the perceived deservingness of their respective target groups. A target group's overall welfare deservingness depends on (1) how citizens evaluate or 'score' that group on the five deservingness criteria (i.e., 'deservingness perceptions'), and (2) the importance they attach to those criteria when forming welfare opinions (i.e., 'deservingness valuations'). Both types of deservingness opinions are, in turn, influenced by the ideological and sociodemographic characteristics of the individuals who make the judgements, and the social-structural, cultural-political and institutional-policy context in which those judgements are made. In the following, we first explain the different components and relationships of the welfare deservingness model in more detail. The model is then linked to the perspectives of policy feedback and policy responsiveness to clarify why and how popular deservingness opinions interact with welfare state policies. Throughout the discussion, we identify several conceptual and empirical lacunae in the current deservingness model. How most, but unfortunately not all, of these lacunae are addressed in this book, is the topic of the next chapter, in which we outline the methodological framework.

Figure 2.1 The welfare deservingness model



Notes: The model is based on: Cook & Barrett (1992: 193), Jeene (2015: 22) and van Oorschot & Roosma (2017: 16). ...Ta...= the 'score' of a target group on a deservingness criterion. Ec/a/r/i/n= the relative importance of a criterion in shaping the overall deservingness of a target group.

2.1 THE WELFARE DESERVINGNESS MODEL

The most central component of the heuristic model depicted in Figure 2.1 is arguably the deservingness concept itself. In its most basic form, welfare deservingness refers to the degree to which a specific target group, such as the elderly, the sick or the unemployed, is considered deserving, or worthy, of social welfare. A derivative thereof is the concept of 'relative deservingness', which refers to the degree to which a target group is considered more, or less, deserving than other groups (see for example Jeene & van Oorschot, 2013). The importance of distinguishing between the two types of deservingness has already been illustrated in the introductory chapter, where it was shown that some groups, such as the unemployed, are perhaps seen as *relatively* less deserving, but are certainly not considered undeserving in an *absolute* sense. The perceived (relative) deservingness of a target group, in turn, determines the extent to which people support government involvement in bestowing social rights (e.g., in-cash benefits or in-kind services) to, and imposing social obligations (e.g., job-seeking requirements) on that group. Most existing deservingness studies, however, have been concerned primarily with rights rather than obligations (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). The few that have linked deservingness to demanding activation policies have typically found that when it comes to enforcing work-related requirements, more-deserving target groups, such as the disabled, are granted considerably more leniency by the general public than less-deserving groups, such as the able-bodied unemployed (Buss, 2018; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015; Larsen, 2008b; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). Despite its dominance, however, surprisingly few have actually examined the deservingness-rights relationship directly, by measuring perceived deservingness and assessing its impact on public support for social rights (Meuleman et al., 2017). Instead, it has become customary to gauge a target group's deservingness indirectly by deducing it from measurements of the support component, such as items concerning government responsibility and government spending (see for example Goldschmidt, 2015; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2013; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014).

On the surface, this strategy seems logical and understandable. As explained by Cook (1972: 172):

> The very generality of the relationship between deservingness and support must make one suspect that deservingness and support may form a common factor instead of being two unique constructs (i.e., being deserving may mean being deserving of support). Thus, it may be that deservingness is more usefully conceptualized as an indirect measure of support rather than as an independent determinant of support.

However, the mere observation that support is comparatively high for welfare policies targeted at groups that, from a theoretical perspective, should be considered deserving by the public, hardly counts as definite empirical proof that support is actually, or single-handedly, driven by such popular deservingness opinions. As explained above, many other factors–such as self-interest, ideology and performance evaluations–could explain why some welfare programmes are more popular than others; a fact that risks being ignored when deservingness is equated with support for social welfare. This makes it absolutely necessary to draw a sharp conceptual distinction between the two components of the deservingness model. A somewhat reassuring finding, however, is that the few studies that have explicitly made this distinction typically report a strong empirical relationship between perceived deservingness and support for social welfare (Appelbaum, 2001, 2002; Cook, 1979). Nevertheless, some researchers caution against interpreting that link as a causal one, as it could also be that people consider a particular target group as deserving simply because they support the welfare policy targeted at that group, but for reasons other than deservingness (Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Larsen, 2006). Separating cause from effect, if at all possible, would require longitudinal public opinion data capturing both the deservingness and the support component. Unfortunately, such data is not yet available.

A target group's overall deservingness depends, in first instance, on how it is perceived (or 'scored') on a number of deservingness criteria. According to van Oorschot (2000, 2006a), citizens use five criteria, also known as the 'CARIN criteria', when they decide who should get what from the welfare state. The first one, *control*, refers to the degree of personal responsibility welfare targets have for being in their situation, and consists, according to Jeene (2015: 18), of two sub-components: 'control for getting in, which means who is to blame for being in the poor situation … and control over getting out, which refers to the effort that people make to end their hardships'. As a general rule, target groups are considered less deserving if they are held responsible for being on social welfare. The second criterion, *attitude*, the broadest of the bunch, refers to a comprehensive collection of norm-conforming attitudes and behaviours, such as the gratitude, docility, compliance, honesty and pleasantness of welfare targets (Cook, 1979; De Swaan, 1988). Groups that are perceived to 'act properly', such as the grateful and docile pensioners, are commonly regarded as more deserving, and are rewarded with more generous welfare arrangements than groups thought to 'behave badly', such as the deviant and demanding out-of-work youngster (Larsen, 2008b; van Oorschot, 2006a). The third criterion, *reciprocity*, relates to the perceived contributions of welfare targets: the greater their contribution to society (in the past, the present or the future) in terms of work, taxes, caring responsibilities, job-seeking efforts or other performances, the more deserving they are (van Oorschot, 2006a). The fourth criterion, *identity*, has to do with feelings of similarity, proximity and cultural closeness (De Swaan, 1988). Welfare targets who are, for whatever reason, perceived to belong to the in-group are

generally considered more deserving of social welfare than out-group members, with whom we have little in common. For most welfare state scholars, the identity dimension boils down to issues of race, ethnicity, immigrant status and nationality. However, this is too narrow an interpretation of the identity concept, as it neglects the well-established finding in psychological literature that individuals derive their social identity from multiple group memberships, which also include gender, age, social class, language and religion (Chen & Li, 2009). The fifth criterion, *need*, refers to the perceived financial destitution and/or health status of welfare targets: the higher their need, the more deserving they are.

Although the deservingness model, as depicted in Figure 2.1, makes it seem as though the CARIN criteria constitute five separate and independent entities, the reality is that they are very much interwoven, and the boundaries between them are not always clear (Meuleman, Roosma, & Abts, 2019). To put it in factor-analytical terms, most types of popular perceptions potentially 'load' onto multiple deservingness criteria. A case in point are perceptions concerning (the lack of) job-seeking efforts on the part of welfare recipients, which can be interpreted in numerous ways: as evidence that they are in control of their situation; as a sign that they are unwilling to reciprocate; as the mark of an ungrateful attitude; as an indication that they are 'different than us', because they do not share a common work ethic; or perhaps even as proof that they are not really in need (Larsen, 2006; Petersen, 2012; van Oorschot, 2000). This interconnectedness of the CARIN criteria presents a major challenge for survey researchers trying to operationalize them, most of whom rely on expert knowledge to turn the abstract criteria into concrete survey measurements (Meuleman et al., 2017). It is well known, however, that the views of experts are not always in tune with those of the general public. One promising way forward is to conduct more qualitative research that uses, for example, in-depth interviews or focus groups to discover what concrete meaning deservingness criteria have to ordinary citizens (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017; see Chapter 6).

Most empirical studies have almost exclusively focused on popular perceptions that relate either to poor people in general, or to groups alleged to be less-deserving, most notably the (black) recipients of American 'welfare', able-bodied unemployed people, social assistance beneficiaries and, more recently, immigrants (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017).[3,4] A consistent finding in American research is that 'the poor' are seen in a more positive light than 'welfare recipients' (Smith, 1987), who tend to be the targets of exceptionally hostile and stigmatizing attitudes marking them as lazy, immoral and undeserving (Gilens, 1999; Soss & Schram, 2007). In a similar vein, European scholars often claim that the public image of unemployed people and social assistance recipients is overwhelmingly negative, even in Scandinavia, where welfare attitudes are usually the most positive (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Most widespread is arguably the perception that the able-bodied poor and unemployed lack the will and effort to find work, and are thus (at least partly) responsible for their plight (Buffel & Van de Velde, 2018; Coughlin, 1980; Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Hills, 2002; Maassen & De Goede, 1989).[5] At the same time, however, several studies have nuanced that predominantly negative image, by showing that most citizens actually think poverty and unemployment are caused by circumstances beyond individual control, such as economic forces (Eardley et al., 2000; Larsen, 2006; Lepianka, Gelissen, & van Oorschot, 2010), and also see the unemployed and social assistance beneficiaries as groups facing severe financial need

(Blomberg, Kallio, Kangas, Kroll, & Niemelä, 2017; Hills, 2002; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; Larsen, 2006; Raven, 2012; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a). This might help explain why, as explained in the introductory chapter, the able-bodied unemployed are generally considered less deserving, but not undeserving, and why the welfare schemes targeted at them are less popular, but not unpopular.

Studies examining popular perceptions related to supposedly highly-deserving groups, such as the old, the sick and the disabled, are much rarer, but generally show a brighter picture, at least from a deservingness perspective. The elderly, for example, are typically perceived as 'warm and incompetent' (Cuddy, Norton, & Fiske, 2005), 'needy' (Huddy, Jones, & Chard, 2015) and 'disadvantaged and conventional' (Lambert & Chasteen, 1993).[6] Even more scarce, however, are studies that systematically compare the deservingness-related popular perceptions of multiple target groups. To the best of our knowledge, only Cook (1979) and Cook and Barrett (1992) have provided a truly systematic overview of the way in which the (American) public evaluates different target groups on a broader range of deservingness dimensions that roughly correspond with the CARIN criteria. In Cook's (1979) analysis of the Chicago public, for example, it is shown that the elderly and the disabled poor are seen as more needy, grateful and pleasant than the working-aged poor. They are also considered less responsible for their fate (see also Jensen & Petersen, 2017). [7] Outside of the American context, there is also a pressing need for additional studies that systematically compare how different target groups, not only the most contested ones, are evaluated on the CARIN criteria.

As displayed on the left-hand side of Figure 2.1, the deservingness model asserts that popular deservingness perceptions are influenced by individual and contextual characteristics. At the individual level, two main components have been recognized: a structural factor, referring to a person's social-structural position within society, and a cultural factor, relating to a person's ideological orientations towards that society (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Jeene, van Oorschot, & Uunk, 2013). With regard to 'structure', one of the few consistent empirical findings is that socially vulnerable groups hold more favourable deservingness perceptions than their counterparts in more secure positions. For example, people with experience of unemployment (benefit receipt) are less likely to have stigmatizing attitudes towards the unemployed (Buffel & Van de Velde, 2018; Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Larsen, 2006). Similarly, attributing poverty to self-inflicting behaviour is markedly less common among individuals who have a (subjectively) low income (da Costa & Dias, 2015; Gilens, 1999; Lepianka et al., 2010). Not only do such disadvantaged groups have a greater self-interest in social welfare provision, their lived experience also enables them to empathize and identify with the poor and unemployed on a deeper level. This does not necessarily mean, however, that those living at the margins of society are overwhelmingly positive in their deservingness perceptions. In fact, prior research has shown that they too can hold relatively stigmatizing attitudes towards the poor and unemployed, presumably because they feel some kind of a psychological need to dissociate themselves from those groups (Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; see Chapter 9).[8]

At first glance, the link between ideology, or 'culture', and deservingness seems much more straightforward (Meuleman et al., 2017). As a general rule, politically left-leaning or liberal-leaning individuals perceive the poor and unemployed more positively compared with their right-wing,

conservative counterparts (Blomberg et al., 2017; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Gilens, 1999; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; Larsen, 2006).[9] Doubt has been cast, however, on the causal direction of the ideology-deservingness link (Cook, 1979). It could well be, for instance, that people adopt a right-wing ideology simply because they evaluate welfare recipients negatively on the CARIN criteria. In this book, we follow Cook and Barrett's (1992) argument that ideological dispositions are causally prior to deservingness perceptions, because they are acquired much earlier in life, through socialization during childhood and adolescence (see also Gilens, 1999). This suggests that ideology is much more fundamental and stable than deservingness, making it more likely that it is a cause rather than an effect. According to Jensen and Petersen (2017), however, such ideologically-driven divides emerge only in the case of allegedly less deserving target groups, such as the unemployed; not in the case of groups that are automatically considered deserving by almost all members of the public, such as the sick and disabled. These authors show that the perceived causes of sickness appear to lie 'outside the confines of ideological conflict', because basically everyone (at least in Denmark, Japan and the United States) views the sick as 'unlucky victims deserving of help' (Jensen & Petersen, 2017: 13; see also Mau, 2003; Schlesinger & Lee, 1993).[10] What this comes to show, again, is the importance of also studying the determinants of popular deservingness perceptions concerning allegedly high-deserving groups, which has hitherto remained a rarity in large-scale survey research.[11]

As shown in Figure 2.1, it is not only the characteristics of individuals that influence popular deservingness perceptions, but also the characteristics of the broader societal context in which individuals live. Three general and interrelated types of context have been recognized in the literature: (1) the social-structural context, (2) the cultural-political context and (3) the institutional-policy context (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). Here, we consider only the first and second of these; the third will be discussed in the next section. A first important sub-dimension of the social-structural context is the economy. Most widely discussed and examined is arguably the relationship between the level of unemployment and popular perceptions concerning the control criterion. It is a well-documented finding that poverty and unemployment are more likely to be ascribed to structural rather than individual causes in times of job scarcity, which is why, so the argument generally goes, public support for welfare provision is greater in high-unemployment contexts (Fraile & Ferrer, 2005; Fridberg & Ploug, 2000; Hills, 2002; Jeene, 2015; Larsen, 2006; Wendt et al., 2011). At the same time, high levels of unemployment might also enhance the ease with which people are able to identify with the poor and unemployed, because of the greater risk of experiencing unemployment, either personally or through family and friends (Jeene, 2015; Larsen, 2006; Wendt et al., 2011).[12] Next to the economy, scholars have identified a number of demographic factors, such as population ageing (Jeene, 2015; Naumann, 2018) and ethnic heterogeneity (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Carriero & Filandri, 2018), as important contextual, social-structural determinants of popular deservingness perceptions. To date, however, these factors have seldom been included in empirical models.[13] The second type of context that might affect deservingness perceptions, the cultural-political context, refers to a broad and diverse set of factors, including, to name but a few, a country's religious and ideological heritage (Alesina & Fuchs-Schündeln, 2007; Jeene, 2015; Kahl, 2005; Stam, 2015), the contemporary cultural climate in terms of shared values and norms (Lepianka et al., 2010; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014), and elite framing in political discourse and the mass media (Esmark & Schoop, 2017; Ford, 2016; Iyengar, 1990; Larsen & Dejgaard, 2013; Slothuus, 2007).

However, also the cultural-political context has mostly been the subject of theoretical speculation rather than empirical examination. As noted by Esmark and Schoop (2017: 3), for example, 'although the importance of the media in relation to political framing and public perceptions of deservingness is consistently acknowledged in the available literature on deservingness, studies including the media are in short supply'.[14,15]

The empirically most stable relationship of the deservingness model, at least according to Meuleman and colleagues (2017: 341), is the one between deservingness perceptions and support for social welfare. As already mentioned, however, most scholarly attention has been paid to the link between deservingness and support for social rights. It is well documented that people who 'score' a target group unfavourably on (some of) the CARIN criteria feel less inclined to grant social rights to that group. The most established finding is that citizens are markedly less generous if they attribute the cause of a social risk–such as poverty, unemployment or sickness–to undesirable individual behaviour rather than uncontrollable, structural forces (Alston & Dean, 1972; Appelbaum, 2002; Gilens, 1999; Gollust & Lynch, 2011; Iyengar, 1990; Larsen, 2006, 2008a; Mackonyte, Lomos, & van Oorschot, 2014; Petersen, Slothuus, Stubager, & Togeby, 2010; Petersen, Sznycer, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2012; Soss & Schram, 2007; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). Although they have been investigated less frequently, other deservingness dimensions also play a part in shaping support for social rights. It has been shown, for example, that generosity increases when people think welfare targets have contributed to society (Petersen et al., 2010), are grateful, pleasant and likeable (Appelbaum, 2002; Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992), are 'close to us' (Huddy et al., 2015) and live in need (Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Huddy et al., 2015; Mackonyte et al., 2014; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a). It should be noted, however, that most studies have 'skipped a step' in the deservingness model (as presented in Figure 2.1), by jumping directly from the CARIN criteria to support for social welfare without also first testing how those criteria are linked to the perceived *overall* deservingness of a target group. To the best of our knowledge, only Kootstra (2017) has done this, by measuring (1) how British citizens 'score' different majority and ethnic minority groups on the CARIN criteria, and (2) how deserving they think those groups are of the support they receive from the government. She found that the CARIN criteria have a strong and robust influence on perceived overall deservingness, but that the strength and nature of the relationship varies across target groups–a point to which we will return below.

There is also a lack of studies that put the welfare deservingness framework into a broader perspective, by systematically comparing the effects of deservingness perceptions with those of other well-known determinants of welfare policy preferences. The few studies that have done so, typically demonstrate that deservingness perceptions hold their ground relatively well when placed alongside a broader range of social-structural factors (claimed to measure self-interest) and ideological beliefs (Appelbaum, 2001; Gollust & Lynch, 2011; Huddy et al., 2015; Larsen, 2008a; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). Thus, it seems that 'deservingness opinions are a highly relevant factor in explaining support for welfare policies over and beyond alternative explanatory frameworks' (Meuleman et al., 2017: 341). Further, there is some evidence suggesting that popular perceptions of deservingness actually outweigh alternative factors in explaining welfare preferences. According to Gilens (1999: 80, 94), for one, 'a variety of political attitudes [i.e., individualism, party identification, liberal/conservative ideology] and demographic

characteristics [i.e., family income, age, sex, region, education, marital status] have some effect on opposition to welfare', but 'the two most important sources of opposition to welfare are the perceptions that blacks are lazy and that welfare recipients are undeserving'. In a similar vein, Cook and Barrett (1992) concluded that perceptions of recipient deservingness exert a stronger influence on support for social welfare than self-interest and political predispositions.[16] The authors also assessed the relative importance of perceptions of recipient deservingness vis-à-vis perceptions of programme effectiveness, but found that much seems to depend on the type of welfare programme under consideration. When explaining support for Medicaid and AFDC (which are means-tested social assistance schemes targeted respectively at sick people and families with children), recipient deservingness appeared to be more important. By contrast, in the case of Social Security (a contribution-based social insurance scheme targeted at retired workers), programme effectiveness leads the way. As a general conclusion, however, Cook and Barrett (1992: 197) maintain that all 'four factors combined [political predispositions, self-interest, program effectiveness and recipient deservingness] offer more useful information toward understanding public support for public assistance and social insurance programs than any one or two factors considered alone'.

So far, the discussion of the deservingness model has revolved around the way in which target groups are perceived, or 'scored', on the CARIN criteria. This is, however, only part of the story. For such deservingness perceptions to have real consequences with regard to support for social welfare, it is essential that people also attach importance to the underlying deservingness criteria. To illustrate this point, imagine that an individual, let us call him Mr X, thinks the typical unemployed person has few financial resources. At the same time, however, he feels that financial neediness should not determine who gets what from the welfare state. His perception of need is thus unlikely to structure how he feels about unemployed people's welfare deservingness. Instead, Mr X believes the governing criterion should be reciprocity: if people have contributed to society, they have earned their right to welfare benefits. However, because most unemployed people are too lazy to look for work, Mr X argues, they are not contributing and should not get anything from the welfare state. Thus, his perception of reciprocity is likely to influence how deserving Mr X thinks the unemployed are, unlike his perception of need. What this illustration should demonstrate is that welfare deservingness is determined not only by people's perceptions of a target group, but also by the value they attach to deservingness and the CARIN criteria (Meuleman et al., 2019). In this book, the first factor, people's subjective evaluations of target groups' characteristics, is termed 'deservingness *perceptions'*, and the second factor, the (relative) importance they attach to various criteria of deservingness, is called 'deservingness *valuations*. Despite being conceptually different, perceptions and valuations have often been conflated in prior deservingness research. For instance, it is a common misunderstanding that vignette experiments, which are increasingly being used in deservingness research, gauge people's perceptions of welfare recipients (Meuleman et al., 2017). Vignette experiments assess what types of deservingness considerations people give weight to, but they tell us preciously little about their initial ideas of real-world recipients. It is perfectly possible, for example, for people to respond negatively to a vignette that depicts an unemployed person as lazy, because they feel it is an important deservingness dimension, while at the same time, they might believe that in reality, most unemployed people do try hard to find work. It is exactly that distinction, between valuations and perceptions, which takes centre stage in the experimental work of Petersen and colleagues

on the so-called 'deservingness heuristic' (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Hansen, 2019; Jensen & Petersen, 2017; Petersen, 2012; Petersen et al., 2010, 2012):

> I have argued that the importance of responding differently to 'cheaters' and 'reciprocators' in help-giving situations over the course of human evolution causes people across cultures, ideologies, and levels of sophistication to think about modern welfare in terms of whether recipients are lazy or unlucky. The mechanism underlying such categorizations seems to be rather universal, as would be expected given their importance for the evolution of human cooperation. Yet manifest differences in welfare opinions will readily occur if the input to these mechanisms varies across individuals. Such variations can occur between countries where, for example, the level of ethnic heterogeneity or level of unemployment seems to influence perceptions of the efforts of welfare recipients. Variations can also occur between individuals within the same country. While ideological predispositions do not influence individuals' tendencies to discern between sloth and misfortune in the presence of clear effort cues, liberals and conservatives still differ in their baseline stereotypes about welfare recipients (Petersen, 2012: 14).

This brings us to the ongoing debate about the relative importance of the deservingness criteria; a debate that stretches between two extreme positions. At one extreme, there is the idea of a law-like hierarchy of deservingness criteria that is the same for everyone, always and everywhere. From this viewpoint, some of the criteria are simply more important than others. Although consensus is lacking in the literature, there has been a tendency to pinpoint control and reciprocity as the most critical deservingness dimensions (Larsen, 2006; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Perhaps most explicit in this regard are the proponents of the deservingness heuristic, who argue that 'deservingness-based welfare opinions are not influenced by all types of positive or negative perceptions of welfare recipients but, in particular, by perceptions of recipient effort' (Petersen, 2012: 2). Also according to Mau (2003), 'reciprocity represents the key concept for understanding why, and under which conditions, people endorse collective welfare arrangements' (see also Bowles & Gintis, 2011). In a similar vein, De Swaan (1988) claims that 'disability', which loosely corresponds with van Oorschot's (2000) control criterion, is the most crucial, perhaps even necessary, condition for deservingness.[17] Deservingness is much more, however, than just control and reciprocity (Bullock, 1999; Raven, Achterberg, & Van Der Veen, 2015). Some even suggest that other deservingness criteria are more important. A number of American scholars, for example, seem to claim that deservingness is, first and foremost, the outcome of the extent to which welfare recipients' attitude and behaviour conforms to mainstream values and norms (Gans, 1995; Katz, 1989; Murray, 1984). From this viewpoint, lifestyles deviating from the norm, such as out-of-wedlock births or teenage pregnancies, are seen as the ultimate signs of undeservingness. Others maintain that, ultimately, considerations of identity lie at the heart of deservingness, especially when ethnic minorities and immigrants are involved (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2019). Although it is seldom recognized as such, the criterion of need might also be the most fundamental, as it may be seen as a prerequisite for other deservingness considerations (Meuleman et al., 2019). By definition, welfare benefits and services are designed to respond to a certain need, be it income security, cost compensation, health protection or any other type (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). If no need is recognized, other deservingness dimensions are perhaps not even relevant. This idea is implicitly present in many deservingness studies that claim to scrutinize opinions towards 'needy groups' rather than 'target groups', already assuming that those groups are actually in need (Jeene, 2015; van Oorschot,

2006a). Further, when describing the deservingness criteria and their relative importance, the concept of need often features prominently. A typical example is found in van Oorschot (2000: 43), who stresses the pivotal role played by the control criterion with the statement that: 'whether people in *need* [emphasis added] can be held responsible for their *neediness* [emphasis added] seems to be a general and central criterion for deservingness'. Thus, it could well be that Cook and Barrett (1992: 117) were right in stating that 'the principal ingredient of deservingness is a view that recipients have a legitimate and otherwise unmeetable need'.

At the other extreme of the debate, there is the view–endorsed in this book–that the search for 'the most important' deservingness criteria is a somewhat pointless exercise, because their relative importance is (1) target specific, (2) person specific and (3) context specific (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). First, the salience of different deservingness criteria is likely to vary across policy target groups (Appelbaum, 2002; Heuer & Zimmermann, 2017; Kootstra, 2017; Meuleman et al., 2019; Raven et al., 2015). When judging the welfare deservingness of immigrants, for example, the criterion of identity might override the possible influences of the remaining criteria (Reeskens & van der Meer, 2019). This is less likely to happen when sick people are the target group under consideration, in which case (medical) need may be a more decisive deservingness factor (Schlesinger & Lee, 1993; van Der Aa et al., 2018). Second, people's emphasis on (some of the) deservingness criteria is likely to be influenced by the structural and cultural characteristics of the individuals making the judgements (Fang & Huber, 2019; Groskind, 1991; Hansen, 2019; Heuer & Zimmermann, 2017; Jeene et al., 2013; Meuleman et al., 2019; van Der Aa et al., 2018; van Oorschot, 2000). On the one hand, social-structural background and ideology determine the importance people attach to *specific* deservingness criteria. Older people, for example, might feel they have contributed more to society during their active careers than their younger counterparts, and accordingly, stress the criterion of reciprocity more strongly (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Jeene et al., 2013). Because people on a low income, by contrast, have more to gain from welfare distribution on the basis of need, they might give relatively more weight to the criterion of need (Groskind, 1991; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2013). On the other hand, personal characteristics might also influence the significance given to deservingness *in general.* To some people, left-wingers for example, deservingness may not matter much when they form welfare preferences, because they have a strong ideological allegiance to the welfare state (Buss, 2018; Hjorth, 2016; Huddy et al., 2015; Jeene et al., 2013; van Oorschot, 2000). To other people, questions of deservingness may be much more relevant. It has been shown, for example, that people in relatively disadvantaged socioeconomic positions place greater emphasis on deservingness than people in more advantaged positions, presumably because the former want to prevent undeserving individuals from taking advantage of the scarce public resources for which they have to compete (Jeene et al., 2013; Muñoz & Pardos-Prado, 2017; van Oorschot, 2000). Third, people's emphasis on deservingness criteria depends on the larger macro context in which they live (Hrast et al., 2018; Jeene, 2015; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). For example, one frequently cited social-structural mechanism holds that the criterion of need is much more salient to people in times of economic downturn and/or high unemployment (Kam & Nam, 2008; Meuleman et al., 2017; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014).[18] A possible cultural-political mechanism is that, as claimed by Kahl (2005), the importance of the deserving-undeserving distinction varies across countries with different religious traditions. How the institutional-policy context may influence the relative importance of deservingness criteria is discussed in the next section.

2.2 WELFARE DESERVINGNESS, POLICY FEEDBACK AND POLICY RESPONSIVENESS

In the previous section, we discussed in detail how popular deservingness opinions shape public support for social welfare (see arrow one in Figure 1.1). The task in the current section is to explore how these factors interact with social welfare policies, by linking the deservingness model to the perspectives of policy responsiveness and policy feedback (see arrows two and three in Figure 1.1). On the one hand, several scholars have suggested that welfare policies are to some extent influenced by, and thus responsive to, popular deservingness opinions (Bell, 2019; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992; De Wilde, 2017; Gans, 1995; Gilens, 1999; Green-Pedersen, 2002; Jensen et al., 2017; Jensen & Petersen, 2017; Larsen, 2008b; Lee et al., 2018; Pierson, 1994; Schneider & Ingram, 1993; van Oorschot, 2006a; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). On the other hand, welfare policies are often claimed to have an influence on, and thus to feed back into, popular opinions of welfare deservingness (Buss, Ebbinghaus, & Naumann, 2017; Kongshøj, 2017; Larsen, 2006, 2008a; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2017; Rothstein, 1998; Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Combined, this leads to the expectation that: 'Public policies and social constructions of groups interact in a reciprocal manner so that they mutually affect each other. A changed social construction of deservedness can precipitate change in policy, and, alternatively, public policy can alter constructions' (Schneider & Ingram, 2005: 8). What is often left unspecified, however, are the specific mechanisms underlying such a reciprocal relationship between welfare deservingness and welfare policy (Meuleman et al., 2017). Therefore, the remainder of this section identifies some of the mechanisms through which deservingness opinions could affect social welfare policies (policy responsiveness), and *vice versa*, some of the mechanisms through which welfare policies could affect deservingness opinions (policy feedback). Before doing so, however, it is worth noting that the social welfare domain is one of the most likely policy scenes where responsiveness and feedback scenarios can unfold, because of its relatively high proximity, salience and visibility to most ordinary citizens (Burstein, 1998, 2003; Campbell, 2012; Page & Shapiro, 1983; Sharp, 1999; Soss & Schram, 2007). Because 'the welfare state is a highly important phenomenon in Western societies that strongly influences the life of nearly the entire population' (Green-Pedersen, 2002: 13), citizens generally have sufficient day-to-day experience of welfare policies–as tax-paying benefactors and as benefit-receiving or service-using beneficiaries–for them to influence their opinions (policy feedback), and policymakers are more likely to be influenced by the opinions of a closely involved and well-informed public (policy responsiveness).

2.2.1 Welfare deservingness and policy responsiveness

Let us first delve deeper into the ways in which welfare state policies are responsive to popular deservingness opinions. Crucial to note, however, is that we do not pretend that public opinion is the only, let alone the most important, factor behind public policymaking. As argued by Burstein (2003: 227), 'no one believes that public opinion always determines public policy; few believe it never does'. Many other factors are arguably more critical for the way in which welfare state policies are designed and implemented (Burstein, 2018), including–to name but a few–party

politics, economic and budgetary considerations, and pressures from international institutions. For example, when governments decide to retrench a welfare scheme, they typically do so because internal (e.g., budget deficiencies) and/or external (e.g., globalization) reform pressures urge them to–not because the public considers its target group as less deserving of social welfare. However, when reform pressures necessitate that policymakers make tough distributive choices, less-deserving policy target groups might be more likely targets of retrenchment than highly-deserving groups (Cook, 1979). In such a scenario, popular deservingness opinions are not seen as an immediate cause of social policy (reforms), but rather as a factor that 'shapes the playing field in which policy makers operate' (Meuleman et al., 2017: 336).

The most basic claim made in the policy responsiveness literature is that public opinion has a bearing on public policymaking because of the re-election motives most public officials have (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Page & Shapiro, 1983). Out of fear of electoral punishment, so the argument goes, policymakers purposely choose to offer more-generous and less-conditional social protection to groups that are (thought to be) highly deserving of it in the eyes of the general public (Cook, 1979; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). One way of doing this is by anticipating, *ex ante*, how the public will react to a policy before it is enacted and implemented, usually on the basis of information gathered from public opinion polls, mass media and policymakers' lived experiences and gut feelings. For example, governments may decide not to retrench old-age pensions because they realize that the elderly are a highly deserving group, making it politically risky to downgrade the level of social protection offered to them (Pierson, 1994). This is why, in the American context, 'Social Security has been called the "third rail" of politics – a colorful phrase suggesting that any politician who dares to cut this highly popular program would be politically electrocuted, and that, knowing this, few or none dare to touch the program' (Sharp, 1999: 209). Indeed, Cook and Barrett (1992: 140) found high levels of support for Social Security among members of the US Congress, first and foremost, 'driven by their fear of what they think the reaction of the public will be if they are not supportive'. Another example is when policymakers choose contribution-based social insurance over poverty-based social assistance schemes, because they think that the public at large attaches greater importance to the criterion of reciprocity than to the criterion of need (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). Next to such anticipatory responsiveness, there is also reactionary responsiveness, which occurs when policymakers modify a policy *ex post*; after the public has reacted to its (announced) implementation. For example, governments may decide to reverse budget cuts to old-age pensions after members of the public have massively rallied in the streets to protest against the disadvantages incurred on a group they consider as deserving of social welfare. If the policymakers who are responsible for the retrenchment do not bring public policy back in line with public opinion, they risk being penalized in subsequent elections. By contrast, governments probably have greater leeway when retrenchment is targeted at groups perceived as less-deserving, such as the able-bodied unemployed, in which case public reaction might be characterized by indifference rather than resistance (Giger, 2012). It should be noted, however, that politicians are not only responsive to public opinion because of self-interested electoral motives, but also because they often come to see it as their moral duty to respect, as far as possible, 'the will of the people', when designing and implementing public policies in a representative democracy (Burstein, 1998; Green-Pedersen, 2002). From this viewpoint, policymakers design beneficial policies for highly-deserving groups because they know (or think) that this is what 'the people' want.

It would also be naïve to think that public opinion always, or even for the most part, has a direct impact on public policy (Burstein, 2003). Most citizens do not have a direct line to elected officials, making it hard for them to influence political decision making directly. Instead, they rely on the political power of intermediary organizations (e.g., trade unions, anti-poverty associations and patient groups, the advice of which tends to be taken more seriously by governments) to make their voices heard in the political arena. Public protests, for example, are more often orchestrated by such organized interests than being the product of spontaneous bottom-up movements of independent and unorganized citizens. Most interest organizations, however, adhere to a 'logic of membership' for their political survival, meaning that they are inclined to promote public policies that are in line with the interests and opinions of their (potential) members, because they otherwise risk eroding their membership base, and consequently see their bargaining power and political influence drastically reduced (Ebbinghaus & Naumann, 2018). Thus, societal organizations are very often, but of course not always, responsive to the wants and demands of their supporters. Trade unions, for example, might consider that their members are somewhat less concerned about the fate of the able-bodied unemployed, and could therefore choose not to mobilize when the government announces cut-backs affecting unemployment benefit schemes. By contrast, because they know that elderly people are regarded as a highly deserving group by almost all of their (potential) members, trade unions might be more eager to take action when cuts in old-age pensions are being proposed. As a result, governments may retrench unemployment benefits more easily (as in, with less union opposition) than pensions.

Lastly, we identify one more mechanism through which popular deservingness opinions shape social welfare policies; one that falls outside the scope of the traditional policy responsiveness perspective. According to Cook and Barrett (1992), there is no *a priori* reason to suspect that policymakers themselves are immune from deservingness considerations when they form opinions and make decisions about social welfare (see also van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Instead, they are likely to have deservingness opinions of their own, which do not necessarily differ in a fundamental way from those held by ordinary citizens. Of course, policymakers usually have specific characteristics that set them apart from the wider public (e.g., they tend to be well-educated, upper class and well-informed about politics), but they are also, through their work, family and friends, strongly connected to–and thus part of–that same public. For this reason, they might follow relatively similar deservingness logics to those found among members of the public. Cook and Barrett (1992), for example, demonstrated empirically that the deservingness beliefs of US Congress representatives not only influenced their social welfare preferences, but also–and more importantly–their voting behaviour: representatives were more likely to vote in favour of welfare legislation supporting children or the elderly if they considered these respective groups as more deserving of social welfare. Several other studies seem to confirm that policymakers' deservingness opinions are consequential for their welfare preferences, and thus potentially also for their political decision making (Blomberg et al., 2017; George, 1996; Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016; van Der Aa, Hiligsmann, Paulus, & Evers, 2017). Likewise, there is some evidence that the welfare preferences of policy administrators, such as social workers and social security officials, are also shaped by their deservingness opinions (Blomberg et al., 2017; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015), and that such opinions partly determine the allocation decisions they make when formal legislation leaves sufficient room for discretion (Altreiter & Leibetseder, 2015; De Wilde, 2017; Knegt, 1987; Schram et al., 2009; Thorén, 2008; Watkins-Hayes & Kovalsky, 2016).

2.2.2 Welfare deservingness and policy feedback

There are good reasons to believe, however, that public policies not only respond to, but also influence or feed back into public opinion (Campbell, 2012; Larsen, 2019; Pierson, 1993). A growing body of literature contends that welfare state policies in particular, act as institutions shaping citizens' welfare attitudes (Jordan, 2013; Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Soss & Schram, 2007; Svallfors, 2007). The most frequently made claim in the literature is that the design of a welfare policy to a large extent determines the (perceived) self-interest people have in that policy. For example, universal, high-level welfare benefits are of personal interest to most citizens, including the all-important middle classes, and should thus generate high levels of popular support. By contrast, selective, low-level benefits only serve marginal groups of poor people, thereby providing little incentive for the broader population to show support on the basis of self-interest (Goodin & Le Grand, 1987; Korpi & Palme, 1998). However, in addition to determining what people find rational, welfare policies also shape their normative beliefs (Mau, 2004; Rothstein, 1998), including popular opinions of welfare deservingness (Larsen, 2006; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Depending on the type of deservingness opinion, however, there are different policy feedback mechanisms at play. On the one hand, policy feedback may work through deservingness *perceptions*: policy design first influences how a target group is evaluated or 'scored' on the deservingness criteria, and in turn, this determines the level of support for social welfare programmes geared towards that group. On the other hand, policy feedback may operate through deservingness *valuations*: policy design affects which deservingness criteria people attach importance to, and thus also how the criteria shape overall deservingness and support for social welfare.

Let us first discuss in greater detail the link between welfare policy and popular deservingness perceptions, by zooming in on the two policy design characteristics that feature most prominently in previous work: selectivity and generosity. With regard to the first, many scholars have argued that highly selective welfare schemes (or regimes) that only assist poor people, produce more-negative deservingness perceptions and thus lower levels of support for social welfare (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). In line with Rothstein (1998), Larsen (2006; 2008), for one, maintained that because means testing draws a sharp boundary between the benefit-receiving minority and the tax-paying majority, it fosters the stigmatizing public image that welfare recipients are 'a different kind of people', characterized by a deep-seated unwillingness to work and contribute to society. By contrast, universal policies, which are accessible to all residents or citizens facing a particular social risk regardless of their financial needs, are not as divisive, and thus produce less-stigmatizing attitudes towards welfare recipients. Likewise, it has been argued that social insurance policies, which are located in the middle of the selectivity-universality continuum, also promote relatively positive deservingness perceptions, especially with regard to the criterion of reciprocity (Fang & Huber, 2019; Larsen, 2006, 2008b; Mau, 2003; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). As argued by Wendt and colleagues (2011: 130), for example, the reason that unemployment *insurance* is more popular than social *assistance* is that 'the beneficiaries have paid [social security] contributions for a certain period of time, and the public thereby perceives that the unemployed receive their due […] The fact that no work history is necessary for benefit receipt [in social assistance schemes] raises doubts about the deservingness of recipients'. At the same time, however, highly selective welfare schemes, precisely because of the presence of

means testing, do tend to generate the perception that recipients are living in poverty (the need criterion), which might in turn increase public support for such schemes (Blomberg et al., 2017; Larsen, 2006; Raven, 2012; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017). As for the second policy design characteristic, generosity, two opposing feedback mechanisms are recognized in the literature. On the one hand, it is often argued that (too) generous welfare schemes risk undermining their support base, either because they fuel the idea that recipients have a good standard of living and are thus no longer in need of state aid, or because they nurture suspicion about recipients' willingness to work (Baumberg Geiger, 2017; Larsen, 2006; Mau, 2003; Raven et al., 2015; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). Of course, this also implies that when generosity is extremely low, support is likely to increase, because the living standards of welfare recipients will be perceived as problematic, and their incentive to work will be considered high (Jeene, van Oorschot, & Uunk, 2014; Wendt et al., 2011). On the other hand, generous welfare schemes could also reinforce their support base, by reducing the differences in economic resources and lifestyles between recipients and non-recipients. This will, so the argument goes, encourage a deeper mutual understanding and identification between both groups, leading to higher levels of public support for social welfare (Carriero & Filandri, 2018; Larsen, 2006).

However, welfare policies do not only influence public support for social welfare through their impact on deservingness perceptions; they also affect what kind of deservingness logics, if any, people adhere to (Jeene, 2015). According to normative institutionalists, welfare policies, once enacted, act as institutions that 'prepare the moral opinions of those participating by filtering and emphasizing certain norms', leading citizens 'to accommodate themselves within a given institutional structure and to develop habitual loyalties' (Mau, 2004: 68; see also Homans, 1974; Douglas, 1987; Rothstein, 1998; Miller, 1999; Arts and Gelissen, 2001). In terms of welfare deservingness, this means that welfare policy design could determine the importance people attach to deservingness in general, or the emphasis they put on specific deservingness criteria (i.e., deservingness valuations). On the one hand, some policy designs may make deservingness *in general* more or less relevant to people. The standard argument here is that highly selective welfare schemes (or regimes), in particular, make deservingness discussions more prevalent and salient, because they single out poor people as the beneficiaries. By contrast, the comprehensive coverage of universal welfare policies, or the 'earned-entitlement' paradigm of social insurance, are said to downplay the importance of deservingness considerations in opinion formation (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Goldschmidt, 2015; Kangas, 2003; Larsen, 2006, 2008a; Muñoz & Pardos-Prado, 2017; Slothuus, 2007). On the other hand, welfare policies may also make people stress some *specific* deservingness criteria more than others. When thinking and talking about contribution-based social insurance, for example, citizens are likely to give more weight to the criterion of reciprocity, because it is so strongly entrenched in the programmatic structure of such schemes (Buss, 2018; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2017; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2013). In the case of means-tested social assistance, by contrast, need considerations are likely to play a more important role in determining perceived deservingness (De Wilde, 2017; Sachweh, Ulrich, & Christoph, 2007; Watkins-Hayes & Kovalsky, 2016). In a similar vein, several authors have argued that when welfare schemes make social rights conditional on the fulfilment of work-related requirements, the relative weight given to the criteria of control and reciprocity is likely to increase (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Carriero & Filandri, 2018; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2017).

2.2.3 Concluding remarks

To conclude this section (and chapter), we would like to make two final remarks about the relationship between popular deservingness opinions and welfare state policies. First, despite an abundance of theoretical attention paid to this relationship, there is surprisingly little research that examines empirically if and how deservingness opinions correlate with welfare policies. There are some studies showing that (changes in) welfare policy design characteristics are to some extent associated with deservingness perceptions (Jeene et al., 2014; Larsen, 2006; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). There are also some studies suggesting that citizens do tend to accommodate themselves to the internal logics of welfare schemes, by emphasizing the deservingness criteria that are embedded most strongly in their institutional structure (Buss, 2018; Castillo, Olivos, & Azar, 2019; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2017; van Der Aa et al., 2017). Thus, as argued by Meuleman and colleagues (2017: 341), 'indications exist that institutional design is a relevant factor for understanding deservingness opinions, but the underlying mechanisms and the preconditions under which such effects materialize require further investigations'. Second, we explicitly argue that the deservingness-policy relationship is a reciprocal one, meaning that the causal influence goes both ways. The implication of such a model of circular causality (see Figure 1.1) is that we do not get involved in chicken-or-egg discussions about which came first: popular deservingness opinions or welfare state policies. From a methodological perspective, the lack of detailed longitudinal data–on public opinion as well as public policy–has always made it very difficult, perhaps even impossible, for welfare attitudes scholars to make strong causal claims about the opinion-policy link (Kenworthy, 2009; Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Raven et al., 2011). Our study is no different in this regard. This means that in the empirical part of this book, the focus is not so much on separating cause from effect, but rather on analysing how–through which mechanisms and under which preconditions–welfare deservingness *correlates* with welfare policy.

Notes

[1] Of course, it should be recognized that there are certain limits to the amount of variance public opinion research can reasonably be expected to explain. After all, predicting the thoughts, motivations and opinions of essentially unpredictable research units (i.e., human beings) is definitely not an easy task (Gelissen, 2001a).

[2] Gilens (1999), for example, claimed that white Americans' opposition to 'welfare' is rooted first and foremost in popular (mis)conceptions that welfare recipients are predominantly black, that most blacks are lazy, and accordingly, that welfare recipients are undeserving.

[3] Studying attitudes towards poor people more generally, however, seems somewhat less useful for the deservingness model, because it is unclear what reference group citizens have in mind when they respond to questions about 'poverty' or 'the poor' (Cook, 1979). Are they thinking of poor people more generally, or are they considering a particular subcategory of the poor, such as the able-bodied poor, the elderly poor or poor children? For studies concerned with deservingness-related perceptions of the poor in general, we refer to: Alston and Dean (1972); Coughlin (1980), Da Costa & Dias (2015); Lepianka, van Oorschot, & Gelissen (2009); Lepianka et al. (2010); Larsen (2006, 2008a); Mau (2003).

[4] For studies on deservingness perceptions concerning immigrants, we refer to: Kootstra (2017); Kremer (2016); Larsen (2011), Larsen et al. (2018); Osipovič (2015); Uunk & van Oorschot (2007).

[5] De Vries (2017) actually suggests that this might just be the tip of the iceberg, as most people also hold negative *implicit* attitudes towards the unemployed, which do not surface in traditional surveys.

[6] Unfortunately, these studies were often conducted among small-N student and convenience samples, rather than large-N general population samples, which poses a serious threat to the generalizability of their results.

[7] Likewise, Cook and Barrett (1992: 100) found that 'in general, fewer members of the [American] public held positive views about the deservingness of AFDC recipients than of Social Security or Medicaid recipients', which are targeted at poor families with children, retired workers and sick or disabled poor people, respectively.

[8] The findings are markedly less consistent for other social-structural characteristics. Although men tend to see the poor and unemployed as less deserving than women do, the gender difference is often small and (statistically) insignificant (Alston & Dean, 1972; Blomberg et al., 2017; Larsen, 2006). With regard to age, some studies suggest that younger groups are more negative in their deservingness evaluations than older age groups (Alston & Dean, 1972; Blomberg et al., 2017; Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003), but others report the opposite pattern (Larsen, 2006). The same goes for education: some show that the higher educated have more favourable deservingness attitudes than the lower educated (Gilens, 1999; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015), others claim it is the other way around (Alston & Dean, 1972).

[9] Other ideological beliefs that have previously been linked to popular deservingness perceptions include authoritarianism (Maassen & De Goede, 1989), egalitarianism, ethnocentrism (Kinder & Kam, 2010), humanitarianism (Hansen, 2019), Belief in a Just World (Appelbaum, 2002), religiosity and work ethics (Furnham, 1983; Jeene, 2015; Lepianka et al., 2010).

[10] Gollust and Lynch (2011), however, did find an effect of political ideology in the US, with Conservatives and Republicans being more likely to attribute sickness to behavioural causes rather than systemic factors (e.g., healthcare system failure) (see also Fang & Huber, 2019).

[11] Notable exceptions are: Fang & Huber, 2019 and Huddy et al., 2015).

[12] In a similar vein, it has been argued that in periods of relatively low income inequality (Carriero & Filandri, 2018), or economic downturn more generally (Gilens, 1999; Jeene, 2015; Kam & Nam, 2008), poverty and unemployment are seen as problems of society rather than of individuals, and the social distance between the tax-paying majority and the benefit-receiving minority strongly decreases. Economic decline not only increases identification with, but also the (perceived) need of poor and unemployed people, which should make them more deserving in the public's opinion (Kam & Nam, 2008; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017).

[13] To our knowledge, only Larsen (2006, 2008a, 2011) has demonstrated empirically that people are more likely to attribute poverty to laziness and lack of willpower in ethnically heterogeneous countries, even when controlling for unemployment rates and social expenditure.
[14] The role played by the mass media in shaping deservingness perceptions has hitherto only been gauged indirectly, through the use of experimental studies (Iyengar, 1990; Slothuus, 2007). Unfortunately, these often lack sufficient external validity to generalize their findings to the 'real world' outside of the experimental setting (Barabas & Jerit, 2010).

[15] To grasp the impact of culturally shared values and norms, some studies have aggregated individual-level public opinion data concerning people's ideological dispositions, such as left-right ideology, egalitarianism and work ethics, to the country level (Jeene, 2015; Lepianka et al., 2010; Likki & Staerklé, 2015; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). What is generally found is that the national cultural climate in which individuals live has the potential to influence their deservingness perceptions, above and beyond the values and norms they personally hold.

[16] However, Cook and Barrett (1992) have argued that some caution is warranted, as sociodemographic position and ideology may also impact welfare support indirectly through other factors, such as deservingness perceptions.

[17] According to De Swaan (1988), 'disability' precedes 'proximity' and 'docility', which come close to the respective deservingness criteria of identity and attitude (van Oorschot, 2000).

[18] See van Oorschot (2006: 37) and Wendt et al. (2011: 150) for the hypothesized link between national economic affluence and the deservingness criteria of control and identity, and reciprocity, respectively.

3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: WELFARE SUPPORT, DESERVINGNESS OPINIONS AND WELFARE STATE POLICIES

TIJS LAENEN

The internal variation within welfare states suggests that the notion of public support for the welfare state may be misleading. Instead, citizens may hold more nuanced views that recognize the complexity of welfare design.

Jason Jordan (2010: 867)

This chapter explains and justifies how we have operationalized the three core concepts of the book's heuristic model (see Figure 1.1): public support for social welfare, popular deservingness opinions and welfare state policies. In doing so, it makes clear how the book deals with most, but unfortunately not all, of the conceptual and empirical lacunae that were identified in the previous chapters, and sets out the methodological map that has guided us through the empirical analyses that are presented in the subsequent chapters. By combining multiple data sources–ranging from quantitative surveys to qualitative focus groups–we hope to overcome some of the inherent weaknesses associated with any single data source, and thus to maximize the reliability, robustness and stability of the empirical findings. Ultimately, such data triangulation should help to provide a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between popular deservingness opinions, welfare support and welfare state policies. In addition to using its own unique data, however, each empirical chapter also examines a different combination of policy target groups, types of welfare support, types of deservingness opinions and alternative explanatory frameworks (see Table 3.1 for an overview).

3.1 PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

Despite using very different data, the empirical chapters have in common that they analyse what we call 'target-specific welfare support', defined as the degree to which the public supports the provision of social welfare to specific policy target groups. This stands in stark contrast with the widely used notion of 'generalized welfare support', which refers to support for the welfare state as a whole, and is typically measured through single survey items that tap into income redistribution preferences (Andreβ & Heien, 2001; Brady & Finnigan, 2014; Dallinger, 2010; Jaeger, 2006a, 2008, 2009; Linos & West, 2003),[1] or through composite indices that aggregate support for multiple, target-specific welfare policies (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Jakobsen, 2011; Svallfors, 2003, 2004, 2011; Taylor-Gooby, 2011b).[2] Although such measurements of overall support for the entire welfare state system are very valuable for some purposes, they are less appropriate for the study at hand for two obvious reasons. First, starting from the introduction, the book does not conceive of the welfare state as one single entity, but as a mixture of differently targeted welfare schemes that vary with regard to their generosity and conditionality.[3] Given the internal complexity and heterogeneity of welfare states, citizens are likely to have 'separate and possibly inconsistent views on different services and benefits' (Taylor-Gooby, 2001: 138), and thus to have 'more nuanced opinions than assumed by measures of overall support for the welfare state' (Jordan, 2010: 867) (see also Cnaan et al., 1993; Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Jeene, 2015; Jordan, 2013; Lipsmeyer, 2003; Wendt et al., 2011). Next to the policy-related reason, there is a second, opinion-related reason for using target-specific rather than generalized measurements of welfare support. As shown in the introductory chapter, welfare policies targeted at the old, the sick and the disabled enjoy consistently higher levels of support than policies geared towards the able-bodied unemployed of working age–a pattern that remains hidden when support is operationalized as a composite welfarism index. In addition to the level, however, also the underlying structure of support can vary across differently targeted welfare policies (Schlesinger & Lee, 1993). As argued in Chapter 2, for example, the relative importance of the deservingness criteria in shaping welfare support depends, among other things, on the target group under consideration. Outside of the deservingness framework,

similar arguments have been made regarding the target-specific effects of self-interest considerations (e.g., Ponza, Duncan, Corcoran, & Groskind, 1988) and ideological orientations (e.g., Jensen & Petersen, 2017). There is also plenty of empirical evidence showing that the individual, as well as the contextual, determinants of welfare support differ between different types of welfare policy (Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Larsen, 2006; Pettersen, 2001; Schlesinger & Lee, 1993; Wendt et al., 2011). Thus, it seems that generalized measurements of welfarism may mask more than they reveal (Goldschmidt, 2015), which is why we have chosen to use target-specific measurements of welfare support instead.

Most studies that analyse target-specific welfare support have either used government responsibility indicators, which capture the 'range', or 'extensiveness', of the government's role in providing benefits and services, or government spending items, which refer to the 'degree', or 'intensity', of that role (Roller, 1995). Both types of indicators have, however, attracted criticism. One of the main drawbacks of using government spending preferences is that they are too dependent on actual levels of social spending, which reduces their cross-national comparability (Brady & Bostic, 2015; Svallfors, 2003; Taylor-Gooby, 2011a). A major issue with government responsibility preferences is that they may paint a too rosy picture of welfare support, as citizens might find it very easy to say 'yes' when asked whether the government should provide social welfare, especially if people are not reminded of the fact that benefits and services need to be financed by taxes, or that public resources are limited (Roosma, Gelissen, & van Oorschot, 2013; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012b). However, because they do seem to capture people's principled, normative support for welfare benefits and services (Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Svallfors, 2003), preferences regarding governments' responsibility come closest to the intended meaning of welfare support in the book's heuristic model (see Figure 1.1). Therefore, the empirical chapters rely exclusively on the government responsibility component, which tends also to be seen as one the most fundamental dimensions of welfare support (Ebbinghaus & Naumann, 2018; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012b). While some of the chapters deal only with *absolute* levels of support, by studying target-specific government responsibility preferences in isolation (see Chapters 5, 8 and 9), Chapter 4 looks only at *relative* levels of support, by piecing together different target-specific preferences, and some chapters do both (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Up until now, we have focused on the operationalization of public support for granting social welfare *rights* to different policy target groups. However, some of the empirical chapters (see Chapters 5 and 9) also study support for imposing social welfare *obligations*, on unemployment benefit (and social assistance) recipients in particular (e.g., occupational or geographical mobility requirements). Although such support for welfare conditionality has attracted much less attention from welfare attitudes scholars, at least when compared with support for welfare generosity (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017), it is no less important given the sweeping 'activation turn' (Bonoli, 2010), or 'conditionality turn' (Watts & Fitzpatrick, 2018) that has taken place in most contemporary welfare states.[4] This book provides valuable and much-needed insights into the level as well as the underlying structure of public support for social welfare obligations, by studying how such support relates to people's self-interest considerations, general ideological beliefs, and most importantly, deservingness opinions. With regard to the latter, we are among the first to

explicitly test, with the help of purposefully designed empirical models, how deservingness opinions shape support for social obligations (see also Buss, 2018).[5]

3.2 POPULAR DESERVINGNESS OPINIONS

Drawing a conceptual distinction between deservingness *perceptions* and deservingness *valuations*, as was done in Chapter 2, has of course consequences for the operationalization of deservingness opinions in empirical research. The fact that most existing studies have not explicitly made that distinction might be part of the reason why 'an agreed-upon instrument or procedure to measure deservingness opinions is [still] lacking at present' (Meuleman et al., 2017: 350). Therefore, the empirical part of the book tries, as far as possible, to keep the two types of deservingness opinions separated.[6] Deservingness perceptions, on the one hand, are operationalized straightforwardly by assessing people's subjective evaluations of the deservingness-related characteristics of different policy target groups (e.g., their job-seeking efforts or material needs): either through predefined and fixed-response survey measures (see Chapters 8 and 9) or, more innovatively, through open-ended focus group discussions (see Chapter 6). To measure deservingness valuations, on the other hand, different methodological approaches are pursued. The first involves the simultaneous inclusion of multiple deservingness perceptions in a single empirical model to explore the relative magnitude of their (standardized) effects on support for social welfare (see Chapters 8 and 9); an approach that for some reason has seldom been adopted in prior research (but see Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Larsen, 2006). The second approach deduces people's emphasis of a deservingness criterion from their relative welfare support for two (or more) different groups with allegedly contrasting 'scores' on that specific criterion (see Chapter 6; also van Oorschot, 2000; Roosma & Jeene, 2017).[7] The third approach involves asking people directly about the importance they attach to deservingness criteria, by presenting them with survey items that probe, for example, the extent to which they feel that a given deservingness criterion should structure social security (see Chapter 5; also Meuleman et al., 2019). The fourth approach uses open-ended discussions to unravel which deservingness criteria people spontaneously apply when they think and talk about social welfare (see Chapter 6). Although several other qualitative studies suggest that welfare policy preferences are motivated by deservingness considerations (e.g., Dwyer, 1998, 2002; Frederiksen, 2018; Larsen, Frederiksen, & Nielsen, 2018), most of them remain silent about the relative importance people attach to such considerations (but see Heuer & Zimmermann, 2017; Hrast et al., 2018; Kremer, 2016; Osipovič, 2015).[8]

The book does not, however, use experimental vignettes, which have previously been most widely used to study popular deservingness valuations. Vignette studies typically present people with specific, but hypothetical, cases of welfare claimants who randomly vary on multiple deservingness-related characteristics. Participants are then asked to rate these 'claimants' in terms of the benefits and services that the government should provide to them (see Appendix 2.1 for an overview).[9] The underlying idea is that the experimental cues with the greatest causal impact on the welfare support outcome constitute the most crucial deservingness considerations. Not adopting the vignette approach was a choice made for practical (i.e., data availability) as well as substantive reasons. Although vignette studies are often praised for bringing together the best

of two methodological worlds–the generalizability of surveys and the internal validity of experiments (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015)–they are also affected by a number of issues that warrant caution when interpreting their results–including the lack of external validity and transferability to real-world settings (Barabas & Jerit, 2010), and the excessive individualization of welfare policy target groups, which may lead to person-positivity bias (Sears, 1983) and episodic framing effects (Iyengar, 1990).

Most of our empirical chapters use people's deservingness opinions (perceptions or valuations) to explain their support for social welfare, as measured by government responsibility indicators. By keeping the two separated in the empirical analyses, the book contributes to the much-needed conceptual distinction between welfare deservingness and welfare support (see Chapter 2). The only exception in this regard is Chapter 4, where in all honesty, the support and deservingness components are conflated. While a universal rank order of deservingness is mentioned in the chapter, this is composed of government responsibility items. It could well be, however, that factors other than deservingness–such as self-interest, ideology and performance evaluations–play a more important role in creating the rank order. Therefore, all the other empirical chapters compare the effects of deservingness opinions with those of broadly recognized determinants of welfare state support. Accordingly, they respond to the pressing need to put the welfare deservingness framework into a broader perspective (see Chapter 2). Most prevalent are comparisons with the explanatory frameworks of self-interest, measured through social-structural characteristics and self-predicted likelihood of welfare receipt (see Chapters 5, 7, 8 and 9), and of ideology, assessed by including general ideological beliefs such as egalitarianism, individualism, and left-right orientation (see Chapters 5, 8 and 9). Deservingness opinions are also studied in comparison with performance evaluations or, as they are termed in the respective chapters, 'perceptions of programme performance' (see Chapter 7), and 'criteria of cost awareness' (see Chapter 6).[10] On a final note, we would like to stress that while some chapters, like most prior studies in the field, focus exclusively on some of the least-deserving, most-contested policy target groups–most notably the able-bodied unemployed and social assistance recipients (see Chapters 5, 8 and 9)–other chapters study popular deservingness opinions regarding a broader range of target groups, including also some of the allegedly highly-deserving groups, such as the old and the sick (see Chapters 4, 6 and 7).

Table 3.1 Overview of some of the methodological specificities of the empirical chapters

Chapter	Data	Target groups	Types of welfare support				Types of deservingness opinions		Other explanatory factors		
			Absolute levels	Relative levels	Social rights	Social obligations	Perceptions	Valuations	Self-interest	Ideology	Performance evaluations
CH4	International Social Survey Project, gathered in 34 different countries (including also non-European ones) and in four different years (1985, 1990, 1996, 2006)	old, sick, and unemployed		X	X						
CH5	Belgian National Elections Study, gathered in Belgium in 2014	unemployed/ social assistance recipients	X		X	X		X	X	X	
CH6	WelfSOC focus group data, gathered in Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom in 2016	old, unemployed, families with children, low-income workers, well-off workers, and migrants	X	X	X		X	X			X
CH7	Welfare Opinions Survey, gathered in the Netherlands in 2006	old, unemployed, and social assistance recipients	X	X	X			X	X		X
CH8	European Social Survey, gathered in 33 different European countries in 2007/08 and 2016/17	unemployed	X		X		X		X	X	
CH9	Welfare Opinions Survey, gathered in Denmark in 2008 and in the Netherlands in 2006	unemployed	X		X	X	X		X	X	

3.3 WELFARE STATE POLICIES

How to measure welfare state policies has always been a debated issue in (comparative) welfare state analysis (Clasen & Siegel, 2007; Green-Pedersen, 2004; van Oorschot, 2013). According to Taylor-Gooby (1997: 2), most of the measurement methods fall into one of two broad categories: 'those that view welfare systems from a perspective that stresses differences in *quantity*, as providing more or less of something that is understood as a measure of welfare, and those that see them as different in *kind*, falling into groupings which are distinctive configurations of welfare policies.' The first category is often traced back to the work of Wilensky (1975), who argued that processes of industrialization and economic development would ultimately lead Western nations to converge in terms of their 'welfare effort'; a term he coined to capture a nation's overall level of welfare state spending. Social expenditure figures have since then become a widely applied instrument to measure welfare state policies (Castles, 2009). This has also been criticized, however, for not fully recognizing the large *qualitative* differences that exist between different types of welfare states–an argument most ardently made by welfare regime scholars (Arts & Gelissen, 2002; Korpi & Palme, 1998). Most emblematic of the regime tradition is arguably Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999), who distinguished between three qualitatively different, ideal-typical 'worlds of welfare': a social-democratic world, a liberal world and a corporatist-conservative world.

Instead of choosing one over the other, this book applies both approaches to the measurement of welfare state policies. Some of the empirical chapters study how popular deservingness opinions are associated with qualitatively different constellations of policy design characteristics. Chapter 6, for example, uses Esping-Andersen's (1990) regime framework to understand why British, Danish and German citizens seem to differ in the relative importance they attach to different deservingness criteria. Chapter 7, however, argues that because most real-world welfare states encompass a mixture of differently organized benefits and services, it is important to also scrutinize how welfare attitudes interact with such meso-level welfare schemes (see also Jordan, 2010, 2013; Wendt et al., 2011). Therefore, the chapter examines how the policy designs of three major ideal-typical income benefit types–social insurance, social assistance and universal benefits–are related to popular deservingness opinions and support for social welfare. Chapter 8 continues on this path of disaggregation, but does so by linking quantitative indicators of unemployment benefit design characteristics to popular perceptions of deservingness. In this case, different European unemployment benefit systems are situated on common measurement scales: they are more or less generous, more or less selective, and more or less conditional.[11] Also Chapter 9 follows a disaggregated, quantitative approach to the operationalization of welfare policies, by tracking changes in the generosity and conditionality of Dutch and Danish unemployment insurance, and linking them to popular deservingness opinions.

Notes

[1] Although there is no denying that income redistribution is one of the most crucial objectives of modern welfare states (Ringen, 1987), it is certainly not their only objective. Most welfare states have many other goals, including–to name but a few–the preservation of acquired social status, the prevention of crime and the continuity of consumption levels.

[2] Most of these studies demonstrate that their composite welfare indices form one-dimensional and reliable scales. However, they tend to ignore the fact that such indices only capture what the target-specific welfare support items have in common; not what makes them unique.

[3] All social welfare policies are, by definition, targeted at specific groups (Pettersen, 2001; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Even the most universal policies always target delineated population groups, and by consequence, exclude others. People's pensions, for example, tend to be reserved for residents who have reached the pensionable age and have legally resided in the country for a given number of years.

[4] Since the late 1990s, however, there has been a growing number of studies that analyse popular attitudes towards the social welfare obligations of (unemployment or social assistance) benefit claimants (Achterberg, van der Veen, & Raven, 2014; Buss et al., 2017; Buss, 2018; Carriero & Filandri, 2018; Dwyer, 1998, 2002; Eardley et al., 2000; Fossati, 2018; Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Gilens, 1999; Houtman, 1997; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015; Naumann, De Tavernier, Naegele, & Hess, 2019; Larsen, 2008b; Petersen et al., 2010; Roosma & Jeene, 2017; Saunders, 2002).

[5] A few other studies have linked popular deservingness opinions to public support for welfare conditionality, but mainly on a theoretical level and without actually estimating empirical models that test whether the former shape the latter (Buss et al., 2017; Carriero & Filandri, 2018; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015; Larsen, 2008b; Roosma & Jeene, 2017).

[6] It should be noted, however, that Chapter 7, in particular, mentions deservingness perceptions, but in fact measures deservingness valuations–a discrepancy caused by the specific nature of the theoretical model presented in the chapter (see Figure 7.1).

[7] Van Oorschot (2000), for example, observed that Dutch citizens are markedly less generous towards 'people who are not willing to work' than they are towards 'people who are not able to work', and inferred from this that the criterion of control is one of the most crucial deservingness dimensions.

[8] Osipovič (2015), for example, shows that among Polish migrants living in the UK, contribution-based criteria, such as work and payment of taxes, were most critical for determining deservingness. By contrast, need was seen by most as a problematic principle, and identity also proved to play a somewhat weak role (see Kremer, 2016 for similar results in the Netherlands).

[9] The vignette approach has generated numerous valuable, but sometimes seemingly contrasting insights into people's deservingness valuations (see Appendix 2.1 for an overview). For example, while several vignette studies suggest that control to get 'in', or to get 'out', of welfare dependency is the most crucial deservingness dimension (Appelbaum, 2001; Kootstra, 2016; Will, 1993), others have pointed towards need as the principal ingredient of deservingness (Groskind, 1991; van Der Aa et al., 2018).

[10] Chapter 6 is somewhat special in this regard, as it also identifies two other types of 'context-related criteria' (i.e., equality/universalism and social investment) that structure people's welfare support preferences, which fall outside of the scope of the deservingness framework and the three other major explanatory frameworks.

[11] At the same time, however, Chapter 8 also includes aggregated measurements of welfare generosity and welfare selectivity to control for the fact that welfare states may indeed be more than a simple sum of their parts (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Larsen, 2006).

PART II

EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS

4 A UNIVERSAL RANK ORDER OF DESERVINGNESS? GEOGRAPHICAL, TEMPORAL AND SOCIAL-STRUCTURAL COMPARISONS

TIJS LAENEN AND BART MEULEMAN

The universal rank order of deservingness is not as universal as previously suggested in the literature.

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Tijs Laenen is the first author of the book chapter. Bart Meuleman is the second author.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, the financial crisis of 2008 stirred up the perception of scarcity among the public and their elected officials. Once again, many societies are in the process of reconsidering their systems of solidarity: to which social groups should the ever more scant public resources best be allocated? One way to approach this issue is by looking at popular opinions regarding policy target groups' welfare deservingness. Much of the relevant literature suggests that this (re)distributional question is in fact a rhetorical one. A recurring assumption in welfare state research is that citizens, in the same way as the welfare states they inhabit, favour differential treatment of target groups and that a universal rank order of deservingness exists, which transcends all geographical, temporal and social-structural boundaries. This body of thought was first expressed by Coughlin (1980: 117), who claimed that the same deservingness ranking could be found in eight countries, the institutional welfare designs of which are assumed to strongly differ from each other. This led him to conclude that there is a 'universal dimension of support', in which the elderly are deemed to be most deserving of social welfare, followed by respectively the sick, poor families with children, the unemployed and social assistance clients. This idea of universality in relative deservingness turned up again two decades later, in the work of van Oorschot (2006: 23), who states that Europeans share a 'fundamental deservingness culture', which is basically Coughlin's rank order with the addition of immigrants as the group judged to be the least entitled to social welfare. Following the deservingness rationale, this time-consistent and cross-cultural pecking order originates from the fact that the public generally scores target groups unequally on the CARIN criteria (see Chapter 2). Even though van Oorschot (2006) does not make any explicit claim of universality, he does suggest this cognitive mechanism–and therefore the rank order– to be universal because of its functionality for the survival of social groups: 'The deservingness criterion of identity protects the group against burdensome support claims from outside the group, while the criterion of control protects against such claims from inside the group. If true, the deservingness rank order should also be found in all other non-European countries' (van Oorschot, 2006a: 38).

Various national (Hills, 2002; Taylor-Gooby, 1985; van Oorschot, 2000) and cross-national (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Coughlin, 1980; van Oorschot, 2006a) empirical studies have, either directly or indirectly, confirmed the allegedly universal deservingness hierarchy, giving it a prominent status in deservingness literature. As a result, the notion of universality in relative deservingness is hardly ever questioned explicitly by the scientific community. However, at the same time we observe a growing body of literature concerning the contextual macro-drivers of deservingness opinions (see Chapter 2). This body of research evidences how opinions of deservingness are contingent on the social-structural, cultural-political and policy-institutional characteristics of societies, and therefore implicitly calls into question the universality of the rank order of deservingness. In this chapter, we revisit the universality question, and examine–theoretically as well as empirically–whether it is possible to discern a rank order of deservingness that is invariant over geographical, temporal and social-structural frontiers.

4.2 THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

4.2.1 Theoretical objections against the existence of a universal rank order

Taking Petersen's (2012) model of the deservingness heuristic as a starting point, strong theoretical arguments exist against the universality of deservingness rankings. This framework states that humankind has, over the course of evolution, developed a psychological reflex to categorize others either as 'cheaters' or as 'reciprocators' in exchange situations. In order to ensure the survival of the social group, the members (even in institutionalized welfare states) are inclined to help only those who reciprocate. Crucially, when concrete information about the efforts of needy others is absent, individuals follow contextual cues and culturally-shared imagery to separate cheaters from reciprocators. As Aarøe and Petersen (2014) have shown, Scandinavians and Americans employ, at first, divergent welfare stereotypes, which leads to cross-national variance in public support for social welfare. When provided with unambiguous information about the efforts of the welfare targets, however, they seem to agree on social welfare, despite living in different welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Therefore, although the underlying psychological mechanism appears to be universal, the input of the heuristic presumably differs between countries, time periods and social-structural groups. From a macro-perspective, the application of the same heuristic may lead to disparate judgments of deservingness due to the effects of, for example, media discourse (Larsen & Dejgaard, 2013), institutional design (Larsen, 2006) and unemployment levels (Jeene, 2015). Whether certain groups are perceived as reciprocators or cheaters–and consequently their position in the deservingness ranking–is accordingly likely to vary geographically and temporally. In other words, we do not expect any ranking to be truly universal from a geographical or a temporal point of view. In times of high unemployment, for example, the scarcity of labour market opportunities may lead the general public to attribute unemployment to causes beyond the control of the individual (Larsen, 2006). As a result, the unemployed are less likely to be categorized as 'cheaters', and it should not be taken for granted that they are deemed to be less deserving than the elderly and the sick.

A similar argument applies to the micro-level social-structural dimension of universality. Social background affects which deservingness cues are picked up, how they are interpreted and therefore how people categorize and rank policy target groups. For example, as socioeconomically successful individuals tend to have a higher internal locus of control–meaning that they believe life events are due to own efforts (Rotter, 1966)–they strongly emphasize the criterion of control. In turn, this leads them to differentiate more between those groups who can (the unemployed) and those groups who cannot (the elderly and the sick) be blamed for their neediness. Moreover, because individuals with a high socioeconomic status feel they have contributed more to society than their less-successful counterparts, it becomes rational for them to emphasize the criterion of reciprocity (Jeene et al., 2013). Therefore, the chances are that they will differentiate more strongly between groups that are perceived to have contributed more (for example the elderly) and those who have contributed less (for example the unemployed). As a result of these mechanisms, socioeconomic status is expected to have a positive effect on the probability of adopting the alleged universal rank order, with the highest levels of support for the elderly, followed by the sick and then the unemployed. A second example of a social-structural factor that could influence an individual's deservingness rank order is work status. Because

human beings have the tendency to judge their ingroups more positively than outgroups–as they can better identify and empathize with the former (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)–the unemployed, retired and permanently disabled presumably differ from those who work with regard to their likelihood of adopting the universal rank order. We expect unemployed, retired and disabled individuals to place their own needy ingroup at the top of their rank order of deservingness. Therefore, whereas a retired person might be more likely to opt for the alleged universal rank order than an employed person would, an unemployed or a permanently disabled person might be less likely to do so.

4.2.2 Methodological objections against the existence of a universal rank order

In addition to the theoretical objections, the validity of the claim that a universal deservingness rank order exists can also be questioned from a methodological point of view. First, previous research has solely been carried out in a Western context. However, universal statements cannot be legitimately derived without empirical testing using data that is not marked by a Western bias. The cultural, economic, political and social divergences between 'the West and the rest' are in many instances too substantial to simply assume convergence in deservingness opinions. Second, deservingness rankings have most commonly been constructed using aggregate measurements, such as national averages. As a result of this bird's-eye view, ecological fallacies might occur. Although the average perceived deservingness of different target groups follows a particular ranking, it does not necessarily follow that individuals' preferences are consistent with this aggregate ranking. As outlined in the theoretical section, it is likely that certain individuals will prefer a different rank order, or even no rank order at all. Yet, this heterogeneity does not show in aggregate data. Third, previous studies have failed to approach the phenomenon from a holistic perspective, in which the geographical, temporal and social-structural dimensions of universality form an integrated trio. Most studies have undertaken only partial measurements of a universal rank order by limiting themselves either to one (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Hills, 2002; Taylor-Gooby, 1985), or two (Coughlin, 1980; van Oorschot, 2006a) of the dimensions.

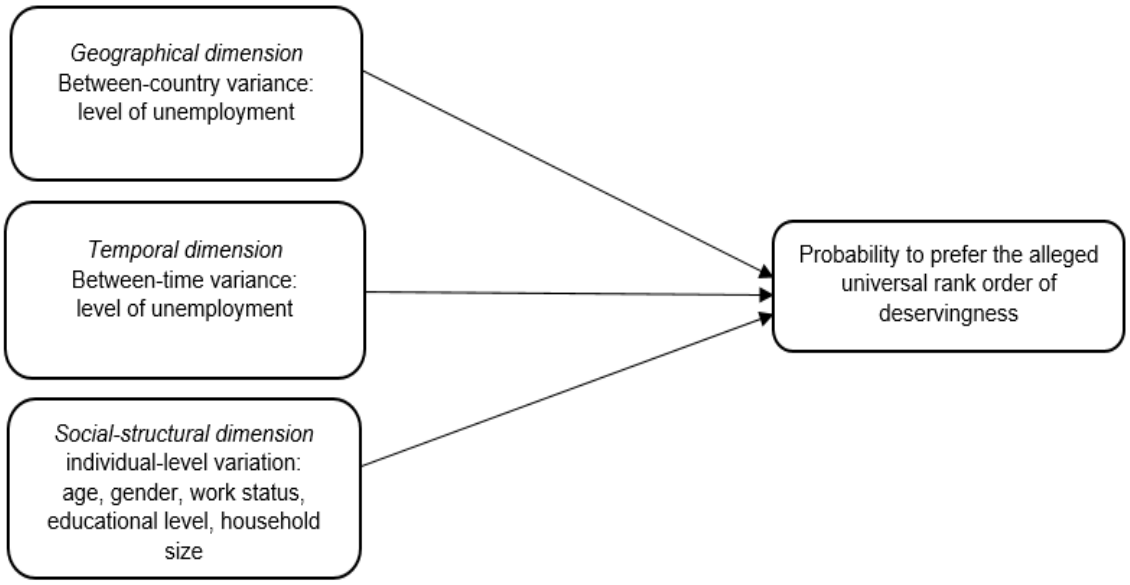
The empirical analyses reported in the following sections of this chapter are intended to remedy these methodological objections to as great an extent as possible. Unfortunately, due to data restrictions not all of the methodological objections could be reconciled in practice. Because we consider the inclusion of non-Western data to be exceptionally important for our purpose, and only large-scale quantitative surveys can provide this at present, we had to trade-off an in-depth understanding of people's deservingness ranking against broad international coverage. We are nevertheless able to construct deservingness rankings on an individual instead of an aggregate level, and to take into account variations across three dimensions of universality: place, time and social-structural position.

4.2.3 When can a rank order be labelled as universal?

Based on these theoretical and methodological considerations, we argue that two conditions should be met before the 'universal dimension of support' can be considered as truly universal. First, although a universal ranking does not necessarily imply that every single person should prefer this deservingness rank order, we do believe that a universal ranking should at least be the

most widely prevalent choice among the public. Second, the probability of an individual opting for the alleged universal rank order should not vary substantially across countries, time points or social-structural groups. If significant variation is detected in any of the three dimensions of universality, the rank order cannot be considered to be as universal as many scholars have claimed. To examine which factors might help explain possible variations in relative deservingness opinions to occur, we include a society's level of unemployment for the geographical and temporal dimension, and people's age, gender, educational level, work status and household size for the social-structural dimension. In Figure 4.1, the three types of variation and their corresponding predictors are graphically summarized in a conceptual model.

Figure 4.1 Conceptual model: three dimensions of universality in relative deservingness opinions



4.3 DATA AND METHODS

4.3.1 Data: the International Social Survey Project

Our data source is the 'Role of Government' module of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which serves the purpose of geographical, temporal and social-structural comparisons of welfare attitudes particularly well. We merged multiple cross-sectional survey rounds (1985, 1990, 1996 and 2006) into a single dataset containing standardized, cross-national measurements of people's deservingness rank orders for 95 728 individuals, living in 34 different countries throughout the globe. For each wave, the survey times, the sampling procedure (simple or multistage stratified random sample), the population (mostly only adults, sometimes adolescents from 15 years of age) and the survey methods (face-to-face, postal survey and online self-completion questionnaire) differ somewhat in the individual countries.[1]

4.3.2 Dependent variable: absence of presence of the universal rank order

The ISSP 'Role of Government' module contains three items gauging the perceived deservingness of each particular target group, namely the sick, the elderly and the unemployed: 'On the whole, do you think it should, or should not be the government's responsibility to provide (a) healthcare for the sick, (b) a decent standard of living for the old and (c) a decent standard of living for the unemployed?'. The response categories, which have been reversed to facilitate more sensible interpretations, range from 'definitely should not be' (value 1) to 'definitely should be' (value 4), with the additional category 'can't choose' (treated as missing data). Respondents' answers to the above items are assumed to be an expression of the degree to which they deem the social groups to be deserving of social welfare, but they tell us nothing about the relative deservingness of these groups. Therefore, we transformed these indicators in three stages into one dichotomous outcome variable that expresses whether respondents are consistent or not with the alleged universal rank order of deservingness. Participants' scores on the three initial items were first subtracted from each other, leading to a new set of variables:

1. Score on item a (the sick) minus score on item c (the unemployed).

2. Score on item b (the elderly) minus score on item a (the sick).

3. Score on item b (the elderly) minus score on item c (the unemployed).

Negative values indicate that a person believes the former group is more entitled to social welfare than the latter, positive values suggest the opposite. A zero value implies that both groups are deemed to be equally deserving. Individuals were then assigned to one of the thirteen possible combinations of rank orders. Strictly speaking, respondents are only consistent with the universal rank order of Coughlin (1980) and van Oorschot (2006) if they have positive values for each of the three variables. However, a more comprehensive interpretation of the universal ranking is also possible. Because the elderly and the sick are marked almost identically by the public on virtually all the deservingness criteria (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006), it is plausible to suppose that these policy target groups will be neck and neck at the top of the deservingness ladder. In this case, participants would have positive values for variables 1 and 3, and a value zero for variable 2. Any other combination of values signals inconsistency with the supposed universal rank order. A respondent with three zero values, for example, has no ranking preference at all. In the third stage, we converted the pattern of combinations, with its thirteen possible outcomes, into a dichotomous response variable, in which respondents who are consistent with the (strict and comprehensive) universal rank order are given value 0, and those who are inconsistent are assigned value 1.

4.3.3 Data analysis

We treat the ISSP data as a three-level structure: individuals are nested within survey years, which are in turn nested within countries. To analyse this particular hierarchical structure combined with a dichotomous outcome variable, we use a three-level logistic regression model. To assess the extent of the geographical and temporal variability of our outcome variable, we first specify a null model, which contains only the fixed intercept and the country-level and year-level

random variances for that intercept, indicating to what extent the intercept varies significantly across countries and across time points within countries. The larger these variance components– as indicated by their respective intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC)[2]–the more the likelihood of preferring the universal rank order depends on their country of residence and the year they were interviewed. The second model examines whether the social-structural dimension affects people's likelihood of favouring the universal ranking, by including the gender, age, educational level, work status and household size of the respondents. Age is categorized into four life stages: adolescence (15–17), young adulthood (18–35), middle-age adulthood (36–65) and old age (65+). Educational level is assessed using three categories: low ('none or lowest formal qualification'), medium ('higher-secondary level completed'), and high ('above higher-secondary level' and 'university degree completed'). Work status is classified as having paid work, being unemployed, being retired or being permanently disabled. Household size is measured as the number of people living in the respondent's household, and is centred around its grand mean.

Lastly, we include the unemployment rate (measured as the percentage of the total labour force) as a contextual higher-level fixed effect in our third statistical model in order to test whether the level of unemployment can explain geographical and temporal variation. Because we assume it takes some time for a country's level of unemployment to influence its inhabitants' deservingness opinions, the unemployment variable is lagged by one year.[3] To enable a sensible interpretation of the intercept, this variable is centred around its grand mean. Unemployment data was retrieved from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for the year 1984 and from the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the years 1991, 1995 and 2005.[4]

4.4 RESULTS

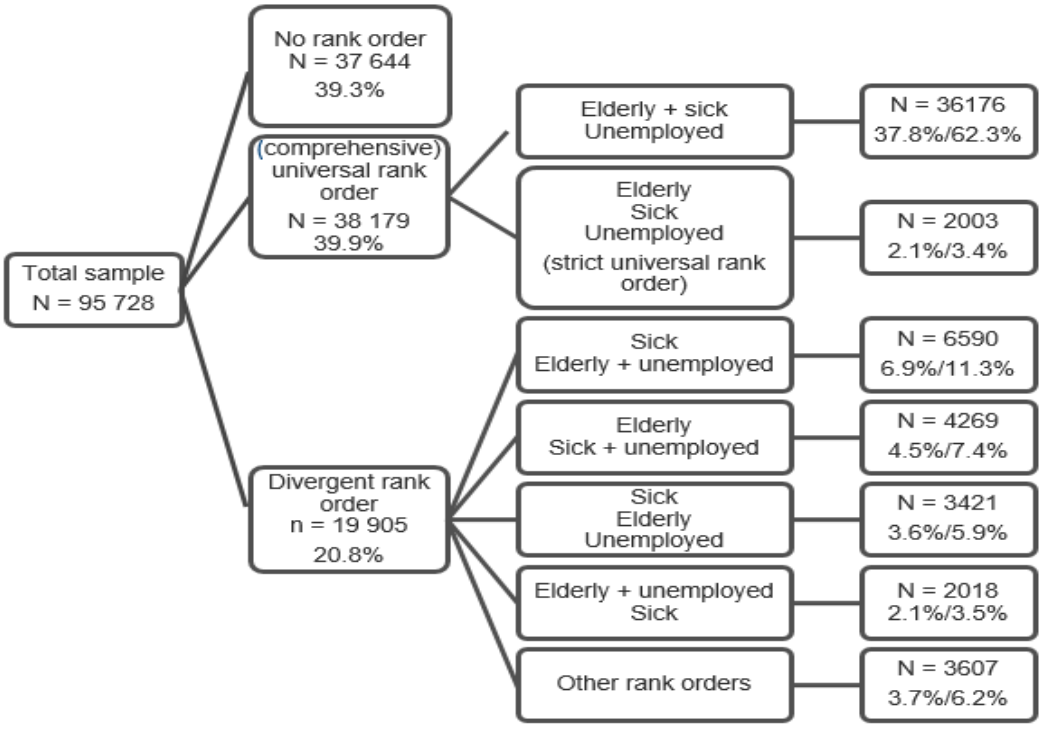
4.4.1 Which deservingness rank orders are most common?

Before reporting the findings of the multilevel models, we start by describing the rank orders of deservingness most commonly preferred by the respondents in our sample. Figure 4.2 shows the frequency distribution of the thirteen possible rank order combinations, and reveals some remarkable results. First, a considerable proportion of the respondents (39.3 per cent) do not seem to differentiate at all between the three target groups. According to these respondents, the government should take as much responsibility for the unemployed as for the elderly and the sick. Aggregate-level rankings make this group of 'welfare egalitarians' disappear completely, and consequently seriously overestimate the dominance of the alleged universal rank order. Second, among those who do differentiate between needy groups, the strict rank order of deservingness is a relatively peripheral choice. Only 3.4 per cent of this subgroup consistently positions the elderly above the sick, and the sick above the unemployed. However, far more respondents opt for the more comprehensive interpretation of the universal rank order: 62.3 per cent of those who do differentiate put the elderly and the sick in the first position, and give last place to the unemployed. This pattern does not necessarily contradict deservingness theory (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006), as it hypothesizes that the elderly and the sick will hold similar, high positions (because they have approximately identical 'scores' on all the CARIN criteria), whereas the unemployed will be seen as less deserving (particularly because of their low score on the criterion

of control). However, even if a sizeable proportion of respondents choose the comprehensive rank order, its supremacy should not be overstated. Relative to the total sample, only 39.9 per cent of respondents follow this particular hierarchy. Overall, just over a fifth of all the respondents do differentiate between targets groups, but follow a different logic to the one predicted by the universal rank order of deservingness.

Critics could well argue that the condensed four-point measurement scale of the ISSP items does not give respondents much opportunity to differentiate between the target groups, which might lead us to depict the group of welfare egalitarians as much larger than it is in reality. To address this, we cross-validated our results using data from the 2008 ESS, in which the same items are measured on an 11-point scale.[5] Although the proportion of respondents who did not differentiate, as could be expected, clearly declines (from 39.3 per cent in the ISSP to 26.1 per cent in the ESS), the conclusion remains that the group of welfare egalitarians is too large to be neglected in research.

Figure 4.2 Frequency distribution of the different rank orders of deservingness



Notes: %/ = proportions calculated relative to the total sample. /% = proportions calculated relative to the subgroup of respondents who differentiate between target groups.

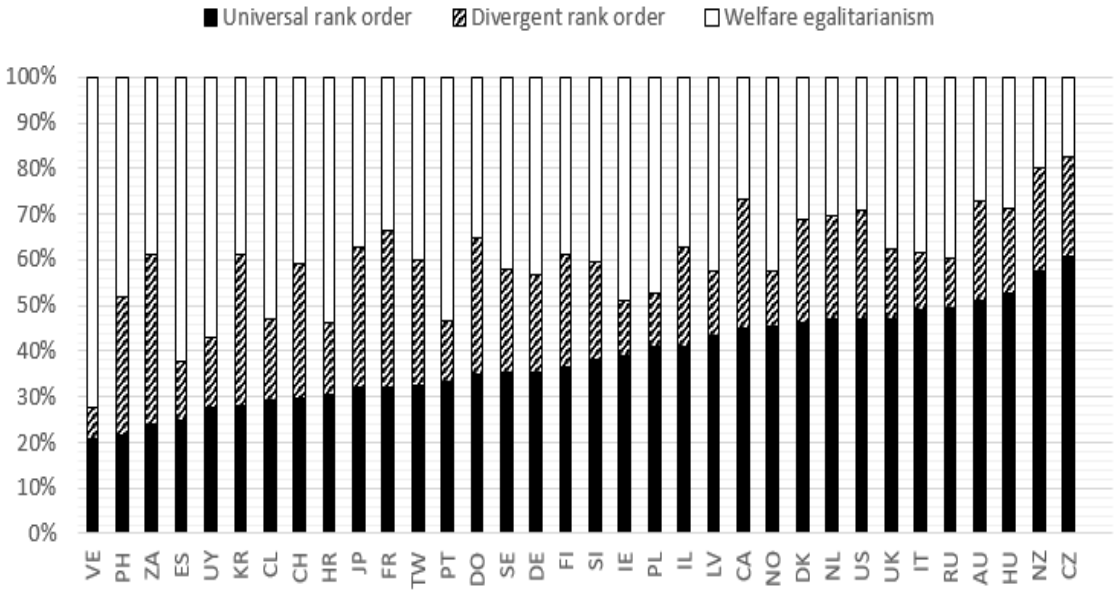
4.4.2 Assessing geographical, temporal and social-structural variability in relative deservingness opinions

Clearly, the universal rank order of deservingness is less universal than often claimed. To examine whether and how it varies across social-structural groups, time points and countries, we estimated a series of three-level logistic regression models explaining support for the comprehensive interpretation of the universal rank order. In the null model (not shown here), the estimate for the fixed intercept equals –0.47. This implies that, on average across all countries

and time points, the odds to opt for the universal ranking equal 0.63, or that the estimated probability of preferring the universal rank order is approximately 38 per cent. This intercept varies significantly between time points (s^2=.06; p<.001) and between countries (s^2=.17; p<.001). However, the values of the ICCs are relatively low: only about 5 per cent of the variability in the outcome variable is located at the country level, and about 1.5 per cent lies between time points within countries. Compared with the individual-level differences, the between-time and the between-country variance is relatively small. Clearly, individual differences account for more variation in relative deservingness opinions than the country or year. In terms of the dimensions of universality, this means that the social-structural component has more potential power to explain variability in the probability of individuals preferring the universal rank order than the geographical or temporal component.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the between-country variance by plotting the frequency distributions of the three most common rank order combinations in our sample–the broad interpretation of the universal rank order, welfare egalitarianism and divergent rank orders–per nation. The proportion of respondents opting for the universal hierarchy ranges from as high as 60 per cent in the Czech Republic and in New Zealand, to as little as 20 per cent in Venezuela and in the Philippines. Since these countries are by no means extreme outliers, the split between them can be seen as a strong indication of sizable cross-national differences in relative perceived deservingness. Despite the low ICC, the country of residence does seem to be of some importance for the likelihood that respondents support the universal rank order of deservingness.[6]

Figure 4.3 Frequency distribution of the three most common rank orders per country



Notes: AU Australia; CA Canada; CZ the Czech Republic; CL Chile; HR Croatia; DO the Dominican Republic; DK Denmark; FI Finland; FR France; DE Germany; HU Hungary; IT Italy; IE Ireland; IL Israel; JP Japan; LV Latvia; NL the Netherlands; NZ New Zealand; NO Norway; PH the Philippines; PL Poland; PT Portugal; RU Russia; SI Slovenia; ZA South Africa; KR South Korea; ES Spain; SE Sweden; CH Switzerland; TW Taiwan; UK the United Kingdom; US the United States; UY Uruguay and VE Venezuela.

In order to examine the impact of the social-structural variables, we add level-1 predictors as fixed effects in Table 4.1 (see Model A). Age, gender and household size have substantively small but statistically significant effects on the likelihood that people will select the allegedly universal rank order. The predicted odds of choosing this rank order are about 8 per cent higher for old-aged people than for middle-aged people, 4.1 per cent higher for women than for men, and they decrease by 1.3 per cent for every additional household member. However, because these effects vanish when a more rigid level of statistical significance is employed, the impact of age, gender and household size is rather limited. By contrast, the predictors associated with individuals' socioeconomic position–work status and educational level–seem to more profoundly influence their choice for the universal rank order. First, compared with being employed, being unemployed or permanently disabled decreases the odds of preferring the universal rank order by respectively 43 per cent and 23.4 per cent. Second, the predicted odds that the lower educated will prefer the universal rank order are 10.5 per cent lower than those for people with a medium educational level. Although there are no significant differences between average-educated and higher-educated individuals, these findings partly confirm our theoretical hypothesis that socioeconomic status has a positive effect on the likelihood of an individual preferring the universal rank order. Contrary to our expectations, being retired does not seem to increase a person's likelihood of adopting the rank order. Accordingly, there is no evidence that elderly people inevitably place their own group at the top of the deservingness rank order.

Table 4.1 Three-level logistic regression models explaining the likelihood to prefer the universal rank order of deservingness

	Model A		Model B	
	B	e^B	*B*	e^B
Fixed part				
Intercept	-0.371***	0.690	-0.364***	0.695
Individual characteristics				
Age (0 = middle aged, 36–65)				
Adolescents (15–17)	-0.318	0.727	-0.321	0.726
Young adults (18–35)	-0.031	0.969	-0.039	0.962
Elderly (65+)	0.077*	1.080	0.077*	1.080
Household size	-0.013*	0.987	-0.012*	0.988
Gender (0 = male)	0.040*	1.041	0.0450*	1.046
Work status (0 = employed)				
Unemployed	-0.562***	0.570	-0.563***	0.570
Permanently disabled	-0.267***	0.766	-0.274***	0.760
Retired	-0.040	0.961	-0.038	0.962
Educational level (0 = average)				
Lower education	-0.123***	0.884	-0.121***	0.886
Higher education	0.000	1.000	-0.008	0.992
Unemployment rate			-0.045***	0.956
Random part				
Variance parameters				
Between-country variance	0.153***		0.146***	
Between-time variance	0.048***		0.047***	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Model B in Table 4.1 includes a fixed effect for unemployment, and provides evidence that a country's level of unemployment at a specific time point has a negative effect on the likelihood that individuals will opt for the universal rank order. The intercept shows that in contexts with an average unemployment rate (8.9), middle-aged, male, employed medium-educated individuals living in an average-sized household (that is the reference category) have an odds-ratio of 0.695 of preferring the universal rank order (corresponding to a probability of 41 per cent). For every increase of 1 per cent in the unemployment rate, and controlling for the individual-level predictors, the odds of following the rank order are further reduced by 4.4 per cent. These findings clearly support the oft-cited hypothesis (for example Larsen, 2006) that in times of higher unemployment, people are substantively less inclined to judge the elderly and the sick as being more deserving than the unemployed, which accordingly undermines the claim that the deservingness ranking is universal.

4.5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we scrutinize the validity of a specific idea in welfare deservingness literature, namely that the public tends to differentiate between different policy target groups, and does so regardless of the country and time they live in or the social categories they belong to. In this so-called 'universal rank order of deservingness', the elderly are seen as most deserving of social welfare, followed by respectively the sick, poor families with children, the unemployed, social assistance recipients and immigrants. Despite the fact that numerous empirical studies have confirmed the universality of this rank order, we formulated various theoretical and methodological objections, which led us to the hypothesis that the existence of a deservingness ranking transcending all geographical, temporal and social-structural boundaries is unlikely. Based on our analysis of ISSP data, we conclude that the universal ranking is not as universal as previously suggested in the literature. First, a considerably large group of respondents (39.3 per cent) deem the elderly, the sick and the unemployed to be equally deserving, which contradicts the basic assumption that people differentiate between different needy groups. Because these 'welfare egalitarians' disappear when rank orders are construed on an aggregate level–such as the country level–previous research might have overestimated the dominance of the alleged universal rank order. Second, among those who discriminate between the target groups, the strict rank order of deservingness is a relatively marginal choice, and the more-comprehensive interpretation of the universal rank order (in which the elderly and the sick are both appointed first place because these groups have approximately identical 'scores' on the CARIN criteria) appears to prevail. Third, the likelihood of an individual preferring the broad universal rank order varies significantly between countries, time points and social-structural groups. Judging by the relatively small ICCs for the cross-national and cross-temporal variation, the social-structural dimension is most likely the strongest source of variability in the probability that an individual adopts the universal rank order.

At the individual level, those with a lower socioeconomic status are significantly less likely to opt for the comprehensive universal rank order of deservingness. This can possibly be explained by the notion that individuals in this position are less inclined to emphasize the deservingness criteria of control and reciprocity, because they have a lower internal locus of control and they have contributed less than their socioeconomically more successful counterparts. Therefore, they

differentiate less between those groups that score particularly well on these criteria (for example the elderly) and those groups who do not (for example the unemployed). However, at this point, this line of reasoning is speculative, and future research should further examine the relationship between socioeconomic status, application of the deservingness criteria and the rank ordering of target groups. Despite the relatively small variation at the context level, we discovered that a society's level of unemployment at a given point in time has a substantial negative effect on people's likelihood of preferring the universal rank order. In this regard, in times of high unemployment the public finds it much easier to attribute unemployment to reasons beyond the control of the individual (Larsen, 2006). As our main aim was to revive the debate about deservingness rank ordering, the causal question concerning the contextual drivers of the (limited) cross-national and cross-temporal variation has been left largely untouched, and we invite the scientific community to pursue a better understanding of the impact of social-structural, cultural-political and policy-institutional factors on relative deservingness opinions.

The above conclusions can be challenged by the concern that due to several measurement issues, the large proportion of 'welfare egalitarians' in our sample might be an overestimation of the actual proportion among the general public. A first concern is that the ISSP items do not force respondents to reckon with the limited nature of governmental resources, and the resulting (re)distributive choices that consequently need to be made. The proportion of discriminating people might possibly increase substantially if we included scarcity in the survey question. A second issue relates to the possible distorting impact of survey satisficing, which in this case refers to respondents' tendency to give identical answers to several survey items on a scale regardless of their content. However, it is doubtful that it is mere coincidence that parallel multilevel analyses, in which the presence of welfare egalitarianism is the dependent variable (not presented here), reveal that those at the bottom of society are not only less inclined to opt for the alleged universal rank order, but also more likely to judge the target groups as equally deserving. Compared with employed people, the predicted odds of being a welfare egalitarian are about 71.8 per cent higher for unemployed people and 63.9 per cent higher for permanently disabled people. For individuals who have attained only lower education, these odds are about 15.5 per cent higher than for individuals who have attained an average level of education.

Despite the numerous methodological and substantive issues, the ISSP measurements currently offer the widest cross-national and temporal coverage of people's deservingness rank ordering. Accordingly, our overall conclusion–that the universal rank order of deservingness is not as universal as previously suggested–does seem to stand its ground fairly well. Throughout this chapter, we have followed the rather rigid condition that a rank order of deservingness can be labelled as universal if, and only if, it prevails among the general public and does not substantially vary across geographical, temporal and social-structural boundaries. However, our results seem to suggest that the cross-national and cross-temporal variation, at least in comparison with the individual-level variance, is relatively small. If it were the case that, across countries and time periods, certain social-structural groups are more or less prone to the alleged universal rank order than other groups, then there is possibly a different kind of universality in relative deservingness. After all, this would mean that where and when someone is born is of little importance; what truly matters is the social position they occupy.

Notes

[1] For more information on the survey methodology, please refer to the ISSP website: www.issp.org/ (accessed 31 October 2016).

[2] Because the residual variance is fixed to the variance of the logistic function in multilevel models with dichotomous outcomes, the ICCs are calculated by using π2/3 as value for the individual-level variance (Hox, 2010).

[3] However, due to data restrictions we had to pair the respondents who participated in the survey round of 1990 with unemployment rates for 1991.

[4] Unfortunately, since data was not available for Italy and the United Kingdom in 1984 and for Taiwan in 2006, respondents living in these countries at that time were excluded from the analyses presented in Models A and B.

[5] We compared data from 19 countries that were part of the 2006 ISSP and the 2008 ESS: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

[6] Because the interpretation of the proportions per survey round is less straightforward, we do not draw similar conclusions for the temporal dimension.

5 PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE SOCIAL RIGHTS AND SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE UNEMPLOYED: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

TIJS LAENEN AND BART MEULEMAN

In addition to self-interest and conventionally recognized ideological beliefs, popular opinions of welfare deservingness–an explanatory factor that has remained understudied in the field–are particularly influential in shaping people's welfare preferences.

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Tijs Laenen is the first author of the article. Bart Meuleman is the second author.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the financial sustainability and social legitimacy of various social protection policies have been scrutinized under the impetus of successive economic recessions, various migration flows and an ageing population (Taylor-Gooby, 2011b). The argument that social benefits are a burden for the national economy and produce lazy, dependent citizens has become widespread in public debates on the pros and cons of social security (Murray, 1984; van Oorschot, Reeskens, & Meuleman, 2012). A popular policy response to this critique has been the implementation of activation measures incorporating a *quid pro quo* principle. Across Europe, social obligations are increasingly being imposed on benefit recipients as a way to counterbalance social rights (Betzelt & Bothfeld, 2011; Kvist, 2002). Belgium, the national context in which the present study is embedded, is perhaps somewhat exceptional, as its 'reluctant and erratic path toward activation' (Hemerijck & Marx, 2010: 139) means it has lagged behind in this regard. However, in recent years the Belgian welfare state appears to have been catching up, as jobless people are now required to show willingness to work by actively searching for employment, participating in training courses or engaging in work experience programmes in order to continue receiving payments provided by unemployment insurance or social assistance. Further, new ways in which the unemployed should reciprocate are regularly being suggested in political discourse and in the popular media.

Despite the growing trend towards activation in welfare states, relatively little is known about its social legitimacy, as most previous research has approached the issue from a social rights perspective (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). The few existing studies dealing with social obligations have shown that there is widespread support among the general public for imposing work-related obligations on recipients of unemployment benefits (Buss et al., 2017; Houtman, 1997; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015; Larsen, 2008b; Saunders, 2002). In trying to explain support for social obligations, most scholars have largely followed social rights literature in identifying material self-interest and ideology as the two most crucial explanatory factors. The effects of these individual-level determinants are commonly expected to run in opposite directions, however, thereby implicitly suggesting a negative relationship between welfare generosity (i.e., the extent to which citizens favour social rights) and welfare conditionality (i.e., the degree to which citizens support social obligations). In this chapter, these frequently studied predictors are supplemented by an empirically less established framework that is highly relevant for understanding welfare state legitimacy: deservingness theory (van Oorschot 2006; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). The importance individuals attach to certain deservingness criteria not only has the potential to shape support for social rights, but also speaks directly to the conditions benefit recipients need to fulfil to be considered as deserving of social welfare (Larsen, 2006, 2008). Accordingly, the chapter contributes to existing literature, first by examining systematically whether welfare conditionality and welfare generosity are indeed two sides of the same coin, driven by the same explanatory factors but working in opposite directions, and second by investigating the impact of deservingness valuations on support for social rights and social obligations. For this purpose, we analysed survey data from the 2014 Belgian National Elections Study (Abts, Swyngedouw, Meuleman, Baute, Galle, & Gaasendam, 2015).

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first reviews the relevant literature and formulates specific hypotheses about the role of self-interest, ideology and welfare deservingness in shaping public support for the social rights and obligations of the unemployed (see Figure 5.1 for a conceptual model). The second describes the methodology that was used to test these hypotheses. The third section analyses how conditionality and generosity are associated, and which attitudinal drivers are important in shaping both types of welfare attitudes. The last section concludes and raises some points of discussion that require further investigation.

5.2 THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

In recent decades, social security systems that protect citizens from the vicissitudes in life that impede the acquisition of a market income (e.g., job loss, old age, sickness) have been increasingly criticized for their one-sided focus on social rights. Social protection is assumed to create and foster lazy, state-dependent citizens, and activation policies are being proposed and implemented as a cure for this alleged passivity problem endangering the welfare state. Although 'activation' has become an umbrella term covering a broad array of divergent policy measures, a common factor underlying many (but by no means all) of them is the imposition of social obligations on individual (able-bodied and unemployed) welfare recipients as a way to counterbalance their social rights (Betzelt & Bothfeld, 2011; Kvist, 2002). We acknowledge that many activation policies do not impose obligations on individuals because in many cases they are either voluntary in nature (e.g., training courses offered to unemployed people) or directed at employers instead of individuals (e.g., wage subsidies for hiring people in high-unemployment risk categories). Nevertheless, the focus of this chapter is on popular attitudes towards activation policies that incorporate individual obligations. Which social-structural and ideational factors are related to people's welfare conditionality, and to what extent are they similar to those associated with people's welfare generosity?

A long-standing and well-established idea in welfare legitimacy research is that welfare attitudes are driven by two distinct yet interrelated mechanisms: material self-interest and ideology (Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989; Jaeger, 2006; Kangas, 1997). In the self-interest logic, citizens are essentially calculating creatures seeking to maximize gain and limit pain, and welfare opinions reflect people's rational interests. According to this argument, socioeconomic groups that are at the greatest risk of needing state support should be the strongest advocates of generous welfare provision. Most empirical research indeed shows that the strongest supporters of welfare allocation are found among people on low incomes, benefit recipients, the lower educated, the older-aged, the unemployed, ethnic minorities and women (Alston & Dean, 1972; Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Cusack, Iversen, & Rehm, 2006; Linos & West, 2003). The self-interest logic can also be applied to support for making access to welfare conditional on fulfilment of certain social obligations. Because socially vulnerable groups might fear they will be the ones that have to fulfil the obligations and potentially lose their benefits (Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015), they will be the most sceptical of activation policies. Previous empirical studies support the claim that opposition to demanding activation policies is strongest among people in socially risky positions (Eardley et al. 2000; Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Houtman, 1997; Larsen, 2008b; Saunders, 2002).

Prior research, however, has often ignored the fact that motives based on self-interest are contingent on the specific social risk under consideration, as well as on the broader context of the society in which people live. It is generally assumed, for example, that pensioners are among the strongest proponents of generous and unconditional welfare provision because of their vulnerable position in society. Yet from a self-interest perspective, it is unclear why pensioners should be concerned about the specific risk of unemployment, as they are no longer assumed to be active in the labour market and thus have no direct personal stake in unemployment benefits. Accordingly, the present study incorporates the self-interest perspective by identifying those social-structural groups that are most vulnerable in the Belgian labour market, and have the greatest personal interest in supporting generous and unconditional unemployment benefits. According to the IMF, the Belgian labour market is highly segmented along four dimensions: age, skills, ethnic background and region. First, the level of unemployment is structurally much higher among young adults than it is among middle-aged people. In 2014 (during the period of data collection), the unemployment rate was 15.6 per cent among young adults between 20 and 29 years of age, compared with 6.8 per cent among persons between 30 and 54.[1] Furthermore, in a 2013 royal decree, the Belgian government recognized people older than 50 as a high-risk group. The underlying logic is that persons over 50 often encounter disproportionate difficulties in finding a new job, which is manifested in longer spells of unemployment. Second, education is considered an important factor in the contemporary knowledge-based Belgian labour market. Unemployment levels are structurally much higher among the lower educated (16.4 per cent in 2014) than the medium (8.8 per cent) and higher educated (4.7 per cent). Third, a person's ethnic background remains a tenacious determinant of unemployment risk in Belgium. In 2014, unemployment was considerably more prevalent among non-EU immigrants (23.4 per cent) than among EU immigrants (10.4 per cent) and native-born (6.6 per cent). Lastly, the unemployment level in the French-speaking region of Belgium has been much higher over recent years than in the Dutch-speaking region (11.7 per cent in Wallonia, compared with 4.9 per cent in Flanders in 2014).

For these reasons, we distinguished five social categories in Belgium that are facing a disproportionally high risk of unemployment: the lower educated, people between 18 and 26 years of age, those between 50 and 65, ethnic minorities and people living in Wallonia. In addition to risk exposure, the actual realization of the risk of unemployment among the working-age jobless or disabled persons is also an important self-interest motivation for supporting social rights and opposing social obligations more strongly (Cusack et al., 2006). Because persons who are permanently outside the labour market, such as pensioners, have no clear-cut personal stake in state-provided unemployment insurance, they are expected to be either less generous and more conditional towards the unemployed compared with persons in the labour market, or to be similar to the general population. We did not expect gender to be an important predictor of attitudes towards unemployment provision, as the unemployment rates among men and women in Belgium do not differ notably. Based on the preceding discussion of labour market vulnerability, the *self-interest hypothesis* predicts that: people who are currently unemployed/disabled, or exposed to a higher risk of unemployment (i.e., the lower educated, people between 18 and 26 years of age, those between 50 and 65, ethnic minorities and people living in Wallonia) are more generous (H1a) and less conditional (H1b) towards the unemployed.

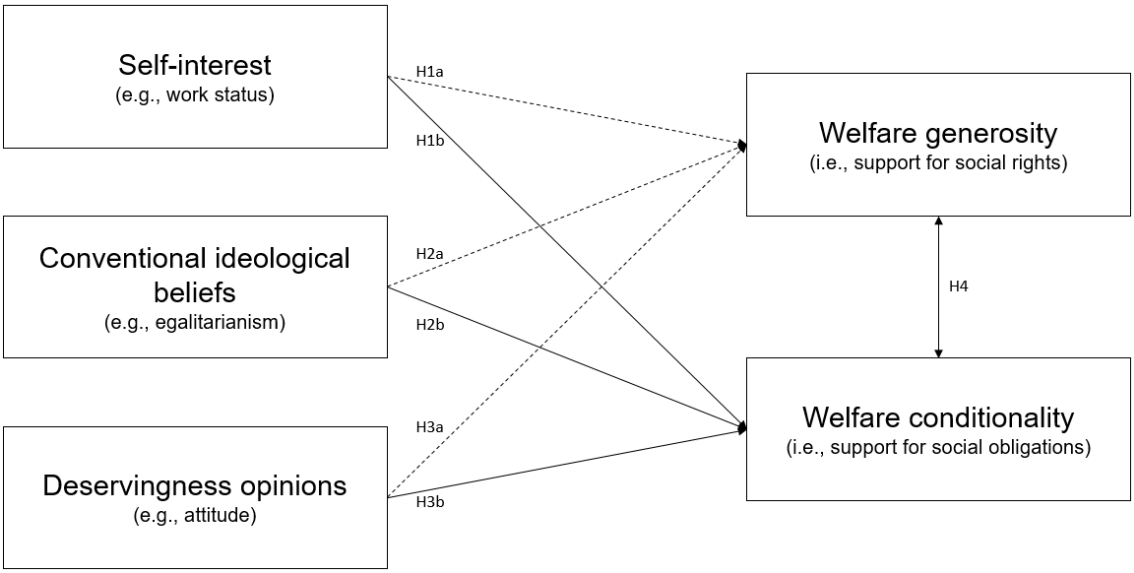
According to a second well-established line of reasoning, welfare policy preferences also reflect the general ideological beliefs people hold. In the established social rights literature as well as in the emerging social obligations literature, egalitarianism, individualism, left-right ideology and work ethic are claimed to be particularly influential, yet these conventionally recognized belief systems are assumed to have opposing effects on support for social rights and support for social obligations. The endorsement of egalitarian ideals is associated with higher levels of welfare generosity (Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Likki & Staerklé, 2015; Svallfors, 2013) and lower levels of welfare conditionality (Achterberg et al., 2014; Houtman, 1997). By contrast, adherence to individualism, a right-wing political stance and a strong belief in the virtue of hard work and diligence temper support for social rights (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Gilens, 1999; Jaeger, 2006, 2008; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2013) and stimulate support for conditionality (Eardley et al., 2000; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015; Larsen, 2008b; Saunders, 2002). Therefore, the *ideology hypothesis* anticipates that: people who adhere to anti-egalitarian, individualistic or politically right-wing ideals, or have a strong work ethic, are less generous (H2a) and more conditional (H2b) towards the unemployed.

Although these conventional ideological beliefs might seem to come conceptually close–perhaps even too close–to generosity and conditionality, our argument for treating them as different constructs is twofold. First, we make the case that the ideological beliefs under consideration here are theoretically distinct from our dependent variables. For example, egalitarianism and generosity are not, as some might argue, one and the same thing, because egalitarians are not necessarily supporters of state welfare and *vice versa*. People who strive for a more equal society might consider institutions other than the welfare state as more appropriate for establishing that equality, such as the family or private charity. Likewise, people who favour generous welfare provision might do so for reasons other than a desire to create a more equal society, such as income maintenance or poverty alleviation. Second, there is the level of abstraction: while the ideological beliefs pertain to the broader society, generosity and conditionality as conceptualized here refer only to the particular group of unemployed people. Within the welfare attitudes literature, it is a well-accepted standard practice to explain such specific policy preferences by more general ideological beliefs (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989; Svallfors, 2013). However, it should be noted that most of these studies, including the current one, make use of cross-sectional data, which hampers the disentanglement of cause and effect. In this chapter, it is assumed that the causal mechanism runs from ideological beliefs to policy preferences, but the possibility that it could also be the other way around is left open.

In addition to these 'usual suspects', popular opinions of welfare deservingness are increasingly being recognized as crucial factors that shape social policy preferences (Appelbaum, 2001; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; Kootstra, 2016; Larsen, 2006; Petersen, 2012; Slothuus, 2007; van Oorschot, 2006a; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). The main premise is that people's welfare generosity towards particular target groups is a function of the importance they attach to the five so-called 'CARIN criteria' in judging who should get what from the welfare state, and further, how they evaluate target groups on these deservingness criteria based on their (perceived) group characteristics (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). In a similar vein, the few studies that have paid attention to the link between welfare deservingness and welfare conditionality have noted that some specific policy target groups (e.g., the disabled) are granted more leniency in fulfilling work

obligations than other groups (e.g., the unemployed), because the public evaluates these groups more favourably on the deservingness criteria (Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015; Larsen, 2006; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). As the somewhat negative stereotypical image of the lazy, non-contributing, fraudulent and ungrateful unemployed appears to be pervasive among large sections of the European public (Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Furnham, 1983; Larsen, 2002; Maassen & De Goede, 1989), this specific target group is presumably evaluated particularly poorly on the criteria of control, reciprocity and attitude (van Oorschot, 2006a). As a consequence, people who emphasize these criteria are likely to be less generous and more conditional towards the jobless. Giving weight to the need criterion might have the opposite effect, as previous research has shown that Europeans believe the unemployed have a relatively low standard of living, or in other words, have a high level of need (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a). In sum, the *deservingness hypothesis* predicts that: people who strongly emphasize the deservingness criteria of control, attitude and reciprocity, or attach little importance to the need criterion are less generous (H3a) and more conditional (H3b) towards the unemployed.[2]

Figure 5.1 Conceptual model: A negative correlation between welfare generosity and conditionality, induced by contrasting effects of self-interest, ideology and deservingness



The foregoing literature review and subsequent hypotheses suggest that welfare conditionality and welfare generosity are both shaped by self-interest, ideological beliefs and deservingness opinions, but in opposite ways, and accordingly seem to be two sides of the same coin. Previous empirical work partly confirms and partly nuances this premise. While Roosma and Jeene (2017) reported a negative relationship between opinions about the rights and obligations of welfare claimants among the Dutch population, Jeene and van Oorschot (2015) showed that Dutch citizens are scattered over four attitudinal patterns concerning the preferred rights-obligations balance. Nearly half of the Dutch public (49.2 per cent) appeared to either want high social rights combined with low social duties for the unemployed ('unconditional generosity'), or low rights coupled with high obligations ('work first'). However, among the remaining Dutch population, social rights and social duties were not necessarily seen as opposites, as most (44.2 per cent) preferred both high rights and high duties ('conditional generosity') and only some (6.6 per cent)

were strongly opposed to both rights and obligations ('laissez-faire'). Based on these studies, and the assumption that self-interest, ideology and deservingness are influential attitudinal drivers– the impact of which on generosity and conditionality runs in opposing directions– a fourth *'two sides of the same coin' hypothesis* predicts that: there is a negative correlation between welfare generosity and welfare conditionality (H4).

5.3 DATA AND METHODS

5.3.1 Data: the Belgian National Elections Study

The theoretical hypotheses were tested using data from the 2014 Belgian National Elections Study, which is a general population survey administered among a probability sample of Belgian residents entitled to vote (Abts et al., 2015). The survey consisted of face-to-face interviews (N=1901, response rate=47.5 per cent) and a drop-off, self-completion questionnaire left at the respondents' home by the interviewer (N=1403, participation rate=73.8 per cent). Because some indicators that are of particular interest for the present study were assessed in the drop-off questionnaire (e.g., the attitude criterion), the subsequent analyses included only those respondents who took part in both waves. To correct for a compositional mismatch between the sample and the population, post-stratification weighting for age, gender and educational level was applied.

5.3.2 Dependent variables: welfare generosity and welfare conditionality

Welfare generosity was measured by a single item asking to what extent the (Belgian) government should, on a scale from 0 to 10, take responsibility for providing a decent standard of living for the unemployed, with higher scores indicating a stronger acceptance of social rights. Welfare conditionality was measured as the average of three Likert-type statements (5-point agree−disagree scale): (a) The long-term unemployed should be obliged to accept any job, even if they earn much less than before by doing so; (b) People on social assistance should be obliged to do community work; and (c) The long-term unemployed should be obliged to re-educate themselves, otherwise they would lose their social benefits. Higher scores on the resulting additive scale variable (α=.645) suggest stronger approval of imposing social obligations. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA; see Appendix 5.1) furthermore showed that these items can be considered as valid and reliable indicators of the intended concepts.

5.3.3 Independent variables: self-interest, ideology and deservingness

People's material self-interest was indirectly gauged through a number of respondents' social-structural characteristics. First, age-related unemployment risk was based on a combination of age and work status, and comprised six categories: a young, employed adult higher-risk group (18−30 years old), a middle-aged, employed lower-risk group (31−49), a pre-retirement, employed higher-risk group (50−64), a retired non-risk group (mostly 65+),[3] a realized risk group (unemployed/disabled persons) and a residual category mainly consisting of students and homemakers. Educational level has three categories: lower secondary or below, higher

secondary, and tertiary. Past benefit receipt measures whether someone in the respondent's household had received welfare benefits, such as social assistance, unemployment benefits or disability benefits, in the two years prior to the data collection. Ethnic background was operationalized by the father's place of birth (Belgium, inside the EU or outside the EU) instead of that of the respondents, so that we could also include second-generation migrants, who still have a disadvantaged position in the Belgian labour market. Gender was included as a control variable.

With regard to ideological beliefs, political left−right orientation was assessed by means of self-placement on a scale ranging from 0 ('very left-wing') to 10 ('very right-wing'). The remaining ideological beliefs were measured by averaging respondents' scores across multiple Likert-type items ranging from 1 ('completely disagree') to 5 ('completely agree'). Egalitarianism (α=.675) was operationalized by means of the following three statements: (a) The differences between classes ought to be smaller than they are at present; (b) The differences between high and low incomes should stay as they are [reverse coded]; and (c) The government should reduce income differentials. Individualism (α=.747) was calculated as the mean score over three indicators: (a) Humanity, brotherhood and solidarity are all nonsense, everybody has to take care of him/herself first; (b) Striving for personal success is more important than providing for good relations with your fellow man; and (c) In our society everything revolves around one's own interest, power and material success. That is why it is better to take care first and foremost of oneself. Work ethic (α=.620) was assessed by four items: (a) To completely develop your talents, you need a job; (b) It is embarrassing to receive money without having had to work for it; (c) Work is a duty towards society; and (d) Work should always come first, even if it means less leisure time. CFA (see Appendix 5.1) showed that these items form reliable scales capturing the latent belief systems in their various dimensions. This CFA also confirmed that the ideological dimensions have sufficiently strong discriminant validity: the latent concepts only overlapped very partially, and could be clearly distinguished from one another.

With regard to welfare deservingness, most previous studies have tried to measure this by using either traditional survey items that tap into respondents' perceptions of different policy target groups, or vignette experiments that assess the impact of randomly varied welfare recipient characteristics on respondents' generosity towards those recipients (Meuleman et al., 2017). This chapter employs another, novel way to operationalize deservingness opinions–and deservingness valuations in particular. Specifically, we used survey items that gauge the importance people attach to abstract deservingness criteria, not only in relation to one particular vignette recipient or policy target group, but to social security more in general. People's emphasis on the control criterion (α=.605) was calculated as the average score across two items: (a) People who fall into poverty because of their own mistakes should be entitled to social assistance [reverse coded]; and (b) People who have themselves to blame for their problems do not deserve any support from social security. Scores for the attitude criterion (α=.660) were calculated as the mean score over two items: (a) People receiving social benefits should show more gratitude; and (b) People on social assistance should be pleased about this and do not have any right to complain. Reciprocity (α=.796) was operationalized using five items: (a) Social security should be preserved for those who have contributed to collective prosperity; (b) It is not fair that people receive social benefits to which they have not contributed; (c) Only people who work are entitled to government

social services; (d) People who have worked and contributed in the past deserve better social services than people who have contributed little or nothing; and (e) It is unfair that people contribute to social services they don't use. Lastly, the importance people attach to the criterion of need (α=.732) was operationalised as the mean score over three items: (a) Social security should only be available to those who truly live in poverty, (b) People with sufficient financial resources should not receive social benefits, and (c) Only people in dire need should receive social benefits. Unfortunately, the data lacks items to adequately measure the extent to which respondents gave weight to the criterion of identity. The measurement quality of these scales was also confirmed by CFA (see Appendix 5.1).

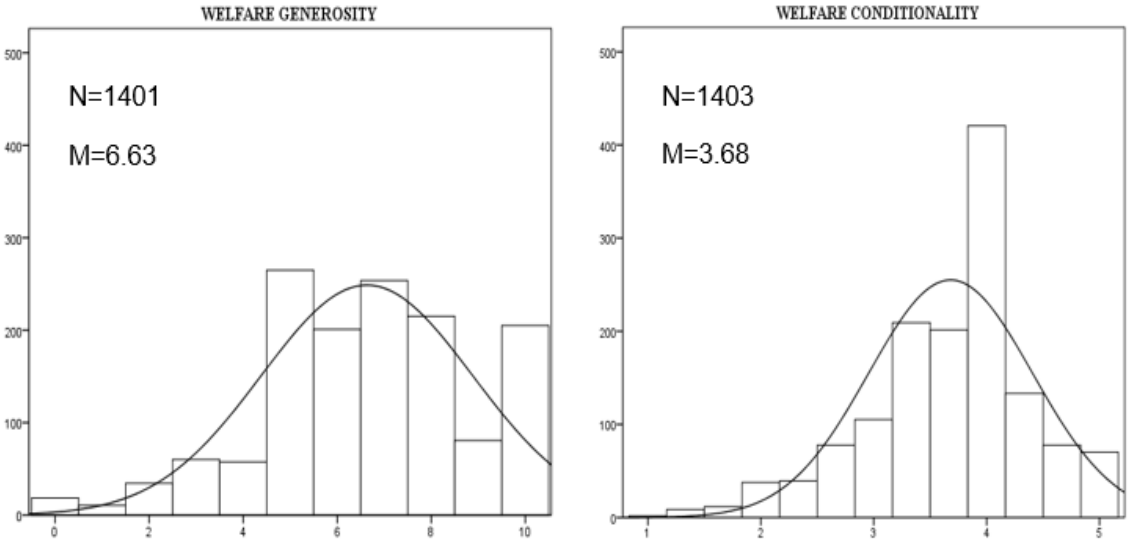
5.3.4 Data analysis

To test our hypotheses, we used step-wise, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to explain welfare generosity and welfare conditionality. The first step (A models) regressed the dependent variables on social-structural indicators. In the subsequent step, the four conventional ideological beliefs (egalitarianism, individualism, left-right ideology, work ethic; B models) and the empirically less-established deservingness criteria (C models) were added. This approach takes into account that ideological beliefs and deservingness valuations can be informed by social-structural characteristics: while the A models provide the total effects of social structure (direct as well as indirect via the beliefs), the B and C models show the social-structural effects controlling for the relevant beliefs.

5.4 RESULTS

5.4.1 Public support for social rights and obligations in the Belgian population

Figure 5.2 Absolute frequency distribution of welfare generosity and welfare conditionality



We start by describing the distribution of welfare generosity and conditionality. Figure 5.2 reveals that both have their peak higher than the midpoint of the scale. On average, public support for social rights is 6.63 (*SD*=2.25) on a scale ranging from 0 to 10, and popular support for social obligations is 3.68 (*SD*=.73) on a scale from 1 to 5. The Belgian public is therefore reasonably supportive of government intervention in favour of the unemployed, yet at the same time also favours placing conditions on them. The relatively widespread agreement among Belgians that unemployment benefits ought to be generous but also conditional on the fulfilment of a number of work-related obligations is in line with previous studies conducted in other countries (Buss et al., 2017; Eardley et al., 2000; Houtman, 1997; Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015; Larsen, 2008b; Saunders, 2002).

5.4.2 Explaining people's welfare generosity and conditionality

Models 1a and 2a in Table 5.1−regressing people's welfare generosity and conditionality, respectively, on a number of social-structural indicators−provide some evidence for the self-interest hypotheses (H1a and H1b). Certain vulnerable social categories–such as the unemployed/disabled, benefit recipients, those with a father born outside of the EU, the lower educated and those living in the high-unemployment region of Wallonia–appear to be significantly more generous. Being currently unemployed/disabled and receiving benefits clearly weakens support for social obligations. However, a self-interest interpretation of these findings is, at the same time, challenged by the fact that: (1) pensioners are considerably more generous towards the unemployed despite being permanently outside the labour market, (2) higher-educated individuals are less conditional and more generous despite having a relatively secure position in the labour market, and (3) the high-risk groups of younger and older employees do not significantly differ from their lower-risk counterparts of middle-aged employees in their support for both social rights and obligations. When the conventional ideological beliefs were added to the regression models (see Models 1b and 2b in Table 5.1), most associations between social-structural position and our dependent variables remained fairly similar, albeit with some exceptions. It was only when ideological factors were taken into account that: (1) the higher levels of generosity found among benefit recipients and the higher educated disappeared, and (2) gender turned into a significant predictor of welfare conditionality. In line with previous research (Larsen, 2008b; Saunders, 2002), women proved to be more conditional in their solidarity with the unemployed than men. These findings suggest that the effect of social position on welfare generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed is to some extent mediated by ideological beliefs (see also for example Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989). With regard to the impact of ideological beliefs, the results show that adherence to individualism, a right-wing political ideology or a strong work ethic lowers support for social rights (as predicted by H2a) and strengthens support for the social obligations of the unemployed (H2b), while valuing egalitarianism has the opposite effect. However, whereas work ethic appears to be most decisive in driving welfare conditionality, egalitarianism is most important in shaping welfare generosity.

Next, deservingness valuations were added to the models. Model 1c shows that emphasising deservingness criteria consistently lowers support for the social rights of the unemployed, which means that citizens expecting sufficient gratitude, adequate contributions and a lack of personal responsibility from social security recipients also feel that the state should be less generous

towards the unemployed. For the need criterion, however, this negative relationship was neither statistically nor substantially significant, which could be due to the widely accepted perception that unemployed people have a relatively low standard of living, or in other words, are confronted with a high level of neediness (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a). Although including welfare deservingness opinions only led to a minor increase in the explained variance of welfare generosity (as illustrated by a .030 increase in R^2_a), the effects of the deservingness criteria did seem to overrule those of most of the conventional ideological beliefs (i.e., individualism, work ethic and left-right ideology). By contrast, the positive association between welfare generosity and egalitarianism remained almost equally strong and stable.

As displayed in Model 2c, emphasising the deservingness criteria (except the need criterion) also appears to significantly strengthen support for imposing social obligations on the unemployed, leading to a substantial increase in the proportion of explained variance (a .104 rise in R^2_a compared with Model 2a). The attitude criterion is clearly most influential in this regard: people who attach greater importance to this criterion might regard the fulfilment of social obligations as a way in which social security recipients can demonstrate their gratitude. Likewise, people who stress reciprocity might be more conditional because the activating welfare state is seen to offer unemployed persons novel opportunities to contribute (see also Gielens, Roosma and Achterberg, 2019). People emphasising the criterion of control might, in turn, consider social duties to be a fair type of sanction for persons who are presumed to be willingly unemployed. Once more, the effects of the conventional ideological beliefs of egalitarianism, individualism and, to a lesser extent, left−right ideology and work ethic diminished after including deservingness valuations. Taken together, the analyses broadly support the deservingness hypotheses, stating that emphasising the criteria of deservingness lowers people's welfare generosity (H3a) while strengthening their support for welfare conditionality (H3b). However, the stronger effects of the deservingness criteria on conditionality suggest that the deservingness framework sheds considerably more light on people's opinions about social obligations than it does on attitudes towards social rights.

5.4.3 The correlation between welfare generosity and conditionality

The final step illustrates that there is a statistically significant and substantially moderate negative association between generosity and conditionality (r=-.312, n=1390, p<.01), which means that high levels of support for social rights tend to coincide with relatively weak support for social obligations, and *vice versa* (see also Roosma & Jeene, 2017). This finding clearly supports the 'two sides of the same coin' hypothesis (H4). The regression models presented in the previous section suggest that the opposing attitudinal drivers of self-interest, conventional ideological beliefs and deservingness valuations are presumably responsible for this negative relationship.

Table 5.1 OLS regressions explaining welfare generosity and welfare conditionality

	Welfare generosity						Welfare conditionality					
	Model 1a		Model 1b		Model 1c		Model 2a		Model 2b		Model 2c	
	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
Age-related work status (ref.=employed, 31-49)												
Employed, 18-30	-.542 *	-.060	-.436	-.048	-.359	-.040	-.024	-.008	-.069	-.024	-.120	-.041
Employed, 50-64	.298	.049	.238	.039	.240	.039	-.116 *	-.059	-.083	-.042	-.086	-.043
Retired	.546 **	.104	.575 ***	.109	.601 ***	.114	.003	.002	-.066	-.040	-.074	-.043
Unemployed/disabled	1.157 ***	.147	1.175 ***	.149	1.108 ***	.140	-.471 ***	-.185	-.471 ***	-.039	-.414 ***	-.162
Other	.724 ***	.108	.800 **	.119	.769 ***	.115	-.259 ***	-.120	-.291 ***	-.185	-.264 ***	-.122
Benefit receipt (ref.=none)	.315 *	.063	.145	.029	.103	.021	-.176 ***	-.108	-.117 **	-.072	-.093 *	-.057
Educational level (ref.=medium)												
Lower	.294 *	.063	.355 *	.076	.376 **	.080	.069	.045	-.001	-.001	-.009	-.006
Higher	.314 *	.064	.196	.040	.077	.016	-.205 ***	-.129	-.111 *	-.070	-.043	-.027
Ethnic background (ref.=father born in Belgium)												
EU	.266	.030	.272	.030	.257	.029	.011	.004	.004	.002	. 005	-.002
Non-EU	.868 **	.091	.795 **	.083	.725 **	.076	-.069	-.022	-.069	-.022	-.036	-.012
Gender (ref.=male)	.089	.020	-.049	-.011	-.021	-.005	.069	.048	.104 **	.071	.085 **	.058
Region (ref.=Flanders)	.462 ***	.101	.285 *	.062	.344 **	.075	-.074	-.050	-.013	-.009	-.045 *	-.030
Egalitarianism			.589 ***	.194	.555 ***	.075			-.080 **	-.082	-.060	-.061
Individualism			-.220 **	-.084	-.065	.183			.098 ***	.115	.008	.009
Left-right ideology			-.061 *	-.060	-.025	-.025			.048 ***	.144	.026 **	.077
Work ethic			-.276 **	-.085	-.136	-.024			.297 ***	.282	.216 ***	.205
Control					-.197 *	-.042					.081 ***	.092
Attitude					-.313 ***	-.073					.220 ***	.249
Reciprocity					-.210 *	-.114					.128 ***	.129
Need					-.118	-.068					.032	.035
N	1399		1350		1344		1391		1350		1344	
R^2_a	.069		.133		.163		.083		.222		.326	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

5.5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In light of the ever-growing shift towards activation in European welfare states, this study examined the relationship between citizens' welfare generosity (i.e., support for social rights) and welfare conditionality (i.e., support for social obligations) towards the unemployed. Based on data from the 2014 Belgian National Elections Study, the main conclusion is that generosity and conditionality appear to be two sides of the same coin for two reasons. First, a statistically and substantially significant negative association between both types of welfare attitudes was found, a correlation that had previously also been detected in the Netherlands (Roosma & Jeene, 2017). Although such comparable findings in two fairly different welfare states suggest that the 'two sides of the same coin' thesis is not merely confined to the Belgian context, future cross-national research should examine its generalizability in more detail.

Table 5.2 A comparison of the impact of self-interest, ideology and deservingness on welfare generosity and welfare conditionality

	Welfare generosity	Welfare conditionality
Self-interest indicators		
Age-related work status (ref.=employed, 31−49 years)		
Employed, 18−30 years	-ns	-ns
Employed, 50−64 years	+ns	-ns
Retired	+	-ns
Unemployed/disabled	+	-
Other (e.g., homemaker, student)	+	-
Benefit receipt (ref.=none)	+ns	-
Educational level (ref.=medium education)		
Lower education	+	-ns
Higher education	+ns	-ns
Ethnic background (ref.=father born in Belgium)		
EU	+ns	+ns
Non-EU	+	-ns
Gender (ref.=male)	-ns	+
Region (ref.=Flanders)	+	-
Ideological beliefs		
Egalitarianism	+	-ns
Individualism	-ns	+ns
Left−right ideology	-ns	+
Work ethic	-ns	+
Deservingness valuations		
Control	-	+
Attitude	-	+
Reciprocity	-	+
Need	-ns	+ns

Note: Ns=p<.05.

The second reason is that, as demonstrated in Table 5.2, most of the attitudinal drivers are similar in strength yet opposite in direction. Three types of influential drivers were deduced from existing welfare attitudes literature: self-interest (captured by social-structural indicators), conventionally recognized ideological beliefs such as egalitarianism and individualism, and relatively understudied welfare deservingness beliefs. We found some evidence in favour of the self-interest thesis which posits that people in a weaker socioeconomic position (e.g., the unemployed/disabled) are more generous and less conditional towards the unemployed. However, two findings in particular contradict the self-interest argument. First, the higher educated were found to be less conditional, despite having a more secure position in the Belgian labour market. Though this may seem to conflict with their interests, a closer look at one of the specific social obligations under consideration might call this into question. That is, being obliged to accept any paid job, regardless of the pay level, is something that the higher educated in particular want to avoid, as they stand to lose most from such a policy. Second, despite being permanently outside the labour force, pensioners are more generous towards the unemployed than are middle-aged, employed people. A possible explanation is that today's pensioners demand stronger state involvement in terms of social welfare because they grew up in a day and age when the Belgian welfare state was not as elaborate as it is nowadays−a situation they would rather not return to. The last social-structural indicator that merits attention is gender, as women–perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, although corroborated by previous research (Larsen, 2008b; Saunders, 2002)–proved to be more conditional than men towards the unemployed. One possible explanation is that women attach greater value to having work because of the struggle they went through to acquire the right to work and to establish more equal employment opportunities. However, future research is needed to delve more deeply into this gender gap in welfare conditionality. The impact of the conventional ideological beliefs is in line with previous theoretical and empirical work. People who strongly adhere to the work ethic or have anti-egalitarian, individualist or politically right-wing ideas are less generous and more conditional with the unemployed. In addition to self-interest and conventionally recognized ideological beliefs, popular opinions of welfare deservingness–an explanatory factor that has remained understudied in the field–are particularly influential in shaping people's welfare preferences. Placing emphasis on criteria of deservingness, such as control, attitude and reciprocity, considerably lowers support for social rights and strengthens acceptance of social obligations. Many of the conventional ideological beliefs lose much of their explanatory power once people's notions of welfare deservingness are taken into account. This makes it clear that deservingness opinions are an indispensable factor to reckon with in welfare attitudes research.

The findings demonstrate that the attitudinal structure behind welfare conditionality bears remarkable resemblance to the one underlying welfare generosity. This implies that future research in the relatively novel field of public opinion concerning activation policies might not have to 'reinvent the wheel', but is to a large extent able to reproduce the causal logics that have been established in the long-standing social rights literature. However, the results also show that the respective models for explaining the two types of welfare attitudes are not exact mirror images of one another. First, the models for social rights and obligations differ notably with respect to which variable has the greatest explanatory power. Whereas people's adherence to the work ethic and the deservingness criterion of attitude appear to be most decisive in shaping conditionality, it is egalitarianism that has the most profound impact on generosity. Despite all the similarities,

citizens thus appear to apply a somewhat different logic in forming opinions about social rights compared with attitudes towards social obligations. A second disparity is that the proportion of explained variance was much higher (nearly twice as high) in the conditionality models than in the generosity models. This observation suggests that self-interest, ideological beliefs, and, particularly, deservingness valuations, are better at explaining individual differences in welfare conditionality than in welfare generosity. Some caution is warranted, however, given that generosity was operationalized with a single item, while conditionality was measured as a composite score based on multiple items. As a result, our measurement of conditionality was less prone to random measurement error, and higher R-squared values could be obtained. However, another plausible interpretation is that the higher explained variance in case of conditionality is due to the fact that, compared with the long-established, institutionalized welfare policies focusing on social rights, activating welfare policies are relatively novel in Western Europe, and are accordingly more intensively debated in public discourse, and also still structured more strongly along the lines of social-structural cleavages and ideological divides.

Notes

[1] Statistics Belgium (2014), Brussels. Accessed 9 March 2017 at www.statbel.fgov.be/.

[2] Because the dataset does not provide a meaningful operationalization of the identity criterion, we do not specify the anticipated effect of this criterion on people's generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed.

[3] The non-risk pensioner category also included those aged between 55 and 64 years who took early retirement (n=63).

6 WHY DESERVINGNESS THEORY NEEDS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH. COMPARING FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON SOCIAL WELFARE IN THREE WELFARE REGIMES

TIJS LAENEN, FEDERICA ROSSETTI AND WIM VAN OORSCHOT

The importance people attach to deservingness criteria depends to some extent on the institutional welfare regime context in which they live.

A slightly different version of this chapter was published as:

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Tijs Laenen and Federica Rossetti are the joint first authors of the article. Wim van Oorschot is the second author.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the present-day Europe of permanent austerity, where the financial sustainability of the welfare state is continuously being scrutinized, the issue of how and to whom the ever-more scarce welfare resources are allocated is again high on the political agenda. In such a context, in-depth knowledge of the normative criteria underpinning citizens' welfare distribution preferences is of crucial importance to all actors in the political arena. For obvious reasons concerning re-election and democratic legitimacy (Burstein, 2003; Pierson, 2001), office-seeking politicians, for example, have strong incentives to implement social policies and to voice political messages that are in tune with popular criteria. According to welfare deservingness theory, citizens use five criteria–the so-called 'CARIN criteria'–to justify what constitutes a fair distribution of social welfare funds among various policy target groups: Control, Attitude, Reciprocity, Identity, and Need (van Oorschot et al., 2017). Considerable progress has been made in the ever-growing body of research contributing to our understanding of the relationship between popular deservingness opinions and welfare policy preferences. However, we argue that the further development of the research field is impeded by the relatively limited knowledge of its fundamentals: the CARIN criteria. Two issues to which qualitative research might offer a potential solution are of particular importance in this regard. The first is that the top-down character of the research process through which the CARIN criteria came into being–first deduced from existing literature and subsequently tested in survey research–makes it difficult for us to claim with any certainty that people actually apply (all of) these five criteria, or perhaps apply others. The second issue is that we do not really know the concrete meanings such abstract deservingness criteria have to people, and how they apply such criteria.

In an attempt to scrutinize people's use of deservingness criteria more accurately, we adopt a qualitative approach to the study of welfare deservingness, in which we analyse data from twelve focus groups (FGs) in three different European countries: Denmark (DK), Germany (DE), and the United Kingdom (UK). The FG participants were invited to freely discuss and rank six different hypothetical vignettes (i.e., an unemployed person, a pensioner, an average-income family with children, a low-income worker, a relatively well-off worker and an immigrant) in terms of their welfare deservingness. The open-ended structure of the FG discussions provides a fruitful opportunity to grasp which deservingness criteria people spontaneously articulate when justifying welfare preferences, and what meaning is given to the different criteria. The cross-national design of our study has the additional advantage that it enables us to explore the frequently-cited idea that deservingness considerations play out differently in different institutional settings, welfare regimes in particular (Larsen, 2006; van Oorschot et al., 2017). We find that in the three countries examined, the FG participants made explicit reference to the deservingness criteria of need, control, and reciprocity in a number of different ways, but not to attitude and identity. In addition, reference was made to three alternative criteria that are outside of the deservingness framework, because they refer more to broader society than to characteristics of welfare targets: equality/universalism, cost awareness and social investment (the latter only in Denmark). In the following, we refer to these as 'context-related criteria'. Our analyses further show that the normative criteria used by selected groups of citizens discussing social welfare relate to the criteria embedded in their country's welfare regime (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Esping-

Andersen, 1990). In liberal Britain, the need criterion dominates the discussions, whereas in corporatist-conservative Germany it is clearly the reciprocity criterion. The FG participants in social-democratic Denmark mostly apply the criteria of universalism/equality, reciprocity and need.

The remainder of the chapter is divided into four sections. The first elaborates on the welfare deservingness theory and argues that it needs qualitative research to develop further. In the second section, the FG data and analytical strategy are described in detail. The third section depicts the deservingness discussions of the FGs in the selected countries, and includes a cross-country comparison in which our findings are interpreted against general welfare state characteristics ('welfare regime' types) of the countries involved. Lastly, we provide our conclusions and discuss some possible avenues for future research.

6.2 THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

A rapidly growing body of research deals with attempts to empirically test deservingness theory (Buss, 2018; Jeene, 2015; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; Kootstra, 2016; Larsen, 2006; Petersen, 2012; van Oorschot, 2006a; van Oorschot et al., 2017). To this end, most rely on quantitative techniques of data gathering and data analysis; regression analysis of survey data in particular. Two major analytical approaches have emerged in this survey-dominated research field (van Oorschot et al., 2017). The first involves measuring the CARIN criteria and their effects on policy preferences by using standard survey items that attempt to capture respondents' initial perceptions of target groups on the different deservingness dimensions. The second approach uses vignette experiments, in which respondents are asked to rate the welfare deservingness of hypothetical but specific claimants with different characteristics, all supposedly related to the CARIN criteria. Despite the progress being made, 'several components are still underdeveloped or warrant further clarification' (van Oorschot et al., 2017: 350). We argue that two issues in particular impede the further development of welfare deservingness literature. Both are the result of the top-down character of previous research, to which more bottom-up qualitative research might offer a solution.

The first and perhaps most fundamental issue is that on the basis of earlier work on welfare deservingness, we cannot say with any certainty that ordinary people actually apply the five–and only those five–deservingness criteria identified in the CARIN model (see Figure 2.1). The current deservingness framework is the result of a deductive process in which researchers first derived from existing literature (e.g., Cook, 1979; De Swaan, 1988) which criteria people may find important when deciding who should get what from the welfare state (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). Later research uses predefined survey items or vignette experiments with fixed-response options to assess how the criteria are related to welfare distribution preferences (van Oorschot et al., 2017). However, in doing so, researchers are in danger of blindly assuming that what people think closely corresponds with what academics believe people think. On the basis of such top-down survey research alone, it remains difficult to tell which criteria citizens actually apply when forming opinions about welfare distribution. It is possible, for example, that not all five CARIN criteria are

(equally) important to people, or that criteria not yet recognized in deservingness literature also play a role in opinion formation.

The second major issue is that we know relatively little about the concrete meanings that abstract deservingness criteria have to people. To date, survey researchers have made use of expert knowledge to translate the CARIN criteria into specific items or vignette attributes. However, once again, expert knowledge might differ from popular opinions. It is possible that certain items or attributes that, according to researchers, fall under the heading of a particular deservingness criterion, are interpreted otherwise by the public. The number of children in the household of a benefit recipient, for example, is typically considered to be an indication of *need* in the eyes of deservingness experts, but could equally be understood by people as a sign of reduced personal *control* over finding a job, as having (young) children might hamper the recipient from looking for work. Deservingness researchers also face the problem that certain items or attributes may relate to multiple deservingness criteria, because they might mean very different things to different people (van Oorschot et al., 2017). For example, suppose that a vignette describes a recipient who has an additional income besides a welfare benefit. Individual A might perceive this information as an indication of less neediness (*need*), but individual B could interpret having an extra income as fraudulent behaviour and thus as a sign of ungratefulness to society (*attitude*) and individual C might even welcome the fact that the recipient is working and contributing at least something to society (*reciprocity*).

According to van Oorschot and Roosma (2015: 25), what the deservingness framework needs in order to tackle these issues is 'qualitative research, e.g., in the form of in depth interviewing or forum groups, in which people are asked to freely discuss and reveal what kind of criteria they are inclined to apply to specific needy groups,' as this kind of research 'could be very helpful in discovering which attributes of target groups indicate particular deservingness criteria and whether current deservingness research is overlooking particular criteria used by the public' (Meuleman et al., 2017: 350). Unlike survey-based research with predefined items and fixed-response options, the open-ended questions asked in qualitative research offer much more room for spontaneous reactions on the part of respondents (Taylor-Gooby & Leruth, 2018). As a result, in-depth interviews or FGs should provide fertile ground to grasp which deservingness criteria people actually apply when deciding who should get what from the welfare state, how these criteria are applied and what they really mean to people. However, to our knowledge, only two previously published studies approach the issue of welfare deservingness from a qualitative perspective. Both Kremer (2016) and Osipovič (2015) analysed the attitudes of labour migrants residing in the Netherlands and the UK respectively, towards the welfare entitlements of newly arrived immigrants. Both studies show a strong and persistent preference for making access to social welfare conditional on past contributions in terms of work and payment of (payroll) taxes. In practice, this entails excluding newly arriving migrants from welfare, at least for some time, because they are perceived to have contributed little to the host society. When discussing the social rights of migrants, notions of reciprocity thus appear to outweigh other deservingness considerations such as need or identity. In the current chapter, we extend the relatively narrow scope of previous qualitative work by studying how citizens living in different countries feel about welfare distribution with regard to a much broader range of target groups: the unemployed, the elderly, families with children, low-income workers, well-off workers and immigrants.

6.3 DATA AND METHODS

In order to study people's social welfare preferences and their use of deservingness criteria, we analysed data from twelve FGs conducted in autumn 2016 in three European countries (Denmark, Germany and the UK, each representing a specific 'welfare regime' type), as part of the cross-national research project 'Welfare State Futures: Our Children's Europe' (WelfSOC). A focus group design was preferred over other qualitative (e.g., in-depth interviews) or quantitative (e.g., experimental surveys) techniques, because it enhances interpersonal discussions and thus creates unique opportunities to investigate the normative criteria underlying the arguments raised in such discussions (Goerres & Prinzen, 2012). Because full cross-country standardization was not considered feasible or desirable, the WelfSOC project allowed for national adaptations in line with country-specific particularities (e.g., respondents were asked about student benefits in Denmark, but not in Germany or the UK). The general selection procedure and structure of the focus groups, however, were similar across the three countries. The FG participants were recruited by national agencies with the help of specific guidelines provided by the WelfSOC coordination team, and were given a small reimbursement to encourage participation. In each country, four relatively homogenous groups consisting of about five to ten participants were formed on the basis of a number of socio-demographic characteristics that are known to be relevant for understanding popular welfare attitudes (e.g., age, gender and income): a middle-class group, a working-class group, a group of elderly people, and a group of young people (see Appendix 6.1 for more details). In Germany and the UK, the FGs were organized and conducted by the commercial agencies of Ipsos Germany and Breaking Blue Research, respectively. In Denmark, this was done by researchers from the Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies of Aalborg University. However, due to the close supervision of the WelfSOC coordination team, the choice between a commercial or an academic organization is unlikely to have had a substantial impact on our results.

The FGs were structured along three stages. The first was a warm-up exercise, in which the moderator encouraged the participants to brainstorm about what comes to mind when thinking of 'the welfare state'. Second, six vignettes, featuring different policy target group representatives, were presented to the participants: an unemployed person, a pensioner, a family with children on an average income, a low-income worker, a relatively well-off worker and an immigrant. Participants were asked what types of benefits and services these people should get from the welfare state, and why they thought that ought to be the case. The vignettes were deliberately described very broadly, so as to gauge what type of information (e.g., age, health and behaviour) participants would need in order to make judgements about the vignettes. After discussing each case separately, in the last stage, participants were asked to rank the six vignettes in terms of their welfare deservingness (i.e., relative deservingness). A potentially important difference between the countries is that in Germany the vignettes were given specific names (e.g., the immigrant was called 'Adrian'), and participants were individually instructed to rank them, and only discussed their rankings in a group setting afterward. In the UK and Denmark, the vignettes were instead described in general terms (e.g., 'an immigrant') and the task was to come up with a ranking based on group consensus. This might have made things more 'personal' in the German FGs and could have enhanced participants' identification with and generosity towards the vignettes. See Appendix 6.2 for some examples of how the FG topic, the vignettes, and the

ranking exercise were introduced in the different countries, and Appendix 6.3 for a summary table of the final group rankings.

All two-hour FG sessions were audio recorded and the recordings were transcribed in full. The German and Danish transcripts were translated into English to ease cross-national comparison. Using NVivo 11 software, we examined the FG transcripts by means of a directed content analysis; a qualitative approach that starts from existing theory or previous research to identify key concepts as initial codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2006). This particular coding approach seemed most appropriate for the study, because as discussed in the theoretical section, there is already a relatively large body of literature concerning the normative deservingness criteria people apply when making distributive decisions (Saldaña, 2009). Five predefined codes were derived from the theoretical perspective of welfare deservingness: control, attitude, reciprocity, identity and need. In addition to the *a priori* coding scheme, ample room was left for the bottom-up recognition of arguments that could not be categorized under one of the five predefined codes, but were nevertheless used as justifications for granting or withholding welfare entitlements. As shown in the results section, this led to the identification of three additional codes that we group under the heading of 'context-related criteria': equality/universalism, cost awareness and social investment (the last only in Denmark). These context-related criteria are different from the deservingness criteria, in that they do not pertain to the characteristics of welfare targets (e.g., their neediness or contributions) but refer instead to broader society and its welfare system.

The coding process followed three steps. First, each researcher independently coded the texts according to the theoretically defined principles, while also leaving room for other codes to emerge. In this way, we left open the possibility to assign multiple codes to a single quote. Second, the reliability of the codes was discussed among the researchers. A code was accepted if, and only if, at least two out of three members of the research team were in agreement. In an attempt to limit researchers' bias in interpreting the FG transcripts as much as possible, we coded only those statements given by respondents in which the following three core elements were recognized: (i) a *personal* claim of fairness on (ii) the topic of *entitlement to social welfare* benefits and/or services (e.g., pensions, healthcare and childcare), for which (iii) the person gave a *justification* as to why the welfare entitlement should or should not be granted. Personal opinions about the fair distribution of other benefits and burdens–such as wages, taxes or work obligations–were excluded from the analysis, as were factual statements that referred to the actual state of affairs instead of the ideal situation people had in mind. We report here an example of a statement made by a respondent that was coded as 'reciprocity':

> I think (i) personal claim it's terrible that someone who's worked for 30 years (iii) justification related to reciprocity only gets one or two years of unemployment money, (ii) welfare entitlement whereas a Hartz IV person [a person who receives unemployment assistance; *Arbeitslosengeld II*] gets what they get. This goes more deeply into it, but I think it's unfair if everyone gets what they get unconditionally rather than having something to do with earning it (DE-MC-8).

6.4 RESULTS

6.4.1 United Kingdom

In the British FGs, discussions were dominated by the criterion of *need*. There was widespread, sometimes tacit, agreement among the participants that welfare resources ought to be allocated according to individual–mainly financial–need. When presented with the vignettes representing different target groups, the British respondents first and foremost considered questions such as: How needy is this person? How much money is coming in and how much money is going out? What is the household income or salary? Does that income stem from a single earner or from multiple earners? What costs and expenses do people have? How much are they paying in rent and energy bills? How many dependents (e.g., children and elderly relatives) are reliant on the income? On the basis of such a fine-grained financial assessment, in which incoming revenue is weighed against outgoing expenditure, it is decided which welfare benefits and services ought to be awarded; with the simple rule of thumb being that higher needs should give rise to higher levels of social protection. For example, when asked about the relevance of age in distributing benefits and services, one respondent replied:

> Yes I think the age does matter. There are some young people that live by themselves and it doesn't really matter about age, but if they are living at home why would they need more money if their mum and dad are paying for the rent and they only have to pay for, say, their bus travel or the new clothes that they want, when an older person would be having to worry about bills and rent and council tax or whatever accommodation they are in? (UK-YO-4)

The preponderance of the need criterion in the UK discussions manifested itself even more strongly in the ranking exercise that the participants were asked to perform. Although the rank orders the FGs ultimately decided on were quite divergent, the process leading to the preferred ranking was quite similar across the groups, with need being the guiding principle in all of them. If there was any discussion at all in the British FGs, it was primarily about the issue of who needs the benefits most. Thus, although the preferred deservingness criterion was shared across almost all participants, the perceptions concerning concrete need differed quite strongly between participants. For example, whereas some considered the elderly to be a target group facing particularly high needs, others maintained that they are relatively well-off: 'They have probably got a pension. They are as sound as a pound. Don't worry about them'! (UK-YO-1). The following response to the moderator's inquiry about why the immigrant was put in a particular position in the rank order exemplifies the ranking reasoning of most British participants: 'We need more information but they [immigrants] need the help. They are in that place because the people above probably need it more and the people below don't need it' (UK-WC-1). Means testing proved to be very popular among the FG participants–for example, 'I think everything should be means-tested' (UK-YO-7) and 'Means testing is good*'* (UK-MC-5)–and it was mentioned in relation to a broad range of benefits and services: childcare, pensions, unemployment benefits, tax credits, etc. Quite frequently, participants mentioned that citizens with incomes above a certain, yet often undefined, upper threshold should not be granted rights to (some) welfare entitlements, as 'there has to be a cut-off at some point, doesn't there?' (UK-WC-1). On the other hand, some of the participants claimed that due to the exponential growth in the cost of living, people on higher

incomes should nonetheless be included in the scope of the welfare state. In addition to financial need, health needs were–albeit far less frequently–also cited as arguments in favour of granting welfare entitlements. More specifically, health needs were mentioned with regard to delivering benefits and services to the elderly (old-age care and pensions) and the sick/disabled (disability benefits and mental health services).

In addition to the need criterion, two other deservingness criteria were referred to, although considerably less frequently and less decisively: control and reciprocity. The criterion of *control* was alluded to in three different ways. First and foremost, individual control over being unemployed or employed part time was considered important for either granting or withholding welfare entitlements: 'If they are able to work full time and they choose to work part time, I think they should be penalized. I don't think they should get help' (UK-WC-3) and 'I think asylum seekers are not allowed to work, so then they have to be getting more money just to survive because they are not allowed to go and get any income' (UK-YO-10). Although most discussions revolved around the personal responsibility for being out of work, individual control over health was also mentioned as a reason for withholding certain benefits and services from people that make poor lifestyle choices, such as unhealthy eating and drug abuse. For example, when asked whether health makes a difference in terms of the benefits and services unemployed people should be entitled to, one of the respondents replied:

> I am going to be really controversial but it depends on why they are not in good health. If I felt for example there was somebody who had cancer or it was an illness they couldn't control then fine, but I have a next door neighbour who takes drugs and who is not in good health. I would have an issue with that (UK-MC-9).

A third way in which reference was made to the control criterion was by linking it to children. Children were generally regarded as innocent third party (van Oorschot et al., 2017), from whom society should not take away any welfare benefits and services because of the choices made by their parents, as 'it is not really fair to punish the children for what the parents decide to do, or don't do' (UK-MC-3). Because of its close connection to the issue of personal responsibility, we did not assign a separate code to this type of reasoning.

The criterion of *reciprocity* was primarily referred to as past contributions instead of future contributions, and served as an argument for either granting or withholding social welfare entitlements. On the one hand, past or present contributions were mentioned as reasons why different target groups–such as the elderly, low-income workers and well-off workers–who have been putting money into the welfare pot by working and paying taxes, should be granted benefits and services. For example, while ranking the different vignettes, one respondent noted that 'the 70 year old has worked for a good part of their life and they deserve something back' (UK-WC-1). On the other hand, immigrants were denied access to social rights because people felt they had not yet contributed enough to British society. If migrants work and contribute to society, however, most respondents felt they should also be entitled to the same welfare benefits and services: 'My son lives in New Zealand and they have lots of different countries but they [immigrants] are not entitled to anything until they have worked and proved themselves. I don't think that is a bad thing' (UK-OL-4).

Leaving room for a bottom-up recognition of justifications that could not be allocated to one of the five CARIN criteria led to the identification of two alternative context-related criteria. These extend beyond the deservingness framework because they do not refer to characteristics of welfare targets, but to broader society. The first context-related criterion, *equality/universalism*, was typically discussed in terms of equal access to (not equal levels of) welfare services (not benefits); healthcare in particular. Most participants agreed that access to the National Health Service (NHS) should be universal and free for all, because healthcare is considered to be a basic human need. However, it should be remembered that this consensus was broken by the few respondents who felt that healthcare treatment should depend on personal responsibility for ill health. Equality was also mentioned as an argument for granting welfare entitlements to immigrants, who, according to some participants, should be treated equally in terms of benefits and services because it is a human right. For example, when asked what immigrants should be entitled to, a respondent replied:

> Healthcare 100 per cent and I don't care if someone has come from a different country and they have got a heart problem, and it doesn't matter if they are paying into our system. I think it's a basic human right to have healthcare and they should definitely get access and no checks and nothing given to them (UK-YO-6).

During the ranking exercise, some participants also expressed a basic attitude towards equality, which states that everyone should get the same, mostly high-level, welfare benefits and services: 'Everybody is equal to access whatever' (UK-MC-9). Such expressions of all-embracing unconditionality were relatively rare, though. A second, albeit marginal, context-related criterion we encountered in the FG data was that of *cost awareness*, which was referred to in two main ways. First, it was used as a reason for excluding immigrants from welfare benefits and services, the NHS in particular:

> We would all like to help everybody but at the moment it just can't be done. We haven't got the facilities. We haven't got anything here, have we? We just seem to be taking money out that we just haven't got and ruining the National Health Service, which should never be ruined. (UK-OL-4).

In addition to the financial feasibility of the welfare state, cost awareness was also mentioned as an argument in favour of means testing, and thus, *de facto*, in favour of distribution according to financial need. Because people think public resources are scarce, they feel that the welfare state apparatus has to make sure that those resources are geared towards people who need them the most. Here, one might recognize the main trait for which means testing is extensively praised in social policy literature: its ability to institutionalize a cost-efficient distribution of welfare between society's rich and poor (van Oorschot, 2002). However, some of the respondents also pointed to one of the most cited arguments against means testing: its high administrative cost. Nevertheless, as this was commonly cited as a mere side-note, the policy instrument of means testing remained relatively popular among the FG participants.

6.4.2 Germany

The discussions in the German FGs were dominated by the criterion of *reciprocity*. A recurring idea among the participants was that an individual has to benefit from the welfare state based on what he or she has paid (or pays) into it. When the moderator presented the different vignettes with target group representatives, a frequent response among the German participants was to seek answers to the questions: How much has this person contributed to the system? For how long? How long has this person worked? Is he or she still working? The general idea is that welfare resources, particularly cash benefits, should be allocated according to the contributions paid in the past: those who have paid more deserve to receive more compared with those who have contributed for a shorter period, or not at all. For example:

> If we talk about long-term unemployment, it depends on what he paid into the system, regardless of need, that's what he should get out of it, and that's OK. If I work and pay in more, then I want to have that back (DE-WC-4).

The emphasis on work is central to these statements. The condition for being entitled to social welfare is that the person has worked for a certain period of time. The reciprocity criterion was not only used to justify the granting of social benefits, but also to exclude those who have not contributed enough to the system. This was often the case for the immigrant vignette, who was not considered entitled to receive the same benefits as a German citizen 'because he hasn't paid anything into the country and his parents haven't paid anything […]. Therefore he's not given anything to the state' (DE-WC-7). Only after a certain amount of years spent working in the country were immigrants considered as being entitled to receive welfare benefits. Although the biggest concern was past reciprocity, the idea of future reciprocity was also present among the German respondents. The state should invest in education and further training to give individuals the opportunity to find better jobs, thus allowing them to pay more into the welfare system. Investments are thus not seen as something that society as a whole can benefit from, but more as personal investments. Future reciprocity plays a particular role with regard to the family, low-income workers and the unemployed. For example, the purpose of supporting low-income workers can be seen in the following statement: 'So that he gets better education/training and can get a better job, better earnings, and can then better pay into the public funds. That's the order of it in my view' (DE-OL-5).

Two other deservingness criteria, need and control, emerged about equally in the German debates. *Need* was mostly used as an argument to exclude from social welfare those who are able to cope using their own resources. Need is thus mainly conceived as financial need, with almost no reference to health needs in the German FGs. Although most of the time participants did not explicitly mention which type of support the wealthier should be excluded from, some participants suggested that nursery schools in particular should be based on income: 'It's unfair, they have so much money, so why should they get everything for free?' (DE-OL-3). This use of the need criterion is more visible in the ranking exercise, in which the well-off worker was placed among the lowest positions by all four FGs: 'He's doing well, so there's no need' (DE-YO-4); 'He can take care of himself and provide for his own needs' (DE-MC-3). In some cases, however, need was also used to justify the granting of welfare entitlements, as those who have not paid enough in the past nevertheless cannot be left alone in poverty:

> I'm talking about this idea of getting out what I paid into the system. That's going to vary, because one person who is 22 hasn't paid much of anything into the system, and if he is unemployed, should he go hungry or beg on the street? (DE-WC-10).

The *control* criterion was used as justification both for granting and for withholding welfare entitlements, with particular reference made to the individual responsibility to find a job. If a person is unemployed for reasons beyond his or her control, they are considered as being entitled to social welfare, and *vice versa*. In this regard, age and health were the two major factors mentioned as reasons why an individual should or should not receive social welfare. For example, referring to age, some argued that an unemployed person should be granted welfare entitlements 'because he's 45 and could possibly have difficulty finding a new job depending on his situation' (DE-MC-5), while the low-income worker should not be the focus of the welfare state 'because he's still young maybe and still has a number of possibilities that could play a role later on' (DE-MC-8). With regard to health, a person is considered deserving of social welfare in case of disability, because a physical condition may prevent people from working, and thus providing for themselves: 'If he's ill, then he should receive help. If there's a 55 year old woman who has problems with her whole body, then you can't expect her to work. You have to support her' (DE-YO-8). By contrast, being in good health was used as a justification for withholding welfare entitlements, as reported with reference to the unemployed: 'because if someone is physically in a position to work and there is work they can do, then I'm of the opinion they should go to work' (DE-MC-6).

The German participants also applied context-related criteria reaching beyond welfare deservingness. In the German groups there was little reference to equal access to healthcare service, but equality was more related to some specific benefits, such as pensions. As opposed to the idea that welfare benefits should be based on contributions made in the past, some participants (particularly in the elderly FG) argued for equal pension levels: 'I'm in favour of a uniform or equal pension amount where everyone gets the same amount, like everyone gets 1500 euros. That's OK' (DE-OL-7). 'Right, that's a good idea. I'd sign up immediately' (DE-OL-8). *Equality/universalism* was also used as argument for guaranteeing equality of access to the welfare state for immigrants, although without reference to which specific benefits or services: 'If he is allowed to live here in Germany, then he's entitled to the same rights as everyone else here' (DE-YO-10). Lastly, we identified the criterion of *cost awareness*, which was mainly interpreted as a concern about the fiscal sustainability of the welfare state and the ability of the state to maintain the system when resources are limited. In particular, participants referred to a fear related to immigration in Germany: 'Too many people [are] coming here, and we can't possibly support them all adequately' (DE-YO-4). Some of the participants expressed a deep concern about the impossibility, for immigrants, to receive adequate support from the welfare state, due to the limited resources.

6.4.3 Denmark

In the Danish FG discussions, there was no single normative criterion that stood out as being most dominant. Instead, it seems that the Danish participants were torn between the criteria of need, reciprocity and equality/universalism. This struggle between different criteria may be

exemplified by what we call the 'AP Møller debate'. Danish respondents often spontaneously discussed whether AP Møller, the now deceased founder of the largest Danish multinational enterprise (Maersk) and archetypical representative of the well-off upper class in Denmark, ought to be entitled to social welfare. A lot of Danish participants argued that rich people should be excluded from receiving welfare benefits–child allowances and pensions in particular–because they do not have a need for it:

> I don't think that it makes sense for us to give a small state pension to some of the richest people in Denmark. That is, if they have all these millions at the bottom of the savings trunk, then I would think that they couldn't care less about what they get (DK-YO-1).

However, as a counterargument, some participants claimed that it is unfair to exclude the wealthy, either because they have paid (often proportionally high) taxes and therefore deserve something back from the welfare state (reciprocity), or simply because they are residents/citizens of Denmark and should therefore be entitled to all welfare rights (equality/universalism). For example, when asked whether rich people should be granted a retirement pension, one of the respondents claimed that they should not because they are not needy, but another respondent disagreed, because he felt they have paid high taxes and should not be discriminated against:

> I think it should be considered. I know what people say. We all served this country and so forth, but I still think from each according to his ability to each according to his need (DK-OL-7).

> I can completely understand your argument about having a high income, but at the same time, as you say [points to another participant], people pay taxes their entire lives and you still pay high taxes when you have a high income, even once you've retired. They pay lots of money. So I can completely understand, when you say, we can get rid of them. But you can't just do that (DK-OL-6).

Also, when asked to rank the different vignettes, the Danish participants applied the three different rationales of need, reciprocity and equality/universalism, instead of following one guiding principle. Despite the explicit instructions of the researchers to rank the vignettes in terms of their welfare deservingness, many Danish respondents initially refused to do so, as 'in a welfare state, everybody deserves to get help' (DK-WC-4), and thus, 'it is very un-welfare-state-like to rank them like this' (DK-YO-3). After further prompting and discussion, two competing rank order justifications emerged. Some suggested that the ranking should perhaps be based on what one has contributed to society. However, most Danish respondents felt uneasy about the idea of distributing welfare resources in proportion to past contributions, and ultimately decided to rank according to the need criterion. The struggle between these two deservingness criteria is exemplified by a respondent's reaction to the statement that the vignettes 'should be ranked according to who has contributed the most' (DK-MC-5): 'The whole point of a welfare state is that you don't have to deserve something, because you have contributed. You should deserve something because you need it' (DK-MC-1).

With regard to the *need* criterion, the Danish participants seemed to share a basic belief that no resident of Denmark ought to be poor, and therefore all sorts of welfare benefits (e.g., housing benefits, pensions and social assistance) should be provided in order to prevent poverty. As

having children in particular was considered to be very expensive by most, it was deemed necessary for families with children to receive support from the welfare state. Single parents, whose financial resources are perceived to be low, were in particular considered as being entitled to more favourable welfare entitlements, such as cheaper childcare and higher rates of child allowances. This is reflected in the common desire among the Danish participants to grade child benefits according to claimants' household income: the higher the income, the lower the benefit. Some participants also argued that rich people ought to be excluded altogether from child allowances and, albeit to a lesser extent, pensions. In practice, cutting off people whose earnings exceed a certain maximum level would imply the implementation of a means test. However, the Danish respondents hardly ever explicitly recommended means testing as being a suitable policy instrument. In addition to financial needs, adverse health was mentioned as a reason why (mostly older) people ought to be entitled to care services:

> I think that something like home help, we shouldn't be slack with this. I think one should take it pretty seriously if people have something, often physical, which means that they cannot manage certain things–either domestic chores or in regard to taking care of themselves–then I really think that they must get support with that (DK-WC-4).

In the Danish discussions, the criterion of *control* revolved mainly around personal responsibility for being unemployed, but was mostly used as an argument for granting instead of withholding welfare benefits and services. Out of a basic belief that people are truly willing to work but are often not able to because of scarce job opportunities or bad health, most Danish respondents opted for the second of two scenarios described by one of the respondents:

> I feel like there are two scenarios. One of them is that he [the unemployed vignette] wants to be unemployed and doesn't feel like working, in which case I still think he should be entitled to benefit, but that it should be low and he should be activated into looking for work just as happens today. If he is not unemployed through choice, then I think that he should be supported and be entitled to a higher rate of benefit than those, for example, who don't feel like working (DK-WC-3).

The criterion of *reciprocity* was primarily used as a justification for distributing welfare resources to pensioners (for having worked for many years) and to well-off citizens (for having paid large amounts of taxes). Depending on the timing of contributions, reciprocity was also used to either grant welfare entitlements to immigrants, or to withhold them from this group. If judgements were made on the basis of past contributions to Danish society, the general tendency was to deny immigrants access to benefits and services. When the focus shifted instead to potential contributions in the future, immigrants were considered to be much more deserving of social welfare. Such considerations of past and future reciprocity are exemplified in the following statement:

> I find it hard to see how someone from Poland has earned anything for the Danish society. […] I think you have to earn something before you can benefit from it. Or at least benefit and then earn. […] I think that immigrants should also get something out of the welfare state, because that person will come to benefit later on, which is why it is also fair enough that such a person gets student benefits, because that person will most likely remain in Denmark and thus work and pay taxes here. So I think it should be like that (DK-YO-5).

Closely linked to, but somewhat different from the criterion of future reciprocity, is the context-related criterion of *social investment*. Although both follow a return-on-investment reasoning, the reciprocity argument is about granting benefits and services to people because they, as individuals, are anticipated to pay back society in terms of tax contributions. The social investment argument involves the allocation of welfare resources so that people can become fully participating citizens, which in the long run will benefit society as a whole. To achieve the much-desired goal of a better society, spending on education and training (for all, but for unemployed and lower-educated people in particular), and child-related benefits and services was strongly promoted.

> I think that society will be making a huge mistake if it seriously starts setting limits on higher education. We talk constantly about getting better qualified because it is so hard to find a qualified workforce and all that. I think that precisely here it would be a really good investment for society to reach, if it was necessary in some cases, and give two extra student grants or whatever was needed for people to advance towards the dream they have and get a higher education (DK-WC-5).

The criterion of *equality/universalism* was reflected in the widespread agreement that access to welfare services–healthcare, nursery care, and education in particular–should be equal and universal, as these services are 'part of the package when you live in Denmark' (DK-WC-1). The following statement, which was endorsed by most respondents in the FG, points to the tacit agreement that the universality of such welfare services is perhaps even non-negotiable:

> When you [refers the moderator] say service, we haven't at any point talked about equal access and free access to hospitals and doctors. Because it's implicit. That's not what's meant in any of the questions, right? (DK-OL-3).

Furthermore, equality/universalism was used as an argument to justify why the rich should also be included in the Danish welfare system, and why immigrants ought to have the right to welfare benefits and services:

> It's not OK to treat people differently, I think. If we have a person who has come to our country, who we call an immigrant and who doesn't have a job, then they should have the same possibility to receive financial help, and that is missing, I think (DK-OL-4).

The Danish participants also applied the context-related criterion of *cost awareness*, which appeared in two different forms. First, some respondents justified welfare retrenchment (e.g., of retirement pensions or dental care) out of a belief that the welfare state project is increasingly becoming unaffordable. Second, cost awareness served as an argument against means testing, as the administrative costs necessary to operate the means test was estimated to be higher than the potential gains.

6.4.4 Cross-national comparisons

In this section, we briefly discuss some of the most striking cross-country differences and similarities (see Table 6.1 for a summary). The first common trend is that the FG participants made explicit references to the deservingness criteria of control, reciprocity and need; but not to attitude and identity. The control criterion was used primarily with reference to work status: those who were considered personally responsible for being jobless were granted less generous welfare provision compared with those perceived to be victims of circumstance. Only in the UK, control was also related to health status: some of the British participants felt that the welfare state should give less to those with unhealthy lifestyles. The reciprocity criterion was conceived in two ways: firstly, as contributions made in the past, and secondly, as contributions to be made in the future. Past reciprocity featured more frequently than future reciprocity, however, especially in the UK, where the future aspect was largely overlooked. The criterion of need was first and foremost interpreted as financial, but also as health need, except in Germany, where the latter was seldom alluded to. A second cross-national similarity is that the FG participants applied a number of alternative context-related criteria alongside the deservingness criteria; most notably the criterion of universalism/equality. In Denmark and the UK, the majority of participants argued for universal and equal access to welfare services, healthcare in particular. In Germany, however, equal old-age pensions seemed to be the main concern for some, especially in the elderly FG. The cost awareness criterion was used in a fairly similar fashion across the three countries, but only played a marginal role in each of them. The only notable country-specific deviation in this regard is that the German participants did not discuss the administrative cost of means testing. The social investment criterion, which refers to the provision of social welfare to individuals because that will benefit society as a whole, was unique to the Danish debates.

Table 6.1 The relative importance of the normative criteria in the different welfare regimes

	United Kingdom	Germany	Denmark
Deservingness criteria			
control	++	++	++
attitude	0	0	0
reciprocity	+	+++	++
past	+	+++	++
future	0	++	+
identity	0	0	0
need	+++	++	++
financial	+++	++	++
health	+	0	+
Context-related criteria			
equality/universalism	++	++	+++
cost awareness	+	+	+
social investment	0	0	+

Note: 0=not important; +++=most important.

The most striking cross-country difference relates to the relative importance of the various normative criteria. In the UK, financial need stands out as the most frequently used and most decisive normative criterion behind popular welfare preferences. In Germany, it is clearly the criterion of (past) reciprocity. Only for Denmark is it difficult to single out one criterion as the most dominant. Instead, the Danish discussions encompass a mix of the criteria of need, reciprocity,

and equality/universalism. These results can be interpreted in light of Esping-Andersen's (1990) welfare regime typology (see also Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002), which since its inception three decades ago has been highly influential in comparative welfare state research. The typology identified three qualitatively different welfare state ideal-types as a critique to the then prevailing dominant way of understanding welfare state variation as differences in degree of social spending or 'welfare effort' (see e.g., Wilensky, 1975). In Esping-Andersen's view, the 'liberal' regime type (present mostly in Anglophone countries, for example the UK) is characterized by a focus on means-tested welfare provision, based on liberal conceptions of limited state influence and citizen's personal responsibilities. In this conception, the state mostly takes responsibility for people in poverty only. The 'corporatist-conservative' regime type (typical for continental European countries, for example Germany) is characterized by a focus on collective, contributory social insurances (with wage-related and contribution-related benefits) to provide for a range of social risks of (male) workers, whether poor or not. Responsibility for their welfare is shared between state and social partners (notably employers' organizations and trade unions). The 'social-democratic' regime type (typical for Scandinavian countries, for example Denmark) provides a broad range of (mainly tax-financed) social benefits and social services for citizens generally (not only for the poor or workers), with the objective of universally guaranteeing an equally high standard of living and well-being for all. In social-democratic Scandinavia, equality is thus a guiding principle in welfare rationing.

Against this background, in our view the dominance of the need criterion in the UK FG discussions might reflect the relatively strong reliance on means-tested social assistance benefits found in the Anglophone liberal world of welfare. Likewise, the dominance of the 'past reciprocity' criterion in Germany might epitomize the insurance-based character of corporative-conservative regimes, in which workers pay social contributions to insure themselves against possible future risks. The typical expectation that the criterion of equality/universalism is most strongly embedded–and thus supported–in the Scandinavian, social-democratic world of welfare, however, is not fully supported by the data. One possible explanation is that the policy emphasis on universalism has declined considerably in Denmark over recent decades (Béland, Blomqvist, Andersen, Palme, & Waddan, 2014; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). The Danish pension system, for one, is much less universal today than it was in the 1980s, when Esping-Andersen (1990) constructed his regime typology (Kangas, Lundberg, & Ploug, 2010), while more generally in Denmark the scope of need-based assistance and reciprocity-based insurance has grown over the years (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). Conversely, in Germany and the UK, the predominance of the respective criteria of reciprocity and need has largely been preserved in the institutional design of welfare provision, with the exception mainly of the German unemployment benefit system, which has become more means-tested after the Hartz IV reforms (Clasen, 2011; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002).

Even though the Danish reluctance to rank the different vignettes may be interpreted as an indirect, albeit rather weak, expression of a Nordic 'passion for equality' (Graubard, 1986), most Danish participants routinely discriminated on the basis of individual need, contributions, and responsibility. Thus, there seems little evidence for the claim that deservingness discussions are more or less irrelevant in the Scandinavian systems of 'Rolls-Royce universalism' (Larsen, 2006; Rothstein, 1998). It must be noted, however, that the Danish participants primarily applied the deservingness criteria to justify why benefits and services should be *granted*, instead of why they

should be *denied*. This finding seems to suggest that the Danish participants, more than their UK and German counterparts, have an overall inclusionary perspective on social rights and take them for granted. This is in line with previous survey research suggesting that popular welfare attitudes, and deservingness opinions in particular, are generally more positive in Denmark than they are in Germany and the UK (Larsen, 2006). Overall therefore, there does seem to be–as Larsen (2006) suggests–some kind of 'institutional logic' to popular welfare attitudes (see also Taylor-Gooby, Hvinden, Mau, Leruth, Schoyen, & Gyory, 2019). Normative institutionalists, on the one hand, would argue that this is because citizens learn, through life-long socialization, to adapt their normative beliefs to the norms entrenched in the institutions (i.e., welfare regimes) they live under (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Mau, 2003; Rothstein, 1998). On the other hand, popular beliefs could also be a driving force behind welfare state development, especially in democracies where political actors have strong electoral incentives to take the wishes of the general public into consideration (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Page & Shapiro, 1983). A more likely scenario therefore is one of continuous covariation, in which public policy and public opinion constantly reinforce one another (see Figure 1.1).

6.5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we have identified two major gaps in the welfare deservingness framework that are thought to impede its further development. The first is that the deductive nature of prior research in the deservingness field makes it difficult to tell to what extent people actually apply the five deservingness criteria that scholars have derived from existing literature. Perhaps people only use some of the CARIN criteria (van Oorschot et al., 2017), or apply other criteria that are not yet recognized in deservingness literature. The second gap is that we know relatively little about what concrete meaning these abstract criteria of deservingness have to people. What substance do people give to the criteria when deciding who should get what from the welfare state? Qualitative research, in which citizens are invited to freely discuss and motivate their deservingness opinions, offers a way forward in addressing these gaps. This could enhance our understanding of people's use of deservingness criteria, and ultimately, of the relationship between welfare deservingness and public support for social welfare. To that purpose, we analysed data from FGs conducted in three different welfare regimes–Denmark, Germany and the UK–in which the participants discussed and ranked six different vignettes in terms of their welfare deservingness. Our main conclusion resulting from these analyses is fourfold.

First, when openly discussing matters of welfare distribution with their peers, the FG participants made explicit reference to the deservingness criteria of control, reciprocity and need, but not to the criteria of attitude and identity. This is somewhat surprising, given that previous quantitative studies suggest that the deservingness dimensions of attitude (see Chapter 5) and identity (Kootstra, 2016) are important determinants of popular welfare preferences. Therefore, we would advise caution with regard to prematurely concluding that attitude and identity simply do not matter when welfare deservingness is being judged. As for identity, it could be that the degree of openness inherent to the FG design yields a particular social desirability bias that prevents participants from articulating arguments concerning identity considerations. The attitude criterion, instead, might suffer from the problem of entailing everything and nothing at the same time. On

the one hand, attitude is 'everything', because it is an all-encompassing concept covering a multitude of different types of law-abiding and norm-conforming behaviour (e.g., gratitude, docility, compliance, honesty, pleasantness). On the other hand, attitude is also 'nothing', because its broadness implies that it is less distinct from the other deservingness criteria. On a more general level, one could thus argue that attitude and identity are criteria that under certain conditions may *tacitly* shape welfare preferences, and they might surface more easily in the context of survey-based studies, for which social desirability bias is less of a problem than in FGs. We leave it up to future research to explore when (and why) deservingness criteria are used explicitly, and when (and why) they operate tacitly.

Second, our analyses provide deeper insight into the specific substance people give to the different deservingness criteria, and are therefore particularly informative for scholars who want to improve the operationalization of those criteria in future survey research. Despite its weaknesses, survey methodology still has plenty of strengths, such as the generalizability to broader populations, and remains highly relevant for studying welfare deservingness. With regard to the criterion of reciprocity, a distinction can be made between two different interpretations. On the one hand, reciprocity was thought of by FG participants as contributions made in the *past*. On the other hand, reciprocity was often understood as potential contributions in the *future*. This distinction between past and future reciprocity is particularly relevant for the category of immigrants, whose perceived deservingness is dependent on the time perspective of choice. People who conceived reciprocity as past contributions were more likely to suggest excluding immigrants from the welfare system, but those who stressed the future aspect of reciprocity seemed more inclined to grant them access because of the potential contributions they were expected to make as tax-paying workers. Thus, when studying popular attitudes towards immigrants' welfare deservingness in survey research for example, it seems crucial to take both types of reciprocity into account as explanatory factors. In a similar vein, need was interpreted in two distinct ways. First and foremost, the FG participants discussed the *financial* needs of the vignettes in terms of revenue (e.g., household income) and expenditure (e.g., rent). Though far less frequent, need was at the same time also interpreted as pertaining to the *health* needs of the vignettes. However, health needs might possibly have played a more prominent role if we had included a disability vignette, which was unfortunately not available in the chosen list (but see Gollust & Lynch, 2011; Jensen & Petersen, 2017; van Der Aa et al., 2018). The control criterion was mainly framed as the personal responsibility people have over their *work status* (i.e., are you to blame for being unemployed?), but was also–at least in the UK–related to *health status* (i.e., are you to blame for being in bad health?).

Third, we found that the FG participants also applied three alternative normative criteria: equality/universalism, cost awareness, and social investment. What sets these 'context-related' criteria apart from the deservingness framework is that they are not related to the characteristics of welfare targets (i.e., their needs, contributions and personal responsibility), but to characteristics of the broader welfare system or even of society in general. The criterion of equality/universalism refers to the practice of making benefits and services unconditional and equal for all, and was mostly mentioned in relation to healthcare. Cost awareness arguments reflect concerns about matters such as the affordability of the welfare state and the administrative cost of means testing. The social investment argument, found only in Denmark, denotes the idea

that the welfare state should invest in people through benefits and services so that society as a whole will thrive. It is important to note that the social investment perspective is different from what we term 'future reciprocity', as the latter concerns giving social welfare to people on the condition that they, as individuals, pay back that support at a later point in time through work and (payroll) taxes.

Fourth, our analyses suggest the existence of–to put it in the words of Larsen (2006)–an 'institutional logic' to welfare preferences. In discussing issues of fair welfare distribution, the British, Danish, and German FG participants appeared to echo the normative criteria that are most strongly embedded in the institutional structure of their respective welfare regimes (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1990). In the liberal UK, there was widespread, sometimes tacit, agreement among the FG participants that welfare resources ought to be allocated according to individual–mainly financial–need. In corporatist-conservative Germany, with its emphasis on contributory social insurance, reciprocity stood out as the preferred distributive rule among the FG participants. Based on the idea that people should get out what they have paid into the social security system, the distribution of welfare resources was considered fair if it was more or less proportional to the amount of contributions people had made in the past, or alternatively, were expected to make in the future. In social-democratic Denmark, it proved impossible to single out one dominant normative criterion guiding the discussions. Instead, the Danish participants seemed torn between the criteria of need, reciprocity and equality/universalism. It must be noted, however, that our analyses do not constitute a hard test of the regime argument, as we did not study representative cross-sections of the population. Instead, our more-modest contribution is to show how the normative criteria used by a selected group of citizens discussing welfare distribution relate to the criteria embedded in the welfare regimes they live under.

Our results also relate to the broader and ongoing scholarly debate about the relative importance of different deservingness criteria (see Chapter 2). Previous quantitative studies comparing the relative weight of the CARIN criteria often singled out one particular criterion as the most important, but they tend to point in different directions (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). While most pinpoint personal control as being the most crucial deservingness dimension (Appelbaum, 2001; van Oorschot, 2000; Will, 1993), some suggest it to be attitude (see Chapter 5), reciprocity (Mau, 2003; Petersen, 2012), identity (Gilens, 1999; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2019), or need (Groskind, 1991, 1994). Our findings bring more nuance to the debate, by suggesting that the importance people attach to deservingness criteria depends to some extent on the institutional welfare regime context in which they live (see also Larsen, 2006). Thus, when deciding who should get what from the welfare state, it not only matters who is judging (e.g., liberals or conservatives; Jeene et al., 2013) and who or what is being judged (e.g., unemployment benefits or healthcare; Jensen & Petersen, 2017), but also when and where the judgments are made (e.g., liberal, conservative, or universal welfare regimes; Larsen, 2006). Future studies should explore the context sensitivity of deservingness valuations further, by scrutinizing in greater detail how they are linked to country-specific policy trajectories (Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017), meso-level welfare schemes instead of macro-level welfare regimes (see Chapter 7), and to alternative contextual factors such as the state of the economy (Jeene et al., 2014).

7 DO INSTITUTIONS MATTER? THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN INCOME BENEFIT DESIGN, POPULAR PERCEPTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

TIJS LAENEN

People's emphasis on deservingness criteria appears to be in accordance with the normative principles embodied in income benefit schemes.

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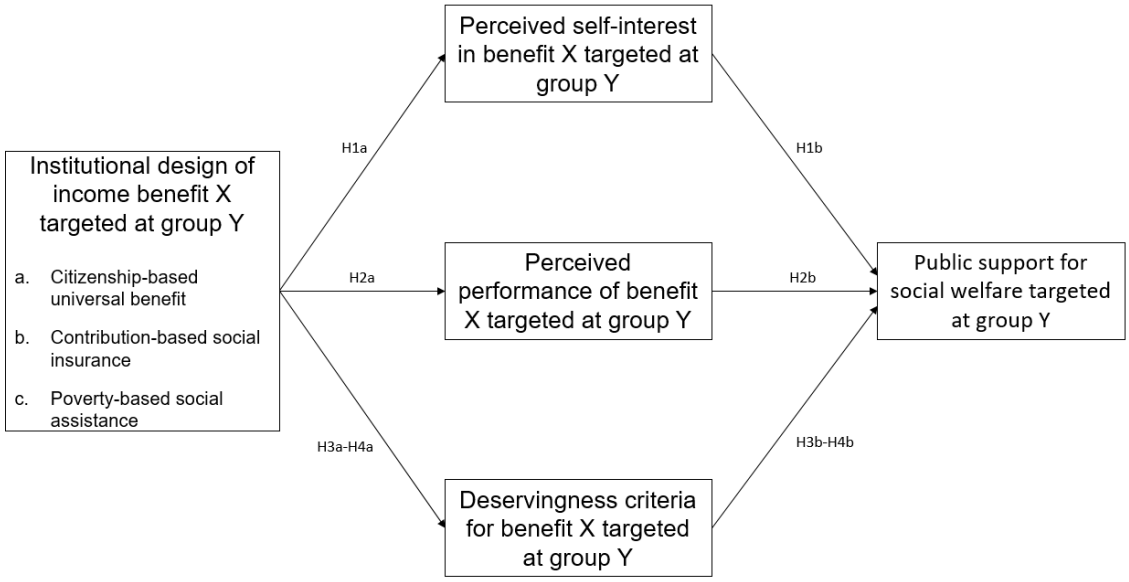
7.1 INTRODUCTION

The idea of a close connection between welfare institutions and welfare attitudes is well-entrenched and well-researched in welfare state literature. However, two important lacunae remain present. The first is that existing empirical research struggles to discern a clear-cut institutional embeddedness of welfare opinions (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Gelissen, 2001; Svallfors, 2003). One possible argument for this apparent non-relationship is that the bird's-eye view of the dominant welfare regime approach (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999) is simply not up to the task. Regime theorists have traditionally set out to 'understand the big picture' and not to 'dwell on the detailed characteristics of the various social programs' (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 2). As a result, the large institutional heterogeneity within national welfare systems has often been neglected (Boldersen & Mabett, 1995; Forma, 1997). Most real-world welfare states encompass a mixture of different types of income benefit schemes, and possibly individual attitudes correlate more strongly with the meso-level schemes that are part of people's daily life than with macro-level regimes that exist mainly as theoretical constructs in academic writings (Jordan, 2010, 2013). A second lacuna is that the precise explanatory mechanisms connecting macro-level (or meso-level) institutions to micro-level attitudes remain underexplored (Larsen, 2006; Raven, 2012). This chapter aims to improve our understanding of the institutions-attitudes nexus by addressing both lacunae in a theoretical model, which postulates that the link between the institutional design of an income benefit and its public support is mediated by three types of popular perceptions. In doing so, the chapter contributes to the literature in two ways. First, it places income benefits instead of welfare regimes at the core of its analytical framework. Second, it attempts to open the 'black box' between welfare institutions and welfare attitudes.

The theoretical model is displayed in Figure 7.1, which serves as a blueprint of the chapter. As shown in the left-hand side of the figure, the model distinguishes three possible institutional designs a particular income benefit scheme may have. These designs correspond to the three major ideal-typical social security constellations found in present-day Europe: citizenship-based universal benefits, contribution-based social insurance, and poverty-based social assistance (Clasen, 1997; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Kvist & Ploug, 1996). The model continues with the assumption that the programmatic structure of a benefit scheme has an impact on popular perceptions surrounding that scheme; that is, on the subjective evaluations made by a citizen, which may or may not concur with objective conditions. Previous work suggests three types of popular perceptions are of particular relevance: self-interest, programme performance, and welfare deservingness (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). The first concerns the personal stake citizens perceive they have in an income benefit scheme. How beneficial do they think a programme is to them? The second type refers to people's evaluations of a scheme's performance. How complex, costly, effective, efficient and fair is the implementation of a welfare policy considered to be? The third type relates to people's perceptions of welfare deservingness. Which deservingness criteria should matter in determining who gets what from a welfare scheme? These popular perceptions, in turn, influence public support for targeted welfare, which is operationalized here as the degree to which the general public feels that the government ought to be responsible for allocating welfare resources to a specific target group (Ringen, 1987; Roller, 1995; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017).

Figure 7.1 Conceptual model: the interplay between benefit design, popular perceptions and support for social welfare



The chapter comprises four sections. In the first, the theoretical model is specified further and applied to three income benefit schemes in the Dutch context. This leads us to specific hypotheses about (a) how the particular institutional design of Dutch income benefit X targeted at group Y is associated with the popular perceptions concerning benefit X, and (b) how these perceptions, in turn, influence the degree of public support for social welfare targeted at group Y. The second section explains the methodological choices made in order to test these hypotheses. To unravel the interplay between benefit design, popular perceptions and welfare support, data from the 2006 Dutch Welfare Opinions Survey is used. The third section reports the results of descriptive and regression analyses. The final section concludes and identifies some shortcomings and suggestions for future research.

7.2 THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

7.2.1 The Dutch income benefits system

The Dutch income benefits system consists of three pillars that each represent one of the three often distinguished ideal-typical benefits of contribution-based social insurance, citizenship-based universal benefits and poverty-based social assistance (Clasen, 1997; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). Although there have been several rounds of welfare state transformations since the 1980s in the Netherlands (van Oorschot, 2006b; Raven, 2012; Yerkes, 2011), its three-pillar income benefits system has remained intact, and the basic institutional structure of the three income benefits under examination has not undergone major change.[1] The first pillar comprises income benefits that are organized by way of contribution-based workers' insurance that covers the risks of unemployment, disability and short-term illness. In the case of unemployment, for instance, those who have contributed sufficiently to the mandatory insurance system through paid work are, regardless of their actual needs, entitled to receive financial compensation from

unemployment insurance. To gain access to this Bismarckian type of social insurance, claimants are required to prove a certain minimum number of working days during the period preceding their claim. The benefit level depends on previous work history and wages, with the simple rule of thumb being that higher contributions in terms of work record duration and wage level give rise to higher benefits, within the limits of pre-determined minima and maxima. The insurance contributions are a fixed percentage of wages, so that a higher absolute amount is paid when the wage is higher. The second pillar contains universal, citizenship-based people's insurances that aim to provide an income to all Dutch citizens for social contingencies such as old age or having children. The Dutch state AOW pension scheme (*Algemene Ouderdomswet*), for example, is a mandatory, contributory programme covering all inhabitants of the Netherlands, irrespective of their actual needs or work history. The benefit level depends on the years of residence, with each year rendering 2 per cent of a basic flat-rate pension, meaning that a person who has been a Dutch citizen for at least 50 years will receive 100 per cent of the flat rate maximum pension level.[2] Contributions are paid as a percentage of taxed income from work and all other sources. One could also argue that the Dutch citizens' pension is a Beveridgean type of social insurance, since it is financed from contributions. However, in our view the Dutch people's pension is closer to the ideal-typical universal, citizenship-based type of benefit, given that it targets all citizens instead of only workers, and having paid any contributions is not a pre-requisite for benefit receipt. The third and final pillar is a non-contributory, poverty-based social assistance scheme that functions as a residual safety net to guarantee no Dutch citizen falls below the pre-defined subsistence level. Dutch social assistance is highly selective, in that means testing is employed to restrict benefit access to those who can demonstrate financial distress. Social assistance is funded by general taxes and the maximum benefit level is equal to the minimum wage.

7.2.2 The interplay between income benefit design, popular perceptions and welfare state support

Existing literature distinguishes three theoretical rationales that connect welfare institutions with welfare support (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017), from which we have deduced the three types of mediating popular perceptions used in our theoretical model. The first rationale, stemming from rational institutionalism, is that institutions matter because they influence citizens' perceived *self-interest* in and thus support for social welfare (Blomberg & Kroll, 1999; Pierson, 1994, 2001; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Accordingly, the most popular welfare arrangements are simply those that bring the greatest good to the greatest number. The second rationale holds that the social legitimacy of a welfare policy is linked to its perceived *performance*. Better functioning social policies (on crucial dimensions such as efficiency or fairness), it is argued, are also perceived to perform better by the citizenry, and thus yield higher levels of popular acceptance (Blomberg & Kroll, 1999; Rothstein, 1998; Svallfors, 2013; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). The third rationale, inspired by normative institutionalism, is that institutions also embody certain rules and norms to which citizens adapt their moral beliefs and policy preferences (Mau, 2004; Rothstein, 1998). This normative approach to welfare state legitimacy is perhaps most prominently advanced by Larsen (2006), who claims that institutional characteristics of welfare policies (such as the degree of universality) are linked to public discussions and popular perceptions of the *welfare deservingness* of benefit recipients, which in turn, adversely affect popular commitment to welfare provision.

Most existing literature concerning the institutions-attitudes nexus primarily contrasts citizenship-based universal policies with poverty-based selective policies, on the dimensions of self-interest, programme performance, and welfare deservingness, thereby leaving contribution-based workers' insurance more or less out of the analytical picture. There seems to be relatively large scholarly agreement with the hypothesis that citizenship-based universal income benefits have higher levels of public support than poverty-based selective benefits. However, the theoretical arguments underlying this thesis differ markedly. The 'interest-related' argument is that universal policies are, in contrast with more-selective ones, targeted at larger segments of the population, and citizens–especially the middle classes–believe they are more likely to benefit from and thus support universal policies (Blomberg & Kroll, 1999; Forma, 1997; Goodin & Le Grand, 1987; Kangas, 1995; Korpi & Palme, 1998; Sachweh et al., 2007). Contribution-based social insurance might take a middle position on the dimension of perceived self-interest because its welfare clientele group–consisting of the insured working population (and occasionally spouses and/or children)–is commonly larger than that of poverty-based policies yet smaller than that of citizenship-based policies. Applied to the Dutch context, the expectation is that:

> H1a: Citizens' perceived self-interest is highest regarding the people's pension, lowest regarding the social assistance scheme, and in between regarding workers' unemployment insurance.

In line with mainstream literature about welfare attitudes (Gelissen, 2001b; Jaeger, 2006b), we also assume that perceived self-interest has a positive effect on people's support for welfare provision, regardless of the target group under consideration:

> H1b: The higher citizens' perceived self-interest in an income benefit scheme, the more strongly they will support the allocation of social welfare to its target group.

The 'performance-related' argument claims that highly selective policies are, particularly in the case of means testing, administratively more complex, more costly and more susceptible to benefit fraud than highly universal policies, because they simply have 'more (eligibility) rules to break'. Consequently, citizens might also believe that poverty-based benefit schemes perform worse than citizenship-based universal benefit schemes, which would therefore make them less popular among the public (Roosma, van Oorschot, & Gelissen, 2014a, 2016; Rothstein, 1998, 2001). Contribution-based social insurance often has similarly complex administrative rules to determine who is entitled to what (Boldersen & Mabett, 1995). It may thus be the case that it is perceived to be as dysfunctional as poverty-based benefits. Nevertheless, the expectation for the Dutch welfare setting is that:

> H2a: Citizens perceive the people's pension to perform better (in terms of complexity, efficiency, effectivity, fairness and societal cost) than workers' unemployment insurance, which in turn, is perceived to perform better than the social assistance scheme.

In line with Rothstein's (1998) suggestion that in order for welfare policy to be legitimate, people must perceive the implementation of that policy to be cheap, fair, simple, efficient and effective, we anticipate that:

> H2b: The better an income benefit scheme is perceived to perform by citizens (in terms of its complexity, efficiency, effectivity, fairness and societal cost), the more they will support the allocation of social welfare to its target group.

The 'deservingness-related' argument builds on the theory of welfare deservingness, which suggests that people's welfare preferences are informed by five crucial deservingness criteria, the CARIN criteria (see Chapter 2). Unfortunately, data limitations restrict our hypotheses and analyses to the criteria of reciprocity and need. According to Larsen (2006), universal policies have higher levels of public support because they supposedly blur the line between 'us'–the better-off benefactors–and 'them'–the poor beneficiaries–(Rothstein, 1998), thereby making discussions about welfare deservingness more or less irrelevant to the general public. Poverty-based selective policies, on the other hand, must assess, among other things, whether benefit claimants are 'poor enough' to be eligible and whether they do not have themselves to blame for their predicament. Although Larsen (2006: 9) suggests that the built-in insurance mechanism of contribution-based social insurance might 'suppress the deservingness discussion even more than a universal programmatic structure' (see also Goldschmidt, 2015), its contributory nature may place the criterion of reciprocity at the heart of public deservingness debates (Reeskens & van der Meer, 2017). After all, social insurance schemes are organized in such a way that only those who have made contributions to the system are entitled to receive benefits from it. Accordingly, when deciding who should get what from the Dutch workers' unemployment insurance, claimants' prior work history and paid insurance premiums are presumably important considerations in the mind of the citizen. In Dutch social assistance, by contrast, the criterion of need might be stressed most by citizens, as the programme is targeted at members of the population who fall below the agreed-upon subsistence level. The universal nature of the Dutch pension system might close all discussions on recipients' fulfilment of the deservingness criteria (Larsen, 2006), which implies that citizens do not emphasize any criteria in expressing their opinions on pensions. However, as the Dutch state pension is also contributory, the criterion of reciprocity might nonetheless find some resonance among the public. Based on the idea that citizens echo the normative principles embedded within the institutional design of a benefit scheme, we expect that:

> H3a: The reciprocity criterion is emphasized most by citizens with regard to workers' unemployment insurance, least with regard to the social assistance scheme, and somewhere in between with regard to the people's pension.

> H4a: The need criterion is emphasized more strongly by citizens regarding the social assistance scheme than the people's pension and workers' unemployment insurance.

Implicit in Larsen's (2006) institutional line of reasoning is the notion that deservingness opinions are negatively related to public support for social welfare, as more intensive public deservingness discussions are claimed to foster lower levels of welfare state legitimacy. This assumption suggests that:

H3b: The more strongly a person feels that an income benefit scheme should be organized according to the criterion of reciprocity, the more (s)he oppose the allocation of social welfare to its target group.

H4b: The more strongly a person feels that an income benefit scheme should be organized according to the criterion of need, the more (s)he oppose the allocation of social welfare to its target group.

7.3 DATA AND METHODS

7.3.1 Data: the Dutch

We used data from the Dutch Welfare Opinions Survey in order to test the theoretical hypotheses. This is a large-scale online survey administered in 2006 by CentERdata (n=1972, participation rate=73 per cent). The survey is exceptionally fruitful for the current research, because it operationalizes people's support for the allocation of welfare to the three policy target groups under consideration, as well as popular perceptions of self-interest, programme performance and deservingness for each benefit scheme separately. An overview of the different constructs, their question wordings and the matching response scales is given in Appendix 7.1. As a comparison with national demographic statistics showed that older people, higher income groups and the higher educated are slightly overrepresented in the sample, a weighting procedure was applied to correct for this.

7.3.2 Dependent variables: target-specific welfare support

The three dependent variables, measuring public support for welfare allocation to different policy target groups, are assessed by items asking to what extent respondents feel, on a scale from 0 to 10, that society should grant *pensioners/unemployed people/social assistance beneficiaries* the right to financial support, given that public funds are limited. A higher score for such an item means that the respondent is more in favour of welfare provision to the target group in question.

7.3.3 Independent variables: self-interest, programme performance and deservingness

Perceived self-interest in income benefit X is measured as respondents' self-predicted likelihood of ever personally receiving the benefit, ranging from an estimated probability of 0 to being currently in receipt of it. *The perceived performance* of benefit X is assessed by five variables that each measure a different component of programme performance.[3] Perceived benefit fraud (or effectiveness) is measured by asking respondents to estimate the prevalence of *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance benefits* being abused, using three response categories: (1) rarely, (2) sometimes and (3) often. The four remaining indicators of programme performance–complexity, efficiency, fairness and societal cost–are part of a series of items in which respondents are asked to rate, on a 5-point scale, how they feel about the current system of *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance benefits*. The response scale ranges from

'complicated' to 'simple' for complexity, from 'poor implementation' to 'strong implementation' for efficiency, from 'unfair' to 'fair' for fairness and from 'costly' to 'cheap' for societal cost.

With regard to *welfare deservingness*, we attempted to operationalize people's emphasis on the criteria of reciprocity and need. Unfortunately, the data lack items by which to measure the criteria of control, identity and attitude. For each benefit scheme, the deservingness criteria are treated as latent concepts measured by multiple manifest items (see Appendix 7.2 for details of the factor analysis). Higher scores indicate that respondents place a stronger emphasis on the particular deservingness criterion. People's emphasis on the reciprocity criterion is assessed by asking whether respondents feel that *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance benefits* should be higher (0=no, 1=yes) for those people who have, for example, (1) paid higher versus lower contributions, or (2) a longer versus a shorter work history before receiving the benefit. To determine people's emphasis on the need criterion, respondents are asked whether they feel *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance benefits* should be lower (0=no, 1=yes) for those people who have, for example, (1) a partner with income versus a partner without income, or (2) a large amount of savings versus little or no savings.

7.3.4 Data analysis

In the first part of the empirical analysis, the theoretical hypotheses concerning the link between income benefit design and popular perceptions are tested by using descriptive statistics. In the second part, three OLS regression models are estimated, in which public support for differently targeted social welfare is explained by popular perceptions. Due to relatively large item nonresponse, missing values were imputed prior to the regression analyses, using the expectation maximization algorithm available in the SPSS software package.[4] Although the results obtained from models applying the maximization procedure are almost identical to those obtained from models following more conventional methods such as listwise or pairwise deletion, the imputed models are presented because it has been shown that maximum likelihood procedures yield slightly more reliable estimates (Schafer & Graham, 2002). As a robustness check, models controlling for several relevant background variables–such as age, gender and income–were also estimated. The results from these models did not differ substantially from the results obtained from models without such controls.

7.4 RESULTS

In this section we empirically examine (a) to what extent popular perceptions of self-interest, programme performance, and welfare deservingness are related to the institutional design of differently organized benefit schemes, and (b) to what extent the social legitimacy of welfare allocation to the target groups of those schemes is shaped by popular perceptions. Dutch citizens appear to be stronger supporters of welfare provision to pensioners than to social assistance recipients and the unemployed. The mean scores of the items asking respondents to what extent society should grant these policy target groups the right to financial support are, on a scale from 0 to 10, respectively 7.16, 6.25 and 6.02. Public support for social welfare targeted at social assistance beneficiaries and the unemployed is thus more or less equal.

7.4.1 How are popular perceptions related to income benefit schemes with a different institutional design?

Table 7.1 shows that Dutch citizens' perceived self-interest is, as anticipated (H1a), highest for the universal people's pension, lowest for social assistance and moderate for workers' unemployment insurance, albeit that the difference between the latter two income benefit schemes is of a minimal magnitude. Although this finding seems to confirm the claim of rational institutionalism that the popularity of a benefit scheme depends on the size of its welfare clientele (Pierson, 1993, 2001), some might argue that the apparent relation between institutional design and perceptions of self-interest is in fact a spurious one in case of the pension scheme. It is possible that citizens' high(er) perceived personal stake in this scheme is not due to its universal character, but can instead simply be explained by the biological reality that every citizen is destined to grow old, but not to become unemployed or poor (Jensen & Petersen, 2017). However, it is highly likely that large segments of the Dutch population, especially the socioeconomically more affluent strata, would not deem the pension system to be beneficial to them if pensions were targeted only at the poor. In the presence of a poverty-based old-age assistance system, the level of perceived self-interest might be much lower than that of a citizenship-based people's pension or a contribution-based workers' pension (Kangas, 1995).

However, welfare institutions do not only convey to people what is in their best interest, but also shape how they are perceived to perform (Rothstein, 1998) and which deservingness criteria are prominent in public welfare discussions (Larsen, 2006). With regard to perceived programme performance, the general pattern seems to be that the pension system is judged to function better than unemployment insurance, which in turn, is deemed to perform marginally better than social assistance. While more than half of the respondents are convinced that benefit fraud rarely occurs in the pension system (57.9 per cent), only 6.6 per cent and 6.2 per cent respectively believe unemployment insurance and social assistance are virtually free of abuse. Furthermore, on average, Dutch citizens think that the pension scheme is more efficient, fairer and less complicated than unemployment insurance and social assistance. The average perceived efficiency and fairness of the unemployment scheme is slightly higher than that of social assistance, yet in terms of perceived complexity there is no substantial difference between the two benefit schemes. A notable exception to the general rule is the perceived societal cost, which is deemed to be more or less equally high for all three income benefits. This finding appears to run counter to the expectation that the pension system would be perceived to perform best. However, given that social expenditure on pensions is much larger than social spending on unemployment insurance and social assistance in the Netherlands (van Oorschot, 2006b), and that the ageing population is increasingly presented as threatening the financial sustainability of the Dutch welfare state in public discourse, it is actually quite surprising that the pension system is not perceived to be more costly to society than the other benefit schemes. Against this background, the data does seem to confirm the hypothesis that Dutch citizens think the pension system performs better than the unemployment scheme, which in turn, is perceived to function better than the social assistance programme (H2a*)*.

Table 7.1 Popular perceptions of self-interest in, performance of and deservingness criteria for differently organized income benefits

	Citizenship-based people's pension	Contribution-based social insurance	Poverty-based social assistance
Perceived self-interest			
Likelihood of receiving benefit X zero chance (1) - current receipt (7)	Mean(M)=5.13	M=2.70	M=2.54
Perceived programme performance			
Benefit fraud			
Rarely	57.9%	6.6%	6.2%
Sometimes	34.7%	47.7%	49.1%
Often	7.4%	45.7%	44.7%
Complexity complicated (1) – simple (5)	M=3.33	M=2.76	M=2.70
Efficiency inefficient (1) – efficient (5)	M=3.56	M=3.06	M=2.85
Fairness unfair (1) – fair (5)	M=3.69	M=3.28	M=3.08
Societal cost costly (1) – cheap (5)	M=2.48	M=2.52	M=2.47
Deservingness criteria			
Reciprocity not important (0) – important (1)	M=.41	M=.60	M=.29
e.g., Should the benefit be higher for those who have paid higher versus those who have paid lower insurance premiums or taxes?	37.7%	46.6%	17.8%
Need not important (0) – important (1)	M=.21	M=.32	M=.46
e.g., Should the benefit be lower for those who have a partner with income versus those who have a partner without income?	37.9%	59.3%	72.7%

Note: The values for the example items for the need and reciprocity criteria are the percentages of respondents agreeing with the statements.

Finally, the link between institutional design and welfare deservingness is examined. Table 7.1 shows that the criterion of reciprocity follows the hypothesized pattern in that it appears to be most strongly emphasized when citizens evaluate who should get what from workers' unemployment insurance, weakest when making deservingness judgements concerning the social assistance scheme and somewhere in between when considering welfare distribution in the people's pension system (H3a*)*. For example, whereas nearly half of the respondents agree that unemployment benefits should be higher if claimants have paid higher contributions, only about 18 per cent feel social assistance should be proportional to previously paid taxes.

Approximately 38 per cent of the respondents believe pensions should be higher for those who have paid a higher insurance premium. The observed pattern for the need criterion is also in line with expectations (H4a). Need is clearly stressed most strongly for the social assistance scheme, which is accordingly targeted at citizens below the poverty line. Illustrative of the popular preference for organizing social assistance along the lines of the need criterion is the relatively high percentage of respondents (72.7 per cent) agreeing with the statement that social assistance benefit should be lower for claimants who have a partner with income compared with those who have a partner without income. Furthermore, Dutch citizens feel that the criterion of need should play a more important role in unemployment insurance than in the pension system. For example, whereas about 38 per cent of the respondents think the pension should be lower for those who have additional means through their income-generating partner, nearly 60 per cent feel this should be the case for unemployment benefit.

7.4.2 Public support for social welfare explained by popular perceptions

Table 7.2 displays the results obtained from three OLS regression models explaining support for social welfare targeted at pensioners (model A),[5] the unemployed (model B) and social assistance beneficiaries (model C). Whereas the standardized slopes (in the third column) convey the relative explanatory strength of the independent variables within the models, the unstandardized coefficients allow for comparisons of the effect sizes of those predictors between the models. The first key observation is that in each model, the predicted likelihood of ever receiving a specific benefit appears to have a significant, positive impact on public support for welfare distribution to the target group of that benefit. The more likely people consider it to be that they will benefit from a programme, the more they support welfare allocation to its target group (H1b). However, a cross-model comparison of the slopes suggests that perceived self-interest seems to play a greater role in shaping citizens' opinions on welfare provision for the unemployed than it does in forging their attitudes towards social welfare for pensioners and social assistance recipients. When attention is paid to within-model comparisons, it becomes obvious that perceptions of self-interest are not the strongest predictors of public support for social welfare.[6]

The second main observation is that the analyses largely confirm the hypothesis that the better citizens believe a specific benefit is performing, the more strongly they support the distribution of public resources to the target group of that benefit (H2b). The perceived prevalence of benefit fraud is among the strongest predictors of public support for targeted welfare: those who believe that abuse occurs often are especially strong opponents of welfare provision. This effect does not differ much across the models, which indicates that perceived benefit fraud has an almost equally strong, negative effect on the social legitimacy of welfare allocation to pensioners, unemployed people and social assistance beneficiaries. Likewise, people who believe a welfare programme is efficiently organized, fair in practice and cheap for society are more likely to agree with high levels of welfare provision for its target group. The impact of perceived fairness, however, is relatively small compared with the effects of perceived efficiency and societal cost. One exception to the rule–for which we have no solid explanation yet–is that public support for social welfare does not increase but instead decreases when perceptions of programme complexity become more favourable. It seems that citizens who judge unemployment insurance and social assistance to be relatively simple, oppose welfare allocation to its target groups more strongly.

Table 7.2 OLS regressions explaining public support for social welfare

	Model A: Pensioners			Model B: Unemployed			Model C: Social assistance beneficiaries		
	B		β	B		β	B		β
Perceived self-interest									
Likelihood of receiving benefit X	.066	**	.061	.119	***	.099	.084	**	.059
Perceived programme performance									
Benefit fraud (0=rarely)									
Sometimes	-.294	**	-.076	-.261	*	-.073	-.046		-.012
Often	-.771	***	-.097	-.879	***	-.243	-.934	***	-.242
Complexity	.011		.006	-.261	***	-.127	-.361	***	-.153
Efficiency	-.008		-.004	.234	***	.112	.288	***	.122
Fairness	.129	**	.071	.119	*	.057	.095	*	.039
Societal cost	.186	***	.085	.280	***	.123	.346	***	.146
Deservingness criteria									
Reciprocity	-.028		-.014	-.217	**	-.079	-.450	***	-.156
Need	-.201	**	-.086	-.058		-.024	.003		.001
R^2	.041			.114			.177		

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

A final important point to note is that with the exception of the need criterion in the social assistance model, the effects of the deservingness criteria are consistently negative (confirming H3b-H4b). A higher emphasis on need or reciprocity appears to lower support for welfare distribution to pensioners, unemployed people and social assistance recipients. This finding lends empirical evidence to Larsen's (2006) implicit assumption that deservingness opinions have an adverse impact on people's commitment to social welfare. However, Table 7.2 also shows that not all (negative) effects of the deservingness criteria are equally strong and statistically significant. A promising interpretation is that the impact of a deservingness criterion might be contingent on how the public at large evaluates the relevant target group on that criterion. Unfavourable evaluations may weaken the (negative) effect, and favourable evaluations may strengthen it. For example, the negligible, positive effect of the need criterion on people's support for welfare distribution to social assistance beneficiaries is possibly due to the public's awareness that this target group consists of poor citizens with high financial needs (Raven, 2012; van

Oorschot, 2006a). Similarly, it is plausible that the reciprocity criterion is such a strong, negative predictor in the social assistance model because the target group of this benefit is perceived to comprise low-income citizens paying a minimal amount of taxes. (van Oorschot, 2006a).

7.5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter proposes a theoretical model that attempts to address two lacunae in existing welfare state literature concerning the institutions-attitudes nexus. By examining to what extent the link between income benefit design and welfare support is mediated by three types of popular perceptions, the present study (1) departs from the dominant yet perhaps inadequate welfare regime approach, and (2) explores some of the previously underexplored explanatory mechanisms that connect institutions to attitudes. The results show that perceptions of self-interest, programme performance and welfare deservingness are meaningfully related to the institutional set-up of three differently organized benefit schemes in the Netherlands. Citizens' self-predicted likelihood of ever receiving benefit is highest for citizenship-based people's pensions, modest for contribution-based workers' unemployment insurance and lowest for poverty-based social assistance. The pension system is also perceived to function considerably better than the other welfare programmes in terms of complexity, efficiency, effectivity and fairness. People's emphasis on deservingness criteria appears to be in accordance with the normative principles embodied in income benefit schemes. Whereas the reciprocity criterion is stressed most regarding workers' unemployment insurance, the need criterion is most important concerning the social assistance scheme. Furthermore, the three types of popular perceptions seem to affect support for welfare allocation to the target groups of the benefit schemes. The higher citizens' perceived self-interest in and perceived performance of a welfare programme, the more strongly they support the distribution of public resources to its target group. The more strongly a person emphasizes the criteria of reciprocity or need, the more (s)he opposes welfare provision.

Although these results may be confined to the particular Dutch case, the underlying theoretical model is certainly not. The Dutch welfare state is not, as sometimes suggested (Arts & Gelissen, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1999), some kind of exceptional, hybrid enigma, as the three major ideal-typical social security constellations are, albeit in different configurations, present in all European welfare states. Therefore, the theoretical model and general hypotheses presented in this chapter should be directly transferrable to any other European country. This does not imply, however, that the concrete empirical outcomes of the model are also the same across countries. The Netherlands has been used several times before as a test case in welfare attitudes research. Cross-national studies following up on such Dutch case studies generally conclude that the underlying theoretical mechanisms may be generalizable, but the empirical patterns found in the Netherlands seem to be somewhat closer to those in other Western and Northern European countries than to those in Eastern and Southern Europe (Roosma, Gelissen, & van Oorschot, 2013; van Oorschot, Reeskens, & Meuleman, 2012).

The results presented above are challenged by two major shortcomings in our research design. The first is that we were unable to separate the effects of institutional features from those of target group characteristics. For example, it is possible that the higher public support for social welfare targeted at pensioners is mainly due to the positive public image of the elderly (van Oorschot, 2006a) rather than being a product of the universal citizenship-based design of the Dutch state pension system. There are at least two ways in which future research might deal with such an intertwinement of income benefit schemes and their respective target groups. One possible avenue is to conduct similar studies in national contexts in which target groups are covered by multiple schemes with differing institutional set-ups. In many European countries, for example, the majority of the elderly are protected by a contribution-based workers' pension, yet those with insufficient contributions to the insurance fund, and a household income below the poverty threshold, are entitled to income support from a poverty-based social assistance scheme. Another option would be to apply the presented analytical framework in cross-national research designs. Comparative welfare state studies commonly examine the link between institutions and attitudes by clustering countries into regime dummy variables and subsequently testing to what extent citizens' opinions differ between these clusters. An alternative and perhaps more fruitful methodological strategy would be to group differently organized income benefits across countries, while holding the target group constant. Imagine, for example, a cross-national study examining the relationship between institutional design and public support for welfare distribution to the unemployed. Whereas a macro-level regime approach would presumably assign both Belgium and Germany to the corporatist cluster (Esping-Andersen, 1990), a meso-level benefit approach would separate the two countries, as the Hartz IV reforms have converted a considerable part of the German unemployment insurance into a poverty-based type of social provision (Goldschmidt, 2015) whereas the Belgian system remains more of a contribution-based type.

A second shortcoming pertains to the matter of causality. On the one hand, policy feedback scholars often claim that citizens adapt to whatever rational or normative incentives are embedded in institutions. On the other hand, policy responsiveness scholars argue against such institutional determinism by claiming that policy actors have good reasons to be responsive to the public's wishes (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Page & Shapiro, 1983). However, in the current study possibly the most plausible causal chain runs from institutions to opinions, as previous work has suggested that:

> In case of highly established and institutionalized policy areas such as unemployment schemes or old age pensions, public opinion will follow existing social policy designs. In case of policy areas where the social policy design has not yet been fully established, such as labour market activation, social policy designs will follow public opinion' (Raven et al., 2011: 375).

As the three Dutch benefit schemes under examination were all established well before the 1970s (unemployment insurance and the AOW pension in the 1950s, and social assistance in the 1960s), they clearly belong to the category of highly institutionalized policy areas. Despite this suggestion, this study's cross-sectional design is unable to discern causal relationships. As a result, only the tentative conclusion can be drawn that some popular attitudes appear to coincide with the institutional set-up of benefit schemes, in ways that are plausible from a theoretical point of view. Future research should attempt to further disentangle cause and effect by studying over-

time trends in institutions and attitudes. Do changes in the institutional design of income benefit schemes temporally precede changes in popular perceptions and public support for social welfare, or *vice versa*?

Notes

[1] Such as an ever-increasing policy emphasis on personal responsibility and activation in unemployment insurance and social assistance (Raven, 2012; Yerkes, 2011).

[2] In some cases, the benefit level is also dependent on the wage of a cohabiting partner who is younger than 65; the official retirement age. The older partner then receives 70 per cent of the full benefit, and the additional top-up of 30 per cent is contingent on the younger partner's income. However, given the relatively small scale of this means-tested supplement in terms of benefit receipt and actual expenditure, we do not expect the average Dutch citizen to be familiar with it. Accordingly, its possible impact on people's welfare attitudes is likely to be limited.

[3] CFA shows that the five variables are not well represented by a one-factor solution, suggesting that they are indeed different components of the broad theoretical concept of perceived programme performance.

[4] The actual regression analyses on the imputed dataset were carried out using Mplus software.

[5] Compared with the unemployment and social assistance model, the R^2 (=.041) of the pension model is relatively low, which indicates that perceptions of self-interest, programme performance, and welfare deservingness do not explain much of the variance in people's support for social welfare targeted at pensioners.

[6] It is possible that the effect of perceived self-interest would have been stronger if we had moved beyond the interests of the individual by also taking those of the members of his or her social network into account. For example, a person might be convinced that (s)he will never become unemployed, yet at the same time believe that his or her spouse runs a greater risk of not having a job, which would in turn increase the (perceived) self-interest in unemployment insurance for that individual, and conceivably also his or her support for welfare allocation to unemployed people.

8 HOW POPULAR DESERVINGNESS PERCEPTIONS MEDIATE THE LINK BETWEEN UNEMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND THEIR PUBLIC SUPPORT

TIJS LAENEN

Popular deservingness perceptions are not only theoretically, but also empirically, linked to different welfare policy design characteristics.

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

After the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent economic recessions struck the European continent, key international institutions such as the IMF and the EU further strengthened their already-intense monitoring of the European economies: particularly those that were granted bailout loans, such as Greece, Ireland and Spain. With the aim of enhancing employability, boosting productivity, and ultimately, strengthening national competitiveness in an era of ever-increasing economic globalization, most European countries have been pushed towards radical social policy reforms. Two frequently advocated reforms are central to this chapter. Based on the assumption that generous and unconditional unemployment benefit schemes risk creating unemployment traps because of their detrimental impact on job-seeking behaviour and work incentives (Immervoll & Knotz, 2018; Venn, 2012), the first recommendation is to lower the levels, curtail the duration and toughen the work requirements for unemployment benefits (Schoukens, 2016: 31–34). The second recommendation–to increase income targeting in social security provision (Schoukens, 2016: 35–38)–is rooted in the idea that selective, means-tested policies are a more cost-effective way of distributing the ever-more scarce public resources, as funds are not spent on the higher-income strata (van Oorschot, 2002). This chapter examines the potential consequences of these policy recommendations for public opinion about unemployment provision. In doing so, we focus attention on some of the social and political implications for which the IMF and the EU tend to have a blind spot (Schoukens & Smets, 2014). Our starting point is that the institutional design of unemployment policies affects popular perceptions about the welfare deservingness of the unemployed (Larsen, 2006). Accordingly, we zoom in on the relationship between three types of policy design characteristics (generosity, selectivity and conditionality) and two particular types of deservingness perceptions (material needs and job-seeking efforts). These deservingness perceptions, in turn, structure public support for government-funded unemployment provision (van Oorschot et al. 2017).

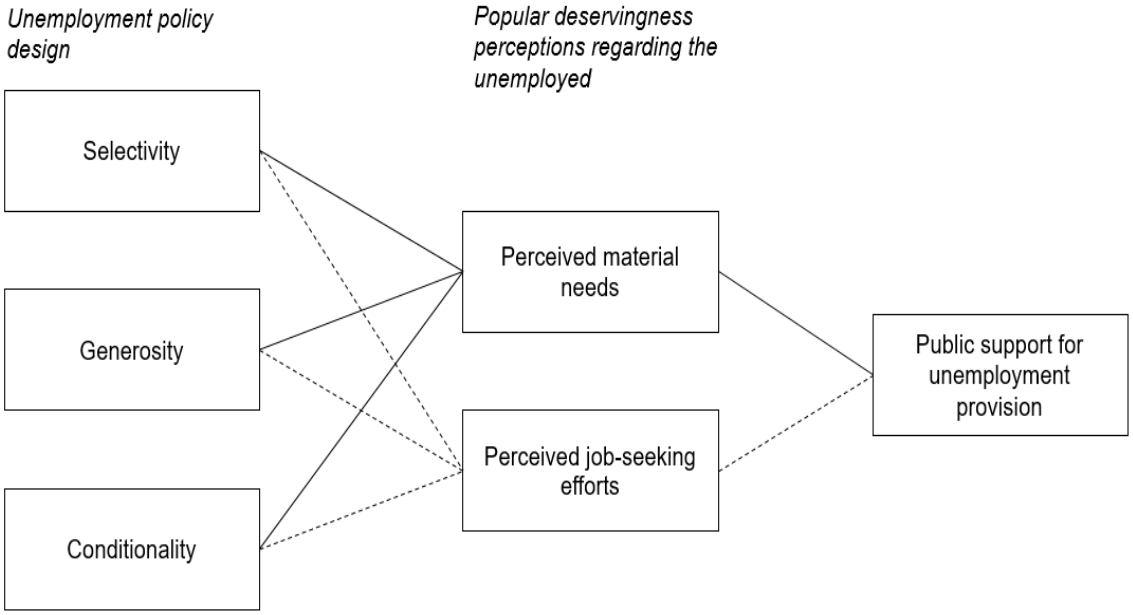
The chapter seeks to address three research questions: (1) How do Europeans evaluate the unemployed in terms of their perceived needs and willingness to work; (2) How are such deservingness perceptions affected by the selectivity, generosity and conditionality of unemployment policies; and (3) What impact do popular deservingness perceptions have on public support for unemployment benefit provision? The rest of the chapter is structured in four sections. The first formulates a number of competing research hypotheses related to previously suggested policy feedback effects on deservingness opinions. The second section describes how we used data from two rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS4 and ESS8) to test the hypotheses. The empirical results are presented in the third section. The fourth section concludes, while also offering some points for discussion and possible avenues for future research.

8.2 THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

A growing body of literature maintains that public support for a given welfare policy is to a large extent contingent on the perceived deservingness of its target group (see Chapter 2). An increasingly popular thesis in that literature is that such perceptions of deservingness are

influenced by the broader policy context in which they are formed (van Oorschot et al., 2017). Three policy design characteristics in particular–selectivity, generosity and conditionality–have previously been linked to perceptions of welfare deservingness (Buss et al., 2017; Larsen, 2006; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). This chapter zooms in on the feedback effects of unemployment policies on popular perceptions concerning the material needs and job-seeking efforts of unemployed people. These deservingness perceptions, in turn, are expected to influence public support for government-funded unemployment benefit provision (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Conceptual model: deservingness perceptions mediating the link between unemployment policies and their public support



The first policy design characteristic, selectivity–defined here as the degree to which resources are targeted exclusively at the poor–is often considered a crucial institutional driver of deservingness opinions. A recurring suggestion in the literature is that welfare systems dominated by selective, means-tested policies foster more-negative perceptions of welfare recipients, because such policies draw a sharp demarcation line between the poor minority receiving the benefits and the better-off majority paying for them (Rothstein, 1998). In such a policy context, it is argued, the genuineness of recipients' needs and work willingness is constantly under scrutiny. By contrast, systems dominated by welfare policies that are more universally targeted are supposed to suppress intense discussions over welfare deservingness (Larsen, 2006). When applied to the specific policy field of unemployment provision, however, the argument might be less clear cut. European unemployment schemes are typically organized as social insurance for workers, and are neither completely selective (that is, only for the unemployed who are poor) nor fully universal (that is, for all unemployed people regardless of their work record). Nevertheless, as pointed out by Clasen (1997), many 'hybrid' unemployment systems exist in Europe, which combine contribution-based with needs-based elements in their programmatic structure. The needs-based component usually takes the form of second-tier unemployment assistance (UA), available for the longer-term unemployed who have exhausted their rights to first-tier

unemployment insurance (UI). The fact that UA is conditional on a contributory record and a means test is what separates it from social assistance, which is usually a separate type of welfare provision targeted only at those living in poverty, irrespective of their prior contributions to a common insurance pool (Clasen, 1997). In other countries, (means-tested) supplements are provided to raise UI benefits up to a certain social minimum. Thus, it seems reasonable to expect that deservingness perceptions turn less favourable when means testing is embedded more strongly in the institutional setup of a country's UI. Consequently, our first hypothesis is that:

> H1a: The more countries spend on means-tested unemployment benefits relative to non-means-tested unemployment benefits, the lower the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are perceived to be.

However, the view that selective policies decrease the perceived deservingness of their target populations has not gone unchallenged in the literature. Some argue that a stronger reliance on means testing could have the opposite effect of making welfare recipients appear more deserving of social welfare in the eyes of the public, because it raises general awareness that the recipients are living below the poverty line and are thus really in need (Larsen, 2006; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017). Previous studies do indeed confirm that recipients of means-tested social assistance programmes are generally perceived to have high needs and are therefore deemed relatively deserving of government aid (Blomberg et al., 2017; Raven, 2012). A possible side effect is that citizens also come to believe that most benefit recipients are actively looking for work in order to escape poverty. Therefore, our counter-expectation is that:

> H1b: The more countries spend on means-tested unemployment benefits relative to non-means-tested unemployment benefits, the higher the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are perceived to be.

A second policy design characteristic claimed to influence deservingness opinions is generosity, defined here as the level of benefits. The policy feedback mechanism that has attracted most attention in the literature maintains that generous social protection decreases popular perceptions of need, and thereby also lowers public support for such protection (Baumberg Geiger, 2017; Buss et al., 2017; Larsen, 2006; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017). The underlying logic is simple: because 'high benefit levels may give people the idea that the unemployed have a good standard of living and could do with less generous provision' (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014: 246), the call for higher unemployment benefits is bound to diminish. Additionally, the belief that unemployed people have plenty of material resources could also trigger the public perception that they are less motivated to work (Baumberg Geiger, 2017). Conversely, lower benefit rates are likely to fuel public awareness that most unemployed people face severe financial problems and are eager to work, which should then increase popular demand for unemployment provision (Jeene et al., 2014). Based on this discussion, we expect that:

> H2a: The higher a country's unemployment benefit levels, the lower the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are perceived to be.

Larsen (2006) takes a different perspective on the relationship between policy generosity and welfare deservingness. He argues that more-generous welfare systems reduce the differences in economic resources and lifestyles between welfare recipients and non-recipients, which makes it easier for the latter to identify and empathize with the former. Accordingly, when unemployment benefit levels are relatively high, perceptions of the unemployed as deviant 'others' refusing to conform to the dominant work ethic are supposed to be less common. Being able to sympathize more profoundly with the unemployed might also boost people's understanding of and concern for the hardships they face. Therefore, it is equally plausible that:

> H2b: The higher a country's unemployment benefit levels, the greater the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are perceived to be.

With regard to the third policy design characteristic, conditionality–defined here as the degree to which benefit recipients are required to fulfil work-related obligations–the literature has also produced competing hypotheses. Our starting point is Soss and Scram's (2007) case study on how major welfare reform in the US influenced mass attitudes towards the poor.[1] Their core claim is that Bill Clinton's plan to 'end welfare as we know it'–by adopting stricter eligibility criteria and work requirements–was a strategic device to increase public willingness to invest in aid to the poor, because it would free welfare from its pejorative image of being a handout to lazy and immoral welfare cheats. The idea was that 'by creating a work attachment, the TANF program would move aid recipients into the more positively valued group known as "workers". Recipients would then qualify as full members of the deserving "us" who play by the "rules". Greater public generosity would follow' (Soss & Schram, 2007: 123). Of course, this logic only pans out if work requirements are popular among the general public; which public opinion data suggests they are, in Europe as well as in the US (Buss et al., 2017; Gilens, 1996). Based on the argument that conditional welfare policies might generate more positive perceptions of their recipients, we anticipate that:

> H3a: The stricter a country's work-related requirements regarding unemployment insurance, the greater the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are perceived to be.

However, Soss and Schram's (2007) empirical analysis demonstrates that public opinion was largely unaffected by the reform: popular perceptions of welfare recipients did not become more favourable, and associations with laziness and dependence remained widespread. One of the explanations offered is that the reforms endorsed, or perhaps even reinforced, what was already there: a negative image of welfare recipients as violators of the dominant work ethic. According to Soss and Schram (2007: 124), 'policy actions that make a show of requiring expected behaviour will tend to reinforce the belief that bad individual behaviour lies at the heart of the social problem'. Thus, strict work-enforcing policies might convey the message to citizens that most unemployed people prefer leisure over work, and therefore need to be forced into employment. In response, citizens might actually start believing that the unemployed are indeed unwilling to work and have plenty of material resources (Blomberg et al., 2017; van Oorschot, 2006a). Consequently, the expectation is that:

> H3b: The stricter a country's work-related requirements regarding unemployment insurance, the lower the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are perceived to be.

With regard to the second part of the conceptual model (see Figure 8.1), concerning the link between popular deservingness perceptions and public support for social welfare, there is much less debate in the literature. A large number of studies have shown that when people are thought to be unemployed due to laziness and lack of effort, support for welfare provision drops markedly (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Kootstra, 2016; Larsen, 2006; Slothuus, 2007; Will, 1993). Likewise, support is found to be much lower when welfare claimants are perceived to be well-off financially (Groskind, 1991; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a). Therefore, our final hypothesis is that:

> H4: The lower the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are perceived to be, the lower the public support for unemployment provision will be.

8.3 DATA AND METHODS

To examine our theoretical hypotheses, we use data from the fourth and the eighth round of the ESS. The empirical analysis proceeds in three steps.[2] In the first, we use descriptive statistics to outline Europeans' perceptions of the unemployed in 2007/08 and in 2016/17. The ESS provides two deservingness-related items. The first asks about the material circumstances of the unemployed: 'What do you think overall about the standard of living of people who are unemployed?' Although this item has previously been used to assess how people evaluate the performance of the welfare state and unemployment benefits (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a), we take it as an indicator of popular perceptions related to the deservingness criterion of need. The underlying idea is thus that the item constitutes a relatively direct measurement of the perceived material needs of the unemployed, instead of an indirect measurement of how the welfare system is perceived to perform. In our view, welfare policy is only one of the many contextual factors that structure such need perceptions, in addition to, for example, the state of the economy. The second ESS item asks about the job-seeking efforts of the unemployed ('Most unemployed people do not really try to find a job') and relates to multiple deservingness criteria. If unemployed people refuse to look for work, they may be regarded as personally responsible for being jobless (control), as ungrateful for the benefits granted to them (attitude), as unwilling to do something in return for that support (reciprocity), or even as culturally distinct because they do not adhere to the dominant work ethic (identity) (Larsen, 2006).

In the second step, a series of multilevel models (with individuals nested in country-year combinations) are estimated in order to scrutinize how individual-level deservingness perceptions are associated with contextual-level policy design characteristics. The country (or year) was not included as a third level, because some countries only participated once in the ESS, which means that levels two and three would have been the same for those countries and the higher-level variances risk being confounded. However, for two reasons the multilevel analyses were not restricted to the countries that participated in both ESS rounds. First, this would have decreased the number of higher-level units and thus the statistical power of the empirical models. Given that ESS4 and ESS8 had respectively 29 and 23 participating countries, we included a total of 52 country-year combinations. However, as documented in Appendix 8.1, a lack of contextual data led to the omission of some country-year combinations in the multilevel models that introduce contextual-level variables. Second, excluding the countries that did not participate twice, which

are mostly Central and Eastern European, would have also decreased the amount of higher-level variation and thus could have potentially influenced the statistical relationships between unemployment policies and deservingness perceptions.[3] Benefit levels, for example, are much lower in some of the countries that would have been omitted (for example Greece, Slovakia and Romania; see Appendix 8.1), which might have led to an underestimation of the true association between welfare generosity and deservingness perceptions. Out of a similar concern for underestimation or overestimation of policy feedback effects, we also took the economic macro-context into account by estimating 'economy-adjusted' parameters; that is, the effects of the policy indicators while controlling for GDP per capita (in PPS per head) and unemployment rates (Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017).[4] Previous research shows that these economic factors are in fact associated with popular deservingness perceptions (Buffel & Van de Velde, 2018; Jeene, 2015; Larsen, 2006). All our models also contain a time dummy (2008/09 versus 2016/17) and check for compositional effects by including a broad range of individual-level control variables: age, gender, education, work status, subjective income, past experience of unemployment, perceived risk of unemployment, political ideology and egalitarianism. For the sake of brevity, the individual characteristics are not discussed further (but see Appendix 8.2 for the regression results).

To grasp the degree of selectivity in unemployment provision, we calculated the ratio of spending on means-tested unemployment benefits relative to the total amount of spending on unemployment benefits. The resulting variable was recoded into three categories: 'no or minimal means testing' (0–10 per cent), 'medium means testing' (10–30 per cent) and 'strong means testing' (>30 per cent). The generosity of unemployment protection is captured by the net replacement rates (averaged across different family types and income scenarios) during different stages of an individual's unemployment: in the first year ('the initial phase'), after the fifth year ('long-term unemployment') and as a 5-year average. The conditionality of unemployment provision is assessed using two different indicators. Spending on active labour market policies (ALMPs) is calculated as a percentage of national GDP and is needs-adjusted by taking the ratio of ALMP spending relative to the national unemployment rate. The second indicator of conditionality represents the strictness of work-related eligibility criteria for unemployment insurance and is taken from Immervoll and Knotz (2018) and Venn (2012). Based on the frequently made claim in welfare state literature that the whole is perhaps greater than the sum of parts (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Larsen, 2006), the total amount of social expenditure and means-tested spending serve respectively as additional indicators of generosity and selectivity. Further details of the contextual indicators are provided in Appendix 8.1.

In the third and final step, the popular deservingness perceptions are used as predictors of public support for unemployment provision in multilevel random slope models that allow the effects of need and effort perceptions to vary across country-year combinations. For this analysis, it was possible to use the full range of countries participating in ESS4 and ESS8 because there are no contextual-level variables included in the models. The dependent variable is an item asking how much responsibility governments have to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed, which has often been used in welfare attitudes literature (see Chapter 3). The 11-point response scale ranges from 'should not be the government's responsibility at all' to 'should be entirely the government's responsibility', with higher scores indicating a greater level of support

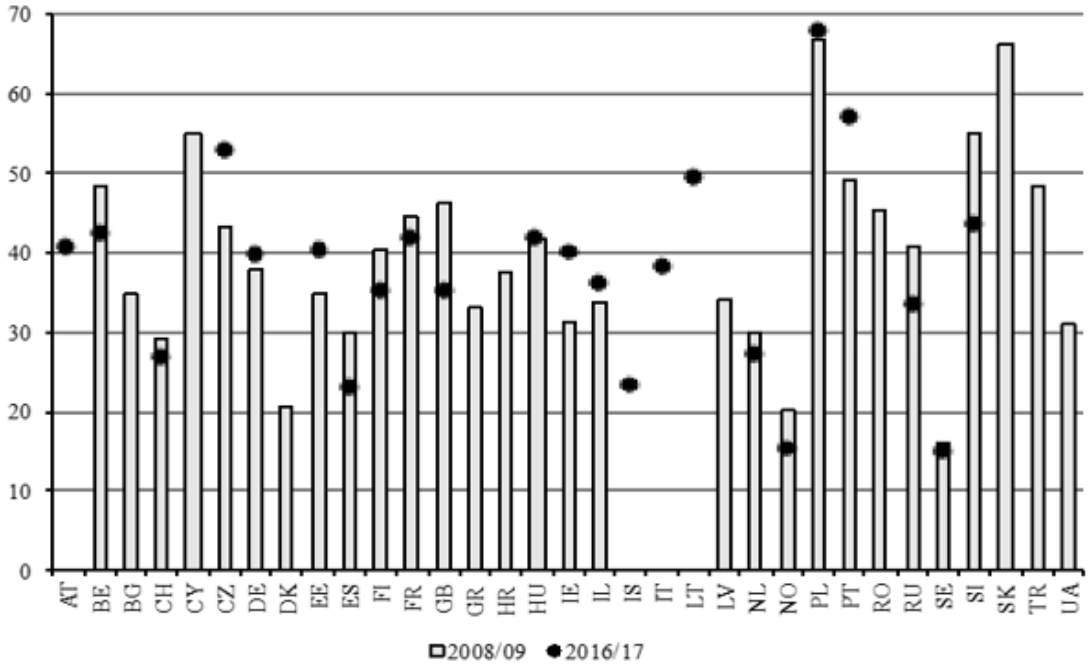
for government-funded unemployment protection. The above-mentioned individual characteristics are included as fixed-effect control variables.

8.4 RESULTS

8.4.1 Europeans' deservingness perceptions concerning the unemployed

Before turning to the multilevel analyses, we describe Europeans' perceptions of the job-seeking efforts and material needs of the unemployed. With regard to the former, Figure 8.2 reveals some cross-national variation. In most countries, between 20 and 50 per cent agree that most of the unemployed do not really try to find work. Obvious outliers are the Scandinavian countries (except Finland (FI)), where the perceptions of effort are the most favourable, and two of the Viségrad countries (Poland (PL) and Slovakia (SK)), where citizens are particularly critical about the job-seeking behaviour of unemployed people. There also seems to be substantial over-time change in effort perceptions, but no clear pattern emerges. The proportion of people who think most of the unemployed make little effort to find work increased notably in some countries (for example Estonia (EE), Ireland (IE) and Portugal (PT), reduced in some (for example Slovenia (SI), Russia (RU) and the United Kingdom (GB)) and remained fairly stable in others (for example Germany (DE), Hungary (HU) and Sweden (SE)).

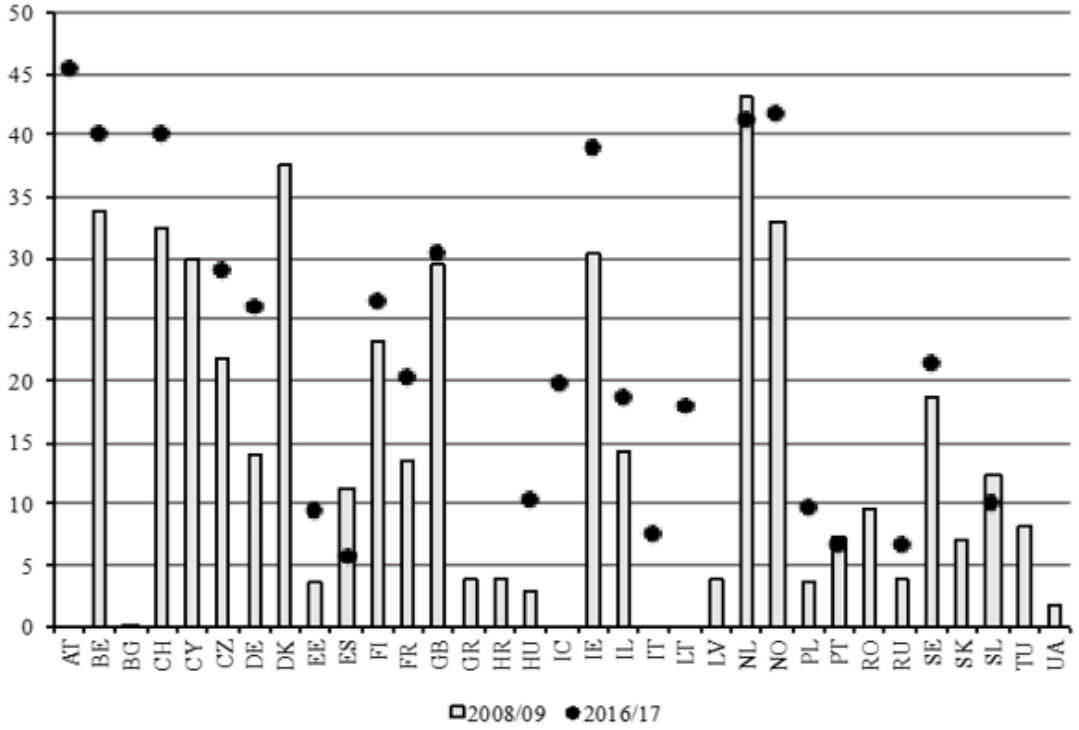
Figure 8.2 National proportions of people agreeing that most of the unemployed do not really try to find work



With regard to popular perceptions of need, there is also considerable cross-national variation.[5] Figure 8.3 demonstrates that in general, the standard of living of unemployed people is judged to be much lower in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe compared with Western Europe. The worse performing economies and less-developed welfare systems of the former are the most likely explanations for this regional gap in perceived material needs. The over-time trend is equally

clear cut: in almost all countries, especially the Western European ones, citizens generally feel that the unemployed were worse off financially in 2008/09 than in 2016/17. This finding suggests that the economic crisis that struck the European continent in 2008/09 (and which was heavily reported in the mass media) raised public awareness of the deteriorating living conditions of the unemployed. The exception to the rule is Spain (ES), however, where the opposite pattern is found. In a few other countries (for example the Netherlands (NL), Portugal and the United Kingdom), need perceptions prove to be relatively stable.

Figure 8.3 National proportions of people feeling that the unemployed have a relatively good standard of living



8.4.2 The impact of unemployment policies on popular deservingness perceptions

A first glance at Table 8.1–showing the effects of our policy indicators when introduced separately in the multilevel models–suggests that popular deservingness perceptions are not only theoretically, but also empirically, linked to different policy design characteristics. The one exception is the degree of selectivity, which does not seem to be strongly associated with deservingness perceptions. Only the proportion of overall means-tested spending has a significant feedback effect: the more European societies spend on means-tested benefits relative to non-means-tested ones, the better the living conditions of the unemployed are perceived to be (H1a). However, this relationship loses statistical significance once the differing levels of economic wealth and unemployment across Europe are taken into account. Thus, neither of our suggested selectivity hypotheses is confirmed by the data (H1a, H1b).

By contrast, generosity is a much more powerful policy correlate of deservingness. Citizens exposed to unemployment schemes with comparatively generous replacement rates, especially for long-term unemployment, believe more strongly that most unemployed people are not needy

(H2a. See also van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014). The same relationship is found for total 'welfare effort': the more countries spend on social benefits, the lower the needs of the unemployed are perceived to be by the general public. The link between generosity and popular perceptions of job-seeking efforts appears to be less straightforward. At first sight, it seems that higher replacement rates generate more favourable perceptions of the unemployed as being eager to search for work (H2b). However, once we also take the economy into consideration, the policy effect changes direction. This means that in European societies with similar levels of unemployment and economic development, the unemployed are actually perceived to be less willing to work when there are higher benefit levels (H2a). To make matters even more complex, the opposite pattern is found when looking at the total amount of social expenditure. Citizens living in high-spending countries are less inclined to think that most unemployed are lazy (H2b). However, the effect of social expenditure fades after controlling for GDP per capita and the unemployment rate.

Table 8.1 Associations between policy indicators and popular deservingness perceptions, tested separately

	Needs (low–high)		Job-seeking efforts (low–high)	
		Economy -adjusted		Economy -adjusted
Selectivity				
Proportion of means-tested spending, unemployment benefits (ref.: 0–10%)				
Medium (10–30%)	0.036	-0.085	-0.254	-0.221
Strong (> 30%)	-0.016	-0.020	-0.080	-0.117
Proportion of means-tested spending, all social benefits	-0.317**	-0.022	0.061	-0.298
Generosity				
Net replacement rate, initial phase	-0.027	-0.042	0.154	0.005
Net replacement rate, long-term unemployment	-0.756***	-0.300**	0.137	-0.271*
Net replacement rate, 5-year average	-0.775***	-0.289**	0.270*	-0.150
Total social expenditure	-0.524***	-0.187*	0.330**	0.081
Conditionality				
Spending on active labour market policies	-0.500***	-0.085	0.393***	0.332**
Strictness of work-related eligibility criteria	0.130	0.134*	0.074	0.119

Notes: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Controlled for social-structural characteristics and ideological beliefs.

Lastly, conditionality also proves to be important in shaping popular perceptions of the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed. In European societies that devote a larger proportion of their welfare budget to active labour market policies, citizens are less prone to think that most unemployed people do not really try to find work (H3a). More spending on ALMPs also decreases the perception that the unemployed are living in need (H3b), but that relationship does not hold

after controlling for the economic situation. Having stricter work-related eligibility criteria embedded in unemployment insurance, by contrast, leads to increased awareness of the material needs of the unemployed (H3a), but only when comparing European societies with similar levels of economic development.

Table 8.2 Associations between policy indicators and popular deservingness perceptions, tested simultaneously

	Need (low–high)	Job-seeking efforts (low–high)
ESS round (ref.: 2008/09)		
2016/17	-0.076*	-0.048
Policy indicators		
Net replacement rate, long-term unemployment	-0.272**	-0.313**
Total social expenditure	-0.200**	
Spending on active labour market policies		0.330*
Strictness of work-related eligibility criteria	0.095	
Economic conditions		
GDP per capita (in PPS per head)	-0.525***	0.535***
Unemployment rate	0.193**	0.219
R^2 individual level	0.062	0.042
N individual level	76 197	67 167
R^2 country-year level	0.841	0.375
N country-year level	43	37

Notes: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Controlled for social-structural characteristics and ideological beliefs.

Three main conclusions can be drawn from Table 8.2, which shows the final multilevel models, retaining all the significant relationships we found earlier. First, in European societies that have comparatively generous unemployment benefits or spend higher amounts on social benefits more generally, the unemployed are seen as less needy and less eager to find work (H2a). Second, in countries with a stronger commitment to active labour market policies, the job-seeking efforts of unemployed people are deemed to be higher. This observation seems to be in line with Soss and Schram's (2007) claim that conditional welfare policies generate more-positive images of welfare recipients (H3a). Third, the economic context–especially GDP per capita–appears to be more important than the institutional context with regard to explaining individual variation in popular deservingness perceptions. In economically wealthier European societies, citizens are much more inclined to think that the unemployed have a fairly good standard of living and are eager to find a new job. In a context of high unemployment, the unemployed are perceived as more needy and as more willing to look for work. The latter finding confirms prior research suggesting that the unemployed are considered more deserving of social welfare in times of high unemployment, because it is easier for the public to attribute unemployment to structural reasons beyond individuals' control (Larsen, 2006; see Chapter 4).

8.4.3 The impact of deservingness perceptions on support for unemployment provision

Table 8.3 shows that popular perceptions of the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are important factors shaping support for government-provided unemployment provision, net of a number of personal characteristics such as work status, perceived unemployment risk and political ideology. More specifically, people who believe more strongly that most unemployed people do not really try to find work or that most of them are reasonably well-off financially, are considerably less supportive of government responsibility to ensure a reasonable standard of living to the unemployed. However, Table 8.3 also shows that the deservingness-support link is context sensitive, because the strength of the empirical relationships varies across time and place. First, the significant negative effect of the interaction term suggests that effort perceptions were more influential in 2016/17 than in 2007/08. A possible explanation for this is that the 2008 financial crisis raised public awareness of a lack of job opportunities, which may have made citizens somewhat more lenient towards unemployed people who do not actively look for work (Larsen, 2006). Second, the random slope variances indicate that the impact of deservingness perceptions on support for social welfare varies across different European societies. Additional country-specific OLS regression analyses (see Appendix 8.3) demonstrate that both deservingness perceptions have a statistically significant and substantial effect in almost all European countries. In that sense, popular perceptions of the job-seeking efforts and needs of unemployed people appear to be universal drivers of support for social welfare (see also Petersen et al., 2012).

Table 8.3 Multilevel models regressing support for unemployment provision on deservingness perceptions

Fixed effects	
Intercept	6.758***
ESS round (ref.: 2008/09)	
2016/17	-0.107
Deservingness perceptions	
Need	0.175***
Job-seeking efforts	0.309***
Interaction terms	
Need*ESS round 2016/17	0.019
Job-seeking efforts*ESS round 2016/17	-0.084*
Random effects	
Random-slope variances	
Need	0.010***
Job-seeking efforts	0.012***
Residual variance (individual level)	4.184***
Random intercept variance (country-year level)	0.261***
Intraclass correlation	0.050
$N_{\text{individual level}}$	89974
$N_{\text{country-year level}}$	52

Notes: *p<.05, **p<.01,***p<.001. Controlled social-structural characteristics and ideological beliefs.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that European populations differ in the relative importance they attach to the two types of deservingness perceptions in forming welfare preferences. In some parts of Europe–particularly in Scandinavia, the Low Countries and Anglo-Saxon Europe–effort perceptions strongly outweigh need perceptions. By contrast, need is the more powerful predictor of welfare support in a host of other countries, including Slovenia, Spain, Portugal and Turkey. In others, such as Russia, Estonia and Latvia, the two types of deservingness perceptions have quite similar effect sizes. These findings shed new light on the long-standing debate about which deservingness dimension is most decisive in shaping welfare preferences (see Chapter 2). Previous empirical research has often singled out popular perceptions of welfare claimant's personal responsibility and job-seeking efforts as the most crucial deservingness considerations. A closer look into these studies, however, reveals that most of them were conducted in countries where effort perceptions have–according to our comparative analysis–a particularly strong impact on welfare support, such as Denmark (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Slothuus, 2007), the Netherlands (Kootstra, 2016; van Oorschot, 2000) and the UK (Kootstra, 2016; De Vries, 2017). Our analyses suggest that the search for the most important deservingness dimension is less meaningful, as the salience of different deservingness criteria seems to depend on the broader country context in which welfare opinions are formed.

8.5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter examined what Europeans think about the material needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed, and how unemployment policies influence such popular perceptions of welfare deservingness. A series of multilevel models were estimated to assess how deservingness perceptions are associated with three particular policy design characteristics: selectivity, generosity and conditionality. The models show that comparatively generous (that is, higher replacement rates and greater social expenditure) and unconditional (that is, less spending on ALMPs and softer work-related eligibility criteria) unemployment policies fuel the perception that most unemployed people have a relatively good standard of living and are not actively looking for a job. Europeans who hold such adverse deservingness beliefs, net of their social-structural background and ideological orientations, also appear to be considerably less supportive of government responsibility to ensure a decent standard of living for the unemployed.

These findings suggest that popular deservingness perceptions play a mediating role in the policy-support link, and help to explain why previous research has found lower levels of public support for unemployment provision in countries with comparatively more generous unemployment benefits (Fraile & Ferrer, 2005; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014; Wendt et al., 2011). Thus, it appears that recommendations from the IMF and EU to make unemployment benefits less attractive by lowering the benefit levels and increasing the work requirements could potentially boost the popular welfare deservingness of the unemployed, and consequently, also increase public support for more generous unemployment provision in the long run. In other words, retrenchment of unemployment benefits could have the opposite effect of amplifying popular demand for such benefits, to which policy makers might, for electoral reasons, respond with welfare expansion initiatives (see Chapter 2). However, it should be noted that on the basis of our analyses, we cannot draw conclusions about how changes over time in unemployment policies are related to changes over time in deservingness perceptions and public support. A major task

for future research, therefore, is to explore whether the empirical relationships found in this chapter extend beyond the cross-sectional, between-country level to the longitudinal, within-country level.

The second frequently cited policy recommendation, to increase reliance on means-tested targeting in social security provision, proves to be less consequential for public opinion on unemployment benefits, as the degree of selectivity is not related to popular perceptions concerning the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed. However, it is possible that no relationship was found because our measurement of selectivity was sub-optimal. Two issues are of particular concern in this regard. First, a potential problem with the Eurostat spending data we used is its lack of cross-national comparability. This is due to the fact that the participating countries are relatively free to determine the specific contents of crucial concepts such as 'unemployment benefits' and 'means testing'. While some countries, for example, might categorize social assistance as an unemployment benefit because they consider it an integral part of the unemployment provision system, others could decide otherwise and label it as a separate social security branch. It is obvious that different categorizations could distort the comparability of the ratio of means-tested spending relative to the total amount of unemployment spending. A second concern is that this policy indicator is quite sensitive to population composition, in that higher levels of poverty will evidently lead to higher proportions of means-tested spending (Marchal & Van Lancker, 2018). This would make some social policies appear more selective than policy makers intended them to be. An important undertaking for future research is to examine the link between selectivity and popular deservingness perceptions in further detail, by developing more fine-grained and comparable measurements of the extent to which social welfare policies are *intentionally* targeted towards the poor.

This chapter offers a first, modest attempt to elucidate some of the various and complex ways in which welfare policies, popular deservingness perceptions and public support for social welfare are interwoven, but much work remains to be done. Here we suggest four promising avenues for future research to follow. First, including other types of policy indicators–such as benefit duration, financing and administrative structures–could provide a more comprehensive picture of how unemployment policies affect popular perceptions of the needs and job-seeking efforts of the unemployed. It could be, for example, that longer spells of benefit receipt increase the public perception that the unemployed have little incentive to actively search for work. Second, it would be valuable to also study policy feedback effects on other types of deservingness-related perceptions concerning the unemployed. Do tougher work record requirements, for example, strengthen the belief that unemployment benefit recipients have contributed to society through paid work? Third, the study of policy feedback effects on popular deservingness perceptions should extend to policy fields other than unemployment provision, such as old-age pensions, healthcare or child allowances. When considering other policy areas, it is likely that one has to reckon with different types of deservingness perceptions, different types of policy indicators, and consequently, different types of policy feedback effects. For instance, in the case of old-age pensions it would not make sense to examine how perceptions of job-seeking efforts are related to matters such as the strictness of work requirements, because both are irrelevant for this specific policy domain. It would be more interesting to explore other issues, such as how minimum (or maximum) pension levels influence the perceived material needs of pensioners. Fourth, to better

isolate the feedback effects of social policies, future research would benefit from also incorporating other types of contextual factors (van Oorschot, 2006a). This chapter shows that without controlling for the macro-economic context (that is, GDP per capita and unemployment rates), we would have overestimated or underestimated some of the policy feedback effects (see also Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017). For example, net replacement rates in the case of long-term unemployment only turns out to have a significant impact on popular perceptions of need when comparing European societies with similar levels of economic development. This could be developed further by taking additional economic indicators (for example income inequality), and also cultural (for example religious heritage), demographic (for example population ageing) and political (for example government structures) factors into account.

Notes

[1] The specific welfare reform under consideration was the 1994 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which, among other things, replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

[2] In each step, post-stratification weights were applied to correct for mismatches between the sample and the population distribution in terms of age, gender, education and region.

[3] The countries that would have been excluded are: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey and Ukraine. Austria and Lithuania did participate in ESS4, but were excluded because the Austrian data was gathered much later (in 2011) and the Lithuanian data does not provide sample weights.

[4] Data for the economic indicators are retrieved from Eurostat, and, in case of missing data, complemented with information provided by the OECD.

[5] Judged by the intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) of the 'empty' null models (not shown here), the contextual variation is much larger in the case of need perceptions (ICC=0.265) compared with effort perceptions (ICC=0.068).

9 THE ABSENCE OF PUBLIC RESISTANCE AGAINST THE RETRENCHMENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE IN DENMARK AND THE NETHERLANDS. THE ROLE OF DESERVINGNESS PERCEPTIONS AMONG WELFARE CONSTITUENCIES

TIJS LAENEN AND CHRISTIAN ALBREKT LARSEN

The harsh deservingness perceptions of the members of the constituencies of unemployment insurance were a necessary condition for the severe retrenchment political elites have managed to implement in Denmark and the Netherlands.

A slightly different version of this chapter was published as:

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Tijs Laenen is the first author of the working paper. Christian Albrekt Larsen is the second author. The paper is currently under review with the Journal Of Social Policy.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past 30 years, Dutch and Danish unemployment insurance (from here onwards referred to as UI) has become markedly less generous in terms of social rights, and more conditional in terms of work-related obligations (Andersen, 2011b; Clasen et al., 2001; Green-Pedersen, 2001, 2002; Hoogenboom, 2011; van Oorschot & Abrahamson, 2003). With the aim of 'activating' the unemployed, eligibility rules were tightened, benefit levels have declined or stagnated, entitlement periods have been shortened, and demands on geographical, occupational and wage mobility were toughened (see Appendix 9.1 for an overview). First, the *work record* required to qualify for UI was made much more stringent over the years in both countries. Second, though it seems as though overall *benefit levels* remained relatively stable in the long term, they were certainly not left completely untouched. In the Netherlands, for example, the 1987 'System Revision' reduced the replacement rates of the wage-related benefits from 80 per cent to 70 per cent, and even more importantly, introduced a new type of UI benefit (the 'follow-up' benefit), which was accessible after the expiration of the wage-related benefit and was set at 70 per cent of the minimum wage. For most of the longer-term unemployed, the transition to this flat-rate follow-up benefit entailed a decrease in actual benefit level. In Denmark, cuts to the benefit level were mostly aimed at specific groups, such as the young, long-term unemployed (1985), the young with no education (1995) and the newly educated (2015). However, from an aggregated perspective, the compensation rates also declined, as more unemployed people reached the relatively low benefit ceiling (2500 EUR per month in 2018). Third, *benefit duration* has been severely curtailed. In Denmark, the maximum period was reduced from in principle being endless, to seven years (1993), five years (1995), four years (1998) and ultimately two years (2010). In the Netherlands, a similar trend is observable: from a maximum of seven and a half years in 1995 (but only for those with extensive work records) to 27 months in 2019 (for all the unemployed). Fourth, UI has become considerably more conditional in terms of *work-related obligations*. In both countries, the definition of suitable work has been sharpened on multiple occasions, which has ultimately led to the view that today's unemployed are obliged to accept any job offer (after six months in the Netherlands and from day one in Denmark). UI recipients who refuse jobs that are, for example, below their previous pay level, run the risk of being sanctioned by the administrative bodies.

According to Pierson's (1994, 1996) theory on the new politics of the welfare state, such retrenchment should have met with public resistance, because welfare policies, once enacted, tend to create self-interested constituencies that will defend their cherished policy against government cutbacks. The argument goes that because these particular welfare constituencies bear the concentrated costs of retrenchment, they are the ones most likely to mobilize against it. Conversely, it is relatively unlikely that those with dispersed benefits, who may for example favour retrenchment out of a belief that it would ease their tax burden, will mobilize in support of it. However, the severe retrenchment of Dutch and Danish UI only met with sparse resistance in the electorate, at least when compared with resistance against attempts to retrench other social security schemes such as pensions or healthcare. There were no strikes to protect UI, nor were there street protests or any outcry in the media (Andersen, 2011a; Hoogenboom, 2011).[1] This is particularly puzzling, because the retrenchment was not limited to some minor groups with few

political resources to mobilize, but affected relatively large and well-organized welfare constituencies. For decades, both Dutch and Danish UI have provided economic security to large segments of the workforce; partly as a result of the so-called 'flexicurity' models that historically combine little protection against dismissal, with easy access to unemployment benefits that are relatively generous. Furthermore, the sizeable group that has lost out as a result of retrenchment is not at all characterized by an inability to mobilize. On the contrary, the Dutch and Danish unemployed have had a full infrastructure of organizations specialized in mobilizing their concentrated interests, as they are represented by trade unions.

The issue addressed in this chapter is how to explain the puzzling lack of fierce public resistance against the retrenchment of UI in Denmark and the Netherlands. More specifically, we identity four of the most likely explanations. These are: (1) the primary defenders of the unemployed, trade unions, have lost much of their political bargaining power; (2) policymakers were successful in applying the blame-avoidance strategies of obfuscation, division and compensation; (3) the constituencies of UI embraced elite ideas that structural problem pressures have rendered retrenchment necessary; and (4) the constituencies of UI have relatively harsh deservingness perceptions concerning the 'other unemployed'. Because the first three explanations have been advanced and documented elsewhere (Cox, 1998, 2001; Green-Pedersen, 2002; Hoogenboom, 2011; Jensen et al., 2018; Larsen & Andersen, 2009), they are only briefly summarized here; including their limitations. Our empirical analysis zooms in on the 'welfare deservingness' explanation.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first reviews the theoretical explanations; first those that stem from within the new politics literature and then those that react against this literature by arguing that the attitudes and behaviour of the members of UI constituencies are not only driven by their self-interest considerations, but also by their norms and ideas. The second section specifies the data and methods with which we test the deservingness argument. Using Dutch and Danish survey data, the third section scrutinizes how generous and conditional constituencies of UI are towards the unemployed, how they perceive the unemployed on a number of deservingness dimensions and what role these deservingness perceptions play in shaping support for the social rights and obligations of the unemployed. The fourth section concludes and offers some points of discussion.

9.2 THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

9.2.1 'New politics' arguments for the lack of public resistance

The first two explanations we offer are borrowed from the new politics literature because they both assume that the answer to the puzzling lack of public resistance against the retrenchment of UI is to be found in the self-interested attitudes and behaviour of the members of UI constituencies. In Denmark and the Netherlands, the interests of these constituencies have traditionally been promoted by specialized trade unions. However, some argue that the unions have lost much of their political bargaining power over recent decades, and are thus no longer capable of shielding UI from retrenchment (Cox, 2001). Especially in the Netherlands, there is some factual basis for the story of waning trade union power (Hoogenboom, 2011). Not only have

Dutch unionization rates seen a sharp decline (from 24.5 per cent in 1987 to 17.7 per cent in 2015)[2], the social partners (i.e., employers' and employees' organizations) were also barred from the administration of UI in 2002, when the state took over. In Denmark, several major labour market reforms have been passed without much involvement by the social partners (Larsen & Andersen, 2009), which suggests that the Danish trade unions also perhaps no longer have the political strength they once did. However, because union density is still relatively high in Denmark (despite a decline from 75.2 per cent in 1987 to 65.4 per cent in 2015), and the Danish unions still play a substantial part in the administration of UI, it is apparent that they still have considerable bargaining power. Accordingly, the Danish case shows that little public resistance against retrenchment of UI can also occur in a country with strong unions. Thus, only looking at the power of organized trade unions cannot, in our opinion, fully explain why strong public opposition against retrenchment of UI was lacking. On the contrary, from a classic new politics perspective, the cases of Denmark and the Netherlands appear even more puzzling.

A second new politics argument is that policymakers have successfully prevented the welfare constituencies from mobilizing against cutbacks being enacted by applying strategies of 'blame avoidance' (Weaver, 1987). There is indeed ample evidence from the Dutch and Danish cases that the political elites did their best to do so, as one can recognize all three of Pierson's (1994) classic blame-avoidance strategies in the retrenchment of UI–particularly in the initial phases. The first strategy, obfuscation, is about hiding the cutbacks and the consequences thereof from the public through the implementation of 'invisible' reforms (Jensen et al., 2018). Freezing or not indexing social security benefits, as was done a number of times with unemployment benefits in the Netherlands (Green-Pedersen, 2002), is one typical example of how governments can lower benefits without attracting much public attention, and accordingly, preventing the mobilization of those with concentrated interests in UI. A second blame-avoidance strategy, division, is about targeting the retrenchment at specific subgroups within a broader policy target group, so that smaller groups within the welfare constituencies are prevented from joining forces. In both Denmark and the Netherlands, cutbacks were first and foremost targeted at (younger) unemployed people with relatively shorter work records (Larsen, 2008b). The 'insider' workforce, comprising mainly (older) workers with a longer work history, was initially affected to a much lesser extent. As a result, younger workers were less likely to gain the support of older workers in resisting retrenchment. The third strategy of blame avoidance, compensation, refers to the act of giving something in return for the losses suffered as a result of retrenchment. Examples of the compensation strategy include the extension of benefit duration for unemployed people with an extensive work record introduced in the Netherlands in 1987 and 1995, the more lenient work requirements for older unemployed people in Denmark in 1995 and the 'compensatory' schemes that allowed sabbatical leave for childcare and education, implemented during the first Danish labour market reform in 1993. However, after the initial changes, the retrenchment–especially harsher conditionality and shorter benefit duration–came to affect all groups of the unemployed; the compensation schemes were abolished and the number of people who fell out of the unemployed benefit system increased. Though not without its merits, the idea that political elites successfully applied some blame-avoidance strategies thus explains only part of the puzzling absence of resistance against retrenchment.

9.2.2 'Ideas matter' arguments for the lack of public resistance

What the new politics arguments have in common is the assumption that members of welfare constituencies, and their representatives, are motived primarily by self-interest. To protect their interests, they are bound to resist retrenchment and therefore need to be obfuscated, divided or compensated. However, such a one-sided focus on self-interest tends to ignore the important role played by norms and ideas. The two remaining explanations recognize that 'ideas matter', by arguing that the lack of resistance was also rooted in the beliefs of constituency members regarding (1) the need for welfare reform and (2) the welfare deservingness of unemployed people. With regard to the first, it is well documented that Dutch and Danish political elites, including union leaders, adopted diagnoses and ideas that led them to conclude that UI needed to be retrenched in order to fix and optimize the structures of the labour market (Cox, 1998, 2001; Larsen & Andersen, 2009). According to Cox (2001: 464), for example, 'reform was made possible in Denmark and the Netherlands by political leaders who mobilized public debate by a process called "path shaping"–framing issues in ways that generated widespread support for reform initiatives'. In this view, the general public, including the constituencies of UI, accepted retrenchment because they embraced the elites' conception that lower benefit levels, shorter benefit duration and increased work obligations would enhance employment, strengthen the economy, and in the long run, improve the lives of unemployed people (see also Taylor-Gooby, 2001). As illustrated in Appendix 9.2, however, our data shows that the need for reform found only some, but certainly not overwhelming, support among the constituencies of UI. The idea that unemployment benefits are bad for the national economy, for example, was only endorsed by a fraction of the Dutch and Danish constituencies of UI. Thus, even though political elites seem to have convinced some constituency members of the need for retrenchment, large numbers chose not to accept that viewpoint.

Another 'ideas matter' way to solve the puzzle of little public opposition against UI retrenchment, which our empirical analyses address, is to argue that the public, including the constituencies of UI, accepted the retrenchment because it was targeted at a group that is generally considered to be less deserving of social welfare; that is, the unemployed (van Oorschot, 2006a). Deservingness theory argues that the working-age, able-bodied unemployed are generally evaluated much harsher on the CARIN criteria than other target groups, such as the elderly or the disabled (see Chapters 1 and 2). Previous studies have shown that the unemployed are indeed often associated with undesirable traits such as fraudulent behaviour and laziness (Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Furnham, 1983; Larsen, 2002; Maassen & De Goede, 1989). Furthermore, such negative deservingness perceptions are known to increase people's acceptance of retrenchment proposals (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Slothuus, 2007). However, because most deservingness studies have exclusively focused on the broader population, little is known about the deservingness opinions of specific groups of welfare constituencies. One notable exception in this regard is the study by Furaker and Blomsterberg (2003), which demonstrated that Swedish citizens, including those with current or previous experience of unemployment, hold somewhat stigmatizing attitudes towards unemployed people. For example, about half of those unemployed at the time agreed that many people who receive unemployment benefits would be able to get a job if they just wanted to; among those who had been unemployed in the 10 years preceding the survey, 72.7 per cent shared that view. It could be, however, that

such deservingness perceptions do not matter much to constituency members when forming opinions about unemployment benefits, as their self-interest in those benefits might outweigh whatever they think of others using the system. Therefore, our empirical analyses seek to contribute to the existing literature by scrutinizing the role played by the deservingness perceptions and self-interests of constituency members in shaping their generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed. More specifically, we aim to address three empirical questions: (1) How generous and conditional are the constituencies of UI towards the unemployed?; (2) How do the constituencies perceive the unemployed on a number of deservingness dimensions; and (3) What role do these deservingness perceptions play in shaping the generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed?

9.3 DATA AND METHODS

9.3.1 Data: the Dutch and Danish Welfare Opinions Survey

To test our deservingness argument, we use data from the unique but hitherto underused Welfare Opinions Survey, conducted in the Netherlands in 2006 (n=1972, participation rate=73 per cent) and in Denmark in 2008 (n=1464, participation rate=49 per cent). There are three main reasons for selecting this particular survey. First, by measuring public support for both the social rights and obligations of the unemployed, the survey connects quite well to the above-described policy developments in the Dutch and Danish UI schemes. Second, its measurements of self-reported receipt of unemployment benefits (in the past, present, and for the Netherlands, also predicted receipt in the future) allow us to identify the Dutch and Danish constituencies of UI. Third, the survey provides an exceptionally fine-grained account of people's deservingness perceptions about the unemployed.

9.3.2 Dependent variables: welfare generosity and welfare conditionality

Welfare generosity is measured by a single item asking respondents to what extent, on a scale from 0 to 10, society should grant unemployed people the right to financial support, given that public funds are limited. An additional benefit of this item is that its introduction prompted respondents to think in terms of retrenchment: 'If we cut back on benefits, the question of who has a greater or lesser right to financial support from society will become more important'. In addition to capturing people's support for the social rights of the unemployed, this particular framing might have also tapped into people's resistance against the retrenchment of those rights. Higher scores then also reflect a stronger opposition to retrenchment of unemployment provision. *Welfare conditionality* is operationalized as a sum scale of six items about the requirements that the long-term unemployed (of any age) should have to fulfil in order to continue receiving unemployment benefits. The following requirements were mentioned in both countries: (a) look for work, (b) participate in activation programmes, (c) receive training or retraining, (d) accept any paid job that is offered, (e) accept a daily commuting time of more than two hours and (f) move to another town or city to find work. Whereas the Danish respondents were given a dichotomous choice (yes=1; no=0), the Dutch respondents could, in addition to either agreeing (=1) or disagreeing (=0), also select a neutral response category (neither agree nor disagree=0.5). The

resulting scale variable ranges from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 6, with higher scores representing stronger acceptance of imposing obligations on the unemployed.

9.3.3 Independent variables: constituency status and deservingness perceptions

Identifying those who bear the concentrated costs of the retrenchment of UI–that is, the welfare constituencies–is a tricky but important empirical issue. On the basis of self-reported receipt of unemployment benefits and experience of unemployment, we identified three sub-groups within the population (see Table 9.1). The group of primary interest for this chapter, the core constituency, consists of those currently receiving unemployment benefits within the family (DK) or household (NL). The insurance element embedded in unemployment protection means that those who had recently experienced unemployment, or expected to do so in the near future, should also be included in the core constituency. In Denmark, recent experience of unemployment was assessed by asking respondents whether they or their partner had been unemployed within the previous five years. In the Netherlands, this item was not available, but we used a prospective item instead that asked respondents to appraise the likelihood of being forced into unemployment in the coming 12 months. Taken together, the core constituency amounts to 25.8 per cent in Denmark and 15.7 per cent in the Netherlands.[3] A second sub-group, the peripheral constituency, comprises those who reported having received unemployment benefit earlier in their life, but who did not belong to the core constituency. In Denmark, 19.7 per cent of the respondents belong to the peripheral constituency, for the Netherlands the figure is 20.4 per cent. A third sub-group, the non-constituency, is a residual category that consists of those who had not received unemployment benefits, had not recently been unemployed (DK) or did not expect to be unemployed in the near future (NL). This non-constituency group includes 54.5 per cent of the Danish sample and 63.9 per cent of the Dutch sample.

Table 9.1 Sample distribution of the core constituencies, peripheral constituencies and non-constituencies

	Denmark (N=1464)		The Netherlands (N=1946)	
1	*Core constituency* currently receiving unemployment benefits within the family or has experienced unemployment in the previous five years	25.8%	*Core constituency* currently receiving unemployment benefits within the household or expect to be unemployed in the coming twelve months	15.7%
2	*Peripheral constituency* received unemployment benefits earlier in life	19.7%	*Peripheral constituency* received unemployment benefits earlier in life	20.4%
3	*Non-constituency* never received unemployment benefits and has not experienced unemployment in the previous five years	54.5%	*Non-constituency* never received unemployment benefits and do not expect to become unemployed in the coming twelve months	63.9%

Note: The constituencies reported in the table are mutually exclusive, meaning that a respondent may only be in one of the categories.

The popular deservingness perceptions regarding the unemployed that are used in the analyses are related to the five CARIN criteria (see Table 9.3 for the exact question wordings and response options). Unfortunately, only two items–corresponding to the criteria of attitude and identity–were asked in exactly the same way in both countries. The first one probes respondents' (dis)agreement with the statement that they 'have little in common with typical unemployed people', which we have taken as a measurement of the degree to which respondents feel close to the unemployed in terms of identity. The second item, present in both the Danish and the Dutch questionnaire, refers to the attitude criterion, and asked respondents to what extent 'unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community because they receive benefits and services'.[4] The question wording and response options of the other deservingness items differed slightly between the countries. In Denmark, we took respondents' appraisal of the living standard of the unemployed as an indication of the extent to which they perceived the unemployed as being in need (see also Chapter 8). In the Netherlands, need was operationalized as an evaluation of the ease with which people on unemployment benefits could make ends meet. The final deservingness perception, which concerns the efforts taken by unemployed people to find a job, refers to both the control and the reciprocity criterion. Unemployed people who show little willingness to work may be held personally responsible for being unemployed (the criterion of control), but may also be regarded as 'cheaters' who do not reciprocate society by displaying the expected job-seeking behaviour (the criterion of reciprocity) (Petersen, 2012).

Lastly, we also included political ideology and some social-structural characteristics as control variables in the regression models. Age in years was recoded into six categories: (a) 15 to 24, (b) 25 to 34, (c) 35 to 44, (d) 45 to 54, (e) 55 to 64 and (f) 65 and above. Education was measured as the highest education level attained by respondents, comprising three categories: lower, medium and higher.[5] Self-reported monthly household income was grouped into four classes for both countries.[6] Gender is a dichotomous variable distinguishing between men and women. Political ideology was measured as respondents' self-placement on a conventional left-right scale.

9.3.4 Data analysis

First, we compared the average level of support for the social rights and obligations of the unemployed among the constituencies to that among the non-constituency. We then described how the constituencies and non-constituency evaluated the unemployed on four different deservingness dimensions, roughly corresponding to the CARIN criteria (see Chapter 2). Third, we estimated OLS regression models, in which we regressed people's generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed on their constituency status and popular deservingness perceptions. We also included an interaction term between constituency status and factor scores based on the deservingness items to assess whether the impact of deservingness perceptions differs between the constituencies and the non-constituency (see Appendix 9.3 for the factor analysis). As a robustness check, we re-ran the models while controlling for respondents' social-structural characteristics and political ideology (see Appendix 9.4). It must be noted at this point, however, that direct cross-country comparisons of the regression parameters were hampered by the different operationalization of some of the independent variables in the two countries (different question wordings and/or response categories). Therefore, between-country comparisons were drawn on a more abstract level; comparing broad empirical patterns instead of specific statistical

effects. Because older, higher-educated and higher-income people were oversampled in the Netherlands, a weighting procedure was applied to correct for this.[7]

9.4 RESULTS

9.4.1 The generosity and conditionality of the constituencies and non-constituency

Table 9.2 reports the average support for granting unemployed people the right to financial assistance in times of retrenchment in the three constituency categories, and shows that people in the core and peripheral constituencies are somewhat more generous towards unemployed people compared with those in the non-constituency. It should be noted, however, that support for the social rights of the unemployed is considerably lower than support for the rights of the old and disabled across all constituency categories in both Denmark and the Netherlands. Even the members of the core constituency of UI thus seem to care less for the unemployed than they do for the elderly and the disabled. The lower position of the unemployed on the welfare priority list might in itself already be a first indication as to why the retrenchment of UI has been accepted.

With regard to welfare conditionality, Table 9.2 reveals that almost all Dutch and Danish respondents–regardless of their constituency category–accept some of the 'softer' work-related obligations, such as looking for work, participating in activation programmes and undergoing (re)training. From this perspective, public support for imposing social obligations on the unemployed is high in both Denmark and the Netherlands. However, the opinion gap between the members of the constituencies and those of the non-constituency becomes visible when looking at acceptance of some of the 'harder' obligations, which turns out to be much lower among the constituencies. Rejection of the idea that unemployed people ought to accept any paid job offered to them, accept daily commuting time of more than two hours or move to another city or town to find work, is more common among people in the core constituency, and, albeit to a lesser extent, peripheral constituency. Although constituency members are thus somewhat less demanding in terms of wage, occupational and geographical mobility, it is definitely not the case that they all argue for an entirely unconditional UI. In both countries, for example, no less than one out of three core constituency members feel that the unemployed should be forced to accept any job offered to them, even if that job is well below the previous salary or education level.

Table 9.2 Public support for the social rights and social obligations of the unemployed

	Denmark			The Netherlands		
	Core constituency	Peripheral constituency	Non-constituency	Core constituency	Peripheral constituency	Non-constituency
Support for the social rights (SR) of the unemployed	Mean (M)=6.77	M=6.86	M=6.25	M=6.23	M=6.25	M=5.92
Support for the SR of the elderly	M=8.18	M=8.37	M=8.08	M=7.27	M=7.24	M=7.10
Support for the SR of the disabled	M=8.84	M=8.89	M=8.93	M=7.45	M=7.40	M=7.34
Look for work						
Yes	97.8%	97.6%	98.6%	94.1%	93.8%	94.1%
No	2.2%	2.4%	1.4%	1.5%	0.7%	1.4%
Agree nor disagree				4.4%	5.5%	4.5%
Participate in activation						
Yes	86.5%	89.9%	92.0%	86.5%	90.3%	92.9%
No	13.5%	10.1%	8.0%	3.9%	1.5%	1.1%
Agree nor disagree				9.6%	8.2%	6.0%
Undergo training or retraining						
Yes	94.1%	95.5%	97.2%	88.0%	87.8%	90.6%
No	5.9%	4.5%	2.8%	2.9%	2.0%	1.4%
Agree nor disagree				9.1%	10.2%	8.0%
Accept any paid job that is offered to them						
Yes	33.5%	38.1%	49.7%	32.4%	36.5%	45.2%
No	66.5%	61.9%	50.3%	36.2%	25.0%	18.2%
Agree nor disagree				31.4%	38.5%	36.6%
Accept daily commuting time of more than 2 hours						
Yes	25.5%	29.5%	41.3%	14.9%	18.1%	21.0%
No	74.5%	70.5%	58.7%	72.2%	61.0%	47.8%
Agree nor disagree				12.9%	20.9%	31.2%
Move to another town or city to find work						
Yes	14.7%	14.0%	26.6%	15.3%	19.9%	24.9%
No	85.3%	86.0%	73.4%	60.7%	52.7%	43.3%
Agree nor disagree				24.0%	27.4%	31.8%

9.4.2 The deservingness perceptions of the constituencies and non-constituency

In line with the findings of Furaker and Blomsterberg (2003) for Sweden, Table 9.3 shows that despite being somewhat more positive than the non-constituency, large proportions of the Danish and the Dutch constituencies of UI have rather harsh deservingness perceptions regarding the unemployed. With the exception of identity considerations, the Dutch constituencies actually barely differ from the non-constitueny in their perceptions of the unemployed. In Denmark, no less than 60.8 per cent of the core constituency members and 64.9 per cent of the peripheral constituency members are convinced that most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one. In the Netherlands, about half of the constituency members think it is frequently or very frequently the case that unemployed people make little or no effort to find work, while the rest think this is sometimes the case. Less than 10 per cent suggest that unemployed people never or rarely show such unwillingness to work. Most Dutch and Danish constituency members thus hold the unemployed personally responsible for their situation (the criterion of control), or feel that they are not contributing enough to society in terms of job-searching behaviour (the criterion of reciprocity).

Perhaps even more striking is the large proportion of the constituencies who answered that they have little in common with typical unemployed people. In Denmark, about half of the core and peripheral constituency members did not seem to identify with unemployed people. In the Netherlands, this actually rises to 65.5 per cent for the core constituency and 66.5 per cent for the peripheral constituency. Relatively large sections of the Dutch and Danish constituencies thus consider themselves to be different to most other unemployed people (the criterion of identity). Furthermore, about half of the Dutch constituency members also feel that unemployed people ought to be more grateful to the broader community for the benefits and services that are given to them. Although the Danish constituency members are somewhat less inclined to demand gratitude, 43.5 per cent and 36.6 per cent of the core and peripheral constituency respectively still think that unemployed people should be grateful for what they receive (the criterion of attitude). Perceptions of need, finally, are also relatively ‘unfavourable’ (as in, ‘not in need’), particularly in Denmark, where about half of the constituency members believe that the unemployed have a fairly good standard of living. In the Netherlands, there seems to be greater concern about the actual needs of the unemployed, as only 14.8 per cent of the core and 16.7 per cent of the peripheral constituency argue that it is easy or very easy for a family to make ends meet on unemployment benefits. However, caution is warranted when interpreting the middle category of ‘only just’ (‘*het kan net*’), as this might also be the typical Dutch way of saying that unemployed people are ‘doing just fine’, and are thus not that needy. What should, above all, be noted from Table 9.3 is that most constituency members do not–as one might intuitively expect–have particularly favourable deservingness perceptions about unemployed people, despite the fact that they too are, were or expect to be, part of the group of jobless people in receipt of unemployment benefits.

Table 9.3 The deservingness perceptions of the core constituencies, peripheral constituencies and non-constituencies

Deservingness criteria	Question wording	Response categories	Denmark			The Netherlands		
			Core constituency	Peripheral constituency	Non-constituency	Core constituency	Peripheral constituency	Non-constituency
Control/reciprocity	DK: 'Most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one'	(strongly) disagree	30.1%	23.8%	15.4%			
		agree nor disagree	9.1%	11.3%	9.8%			
		(strongly) agree	60.8%	64.9%	74.8%			
	NL: 'How often do you think that unemployed people make little or no effort to find a job?'	never to rarely				9.2%	7.1%	6.7%
		sometimes				43.2%	44.7%	44.5%
		(very) often				47.6%	48.2%	48.8%
Attitude	DK and NL: 'Unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community because they receive benefits and services'	(strongly) disagree	34.9%	38.7%	27.6%	29.4%	28.9%	24.0%
		Agree nor disagree	21.6%	24.7%	24.4%	23.4%	24.6%	27.7%
		(strongly) agree	43.5%	36.6%	48.0%	47.2%	46.5%	48.3%
Identity	DK and NL: 'I have little in common with typical unemployed people'	(strongly) disagree	26.3%	17.9%	10.0%	9.0%	12.2%	6.7%
		agree nor disagree	26.9%	31.2%	21.2%	25.5%	21.3%	18.7%
		(strongly) agree	46.8%	50.9%	68.8%	65.5%	66.5%	74.6%
Need	DK: 'How do you estimate the living standard of unemployed people in Denmark?' (0=extremely bad; 10=extremely good)	rather bad	33.0%	28.2%	22.5%			
		not bad, not good	22.8%	21.5%	23.4%			
		rather good	44.2%	50.3%	54.1%			
	NL: 'To what extent do you think it is difficult to make ends meet on an unemployment benefit?'	(very) difficult				30.0%	27.0%	28.2%
		only just				55.2%	56.3%	57.2%
		(very) easy				14.8%	16.7%	14.6%

Note: DK=Denmark; NL=the Netherlands.

9.4.3 The role of deservingness perceptions in explaining people's generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed

The last question addressed here is what impact popular deservingness perceptions have on people's generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed. As shown in Table 9.4, the results of the OLS regression models are quite similar for Denmark and the Netherlands. In both countries, we find the expected effect from being in the constituency of UI. Those in the core and in the peripheral constituency are more generous and less conditional than those in the non-constituency. However, being in the constituency or not explains very little of the variance in people's preferences regarding generosity and conditionality. In Denmark, only 1.2 per cent of the variation in support for social rights and 4.1 per cent of the variation in support for social obligations is explained by self-reported benefit receipt and experience of unemployment. In the Netherlands, the explained variance is even lower: 0.6 per cent for generosity and 2.6 per cent for conditionality. The already weak effect of being in the core or peripheral constituency is weakened even further once popular deservingness perceptions regarding the unemployed are taken into account. In case of generosity, the difference between the constituency and non-constituency of both the Dutch and Danish UI schemes actually becomes insignificant.

All the deservingness perceptions included in this study exert a particularly strong influence on people's generosity and conditionality. Having negative deservingness perceptions markedly weakens support for social rights and strengthens support for social obligations. More specifically, we found lower levels of generosity and higher levels of conditionality among those who (a) regard most unemployed as lazy people not trying hard enough to get a job, (b) demand that the unemployed show their gratitude for the benefits they receive, (c) see the unemployed as different from themselves and (d) believe that the living standards of the unemployed are relatively good. As shown in Appendix 9.4, the effects of these deservingness perceptions remain strong and stable even after controlling for respondents' social-structural background (i.e., age, gender, education and income) and political ideology. In terms of explained variance, the models including the deservingness perceptions have much greater explanatory power than those including only the constituency dummies. In Denmark, the explained variation rises to 14.6 per cent with regard to support for social rights and to 18.9 per cent with regard to support for social obligations. In the Netherlands, it increases to 14.2 per cent for generosity and 13 per cent for conditionality. Thus, it appears that variations in moral deservingness assessments of the unemployed matter much more than simply the specific constituency a person is a member of. Lastly, we included interaction terms between the core constituency dummy and factor scores based on the deservingness items. If the self-interest of the constituency made their deservingness assessment less relevant for opinion formation, we would expect a negative interaction effect. However, there is no sign of such an effect. Thus, it appears that deservingness perceptions do *not* matter less for the core constituency; that is, self-interest does not outweigh the importance of deservingness perceptions.

Table 9.4 OLS regressions estimating the constituency and deservingness effects on welfare generosity and conditionality

	Generosity (0-10)			Conditionality (0 – 6)		
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
			Denmark			
Welfare constituency						
non-constituency	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
peripheral constituency	.100**	.046 ns	.045 ns	-.138**	-.084**	-.082**
core constituency	.094**	.016 ns	.021 ns	-.200**	-.120**	-.121**
Deservingness perceptions						
control/reciprocity		-.118**			.246**	
attitude		-.114**			.089**	
identity		-.154**			.061*	
need		-.164**			.143**	
deservingness factor			-.379**			.383**
core x des. factor			.023ns			.003ns
R^2	.012	.146	.139	.041	.189	.182
N	1414	1401	1386	1389	1375	1361
			The Netherlands			
Welfare constituency						
non-constituency	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
peripheral constituency	.074**	.060*	.061*	-.100**	-.083**	-.088**
core constituency	.062**	.035 ns	.036 ns	-.153**	-.127**	-.130**
Deservingness perceptions						
control/reciprocity		-.186**			.098**	
Attitude		-.150**			.162**	
Identity		-.120**			.152**	
Need		-.093**			.065**	
deservingness factor			-.356**			.324**
core x des. factor			-.022ns			.010ns
R^2_a	.006	.141	.141	.026	.130	.133
N	1871	1476	1421	1736	1476	1374

Notes: *p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; ns > .05. Reported parameters are standardized regression coefficients.

9.5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter has sought to explain why there was relatively little public resistance against the retrenchment of UI in Denmark and the Netherlands. In the past few decades, a large segment of the Danish and Dutch electorates have experienced a severe deterioration of their protection against the risk of unemployment. Most notable is the reduction in the duration periods and the increased conditionality for people receiving unemployment benefits. The lack of opposition to such retrenchment is puzzling, because Dutch and Danish unemployment schemes have traditionally had relatively large and well-organized welfare constituencies. We suggest that in addition to the waning power of the trade unions (particularly in the Netherlands), the successful application of elite blame-avoidance strategies and the changing ideas about the need for welfare state reform, the relatively harsh deservingness assessment of the unemployed among those with a concentrated interest (the welfare constituencies) might have been pivotal for the absence of resistance. Using Dutch and Danish survey data, the chapter demonstrates this mechanism by

showing that large parts of the constituencies of UI, operationalized as self-reported benefit receipt and experience of unemployment, evaluate the unemployed negatively on the deservingness criteria of control, attitude, reciprocity, identity and need. Even in the core constituency, it is a widespread perception that most unemployed people could get a job if they really wanted to, that they should be grateful when helped, that their living conditions are fairly good and that they are different from 'us'. Furthermore, such adverse deservingness perceptions are strongly correlated with support for diminishing the social rights of the unemployed and increasing conditionality. Because these deservingness perceptions are as important for attitudes among the core constituency members as they are for the non-constituency members, there is no indication that their self-interest in the UI system crowds out the importance of deservingness assessments. This finding goes against the basic assumption made in the new politics literature, which in its original formulation tends to take for granted that groups with a concentrated interest will have a strong self-interested preference for preventing retrenchment (Pierson, 1994, 1996). On the one hand, the chapter contributes to the new politics literature by showing that common vested interests do not automatically transform into a welfare constituency that resists retrenchment. On the other hand, the chapter contributes to the deservingness literature by focusing on the deservingness perceptions of particular groups of welfare constituencies, rather than those of the general public.

A first important point of discussion, however, concerns the extent to which the patterns found in our two country cases are part of a larger European story. With regard to deservingness perceptions, data from the fourth wave of the European Social Survey (ESS), conducted in 2008/09, shows that Danish and Dutch people with experience of unemployment are not particularly harsher towards the unemployed than those living in the rest of Europe (see Appendix 9.5). If anything, previous research has shown that the Dutch and Danish public hold, by comparative standards at least, relatively positive attitudes about poor and unemployed people. Since the first Eurobarometer study in 1976, the Dutch and Danes have, for example, consistently had a figure of less than 20 per cent indicating that poverty can be assigned to individual responsibility (Larsen, 2006). There is also evidence that poor and social assistance clients were portrayed as deserving in more than half of the Danish mass media stories from 2004 to 2009 (Larsen & Dejgaard, 2013). At the policy level, generalizations about Europe as a whole are less straightforward. On the one hand, retrenchment of UI is not confined to the Dutch and Danish cases, as it can be observed in other European countries as well (Clasen & Clegg, 2011). On the other hand, there have been countries where, at times, retrenchment of UI did encounter much stronger public resistance–as was the case, for example, in France and Germany (Hoogenboom, 2011; Palier, 2010).

A second important issue is the cross-sectional nature of the data used here, which limits our ability to make causal arguments. After all, our core argument that deservingness perceptions prevented the constituencies from resisting retrenchment can be turned around in terms of causal logic (Raven et al., 2011). It could be the case that the retrenchment itself created negative perceptions of the Dutch and Danish unemployed. Such a process of (negative) policy feedback seems to be implied by a number of scholars critical of contemporary workfare policies. However, there is simply no empirical evidence that retrenchment has led to more negative perceptions of the poor and unemployed. Instead, the available longitudinal data demonstrates a pattern of

stability in popular opinion towards the unemployed in Denmark and the Netherlands between the period prior to the most severe retrenchment of UI (the 1970s and early 1980s) and the period during or afterwards (Hedegaard, 2014; Jeene, 2015; Larsen, 2004; Maassen & De Goede, 1989; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017). Thus, there is little empirical evidence to support a suggestion of reverse causality. In our opinion, the deservingness perceptions we have studied are neither the product nor the driver of retrenchment policies. Retrenchment was the result of structural problem pressures and changing economic ideas among political elites (Larsen & Andersen, 2009). However, it is plausible that the harsh deservingness perceptions of the members of the constituencies of UI were a necessary condition for the severe retrenchment political elites have managed to implement in Denmark and the Netherlands.

Notes

[1] The only significant exception was the protest that followed when 34,000 unemployed dropped out of the Danish UI in 2013. This was a severe miscalculation, as the estimate of the Ministry of Finance of 2010 was that only 1000 to 2000 would drop out as a result of the reduction of the UI period from four to two years. In the wake of the protests, the Danish political elite implemented three mediating temporary schemes to soften the effects. However, after the media fuss faded, the political elites abandoned these schemes and made a new agreement (2015) that settled the UI period at two years and largely maintained the stricter work record entitlement rules. What this example shows is that the constituencies of UI are capable of mobilizing against retrenchment, but that barely any mobilization took place. Thus, the overall picture is that both Dutch and Danish political elites have had the freedom and opportunity to retrench the generous UI systems, turning them into more modest systems.

[2] Data on trade union membership are retrieved from the OECD Statistics website, accessed 11 May 2018 at https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TUD

[3] The lower proportion of respondents in the Dutch core constituency is most likely the combined result of three factors. First, the time period of the prospective item in the Dutch questionnaire was much shorter than the period of the retrospective item in the Danish one (12 months vs 5 years). Second, while the Dutch prospective question only probed a respondent's own predicted likelihood of becoming unemployed, the Danish retrospective question also asked about the recent experience of unemployment of the respondent's partner. Third, the larger welfare constituency in Denmark might also reflect the somewhat more fluid nature of the Danish labour market.

[4] Although one could say this item measures a deservingness valuation instead of a deservingness perception, it is the best available option in the data (see also Kallio & Kouvo, 2015).

[5] In Denmark, lower education is coded as those with primary and secondary education, shown as highest schooling level, plus those indicating no education level. Medium education is coded as those with vocational training. High education is coded as those with so-called short, medium or higher further education. In the Netherlands, lower education is '*basisonderwijs & vbmo'*, medium education is '*havo/vwo & mbo'* and higher education is '*hbo & wo'*.

[6] The four income categories and their sample distribution in Denmark and the Netherlands are:

Income category	Denmark		The Netherlands	
Cat. 1	Below DKK 16,666	17.7%	Below EUR 1150	7.8%
Cat. 2	DKK 16,666 to 33,333	25.3%	EUR 1150 to 1800	22.4%
Cat. 3	DKK 33,334 to 58,333	33.4%	EUR 1801 to 2600	31.2%
Cat. 4	Above DKK 58,333	23.6%	Above EUR 2600	38.6%

Note: The numbers represent the gross monthly income in Denmark but the net figure for the Netherlands.

[7] A comparison with national statistics revealed that such weighting was not necessary in the Danish sample.

PART III

GENERAL CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

10 CONCLUSION: WHAT THE BOOK CONTRIBUTES AND WHAT IT LEAVES OPEN FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

TIJS LAENEN

In addition to bringing greater conceptual clarification and empirical examination to the welfare deservingness framework, the book also brings popular deservingness opinions closer to the broader welfare policy context in which they take shape.

Despite the considerable progress made in recent years by a growing body of research trying to improve our understanding of popular welfare deservingness opinions, some important knowledge gaps remain (see Chapter 2). This final chapter summarizes the book's main contributions to the broader strand of welfare deservingness literature. First, the book brings greater conceptual clarification and empirical examination to the welfare deservingness framework, by pioneering a number of much-needed conceptual distinctions and embarking on several hitherto underexplored empirical pathways in deservingness research. Second, the book brings popular deservingness opinions closer to the institutional context in which they take shape, by studying their relationship with real-world welfare state policies. In the following, we discuss these two overarching categories of contributions in more detail, and identify some of the most promising paths for future research to explore.

10.1 BRINGING GREATER CONCEPTUAL CLARITY AND EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION TO THE WELFARE DESERVINGNESS FRAMEWORK

A major contribution of the present book is that it offers greater conceptual clarification to deservingness theory, by introducing a number of novel conceptual distinctions that have, for the most part, remained invisible in previous research. Providing such conceptual clarity is, however, crucial to enhance the development of a common language that encourages researchers–often coming from different academic disciplines–to talk 'with' rather than 'past' each other, and therefore, ultimately, to improve our collective understanding of (the causes and consequences of) popular deservingness opinions. Perhaps most important in this regard is the distinction between deservingness perceptions, defined as the way in which people evaluate or 'score' policy target groups on different deservingness criteria, and deservingness valuations, referring to the (relative) importance people attach to such criteria: a distinction that is made here not only on a theoretical level, but also in the empirical analyses. In the following paragraphs, we first summarize the book's main findings regarding deservingness perceptions, followed by the findings regarding deservingness valuations. We then elaborate on two other important conceptual distinctions: one between absolute deservingness and relative deservingness, and one between welfare deservingness and welfare support. Along the way, we also discuss what the book contributes to the welfare deservingness framework in terms of empirical examination, and what it leaves open for future research.

With regard to deservingness perceptions, the empirical part of the book offers valuable insights into the public image of various policy target groups. Although the primary focus is, as in most prior empirical studies, on the able-bodied poor and unemployed, we also examine popular perceptions regarding allegedly more-deserving groups, such as the elderly and the sick. Chapter 6, in particular, includes a broader range of target groups, and shows that although people's perceptions are often in line with the expectations of deservingness theorists, they sometimes also deviate from them. The elderly, for example, were seen by quite a few of the focus group participants as being relatively well-off financially, which runs counter to the common assumption in deservingness literature that they are perceived as a group facing particularly great needs (van Oorschot, 2006a).[1] Putting deservingness theory to a more stringent empirical test, however, requires an even more systematic comparison of how different policy target groups are evaluated on the CARIN criteria–something this book is unable to accomplish due to a lack of fine-grained public opinion data. Thus, comparing popular perceptions of deservingness across multiple target groups remains a crucial task for future research. With regard to the specific target group of the unemployed, Chapter 9 demonstrates that large proportions of the Dutch and the Danish public think that most unemployed are a 'different kind of people' (the identity criterion), have a relatively good

standard of living (the need criterion) and make little effort to find a job (the criteria of control and reciprocity). Remarkably, such adverse deservingness perceptions are also found among the 'core constituencies' of unemployment insurance, which consist of people who are, have been or expect to be, in receipt of unemployment benefit. Studying the deservingness perceptions of specific subgroups (such as the constituencies of welfare schemes) rather than those of the general population is another path worth exploring further in future research. Chapter 8, however, demonstrates that Danish and Dutch citizens are clearly not representative of all Europeans, as there seems to be considerable cross-national variation in popular perceptions regarding the job-seeking efforts and material needs of unemployed people, which we attempt to explain through welfare policy design characteristics (see below) and economic indicators. In the well-performing economies of Western Europe, for example, the unemployed are perceived as less needy than in the worse-performing economies of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe (see also van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a). In addition to varying across countries, popular deservingness perceptions also fluctuate over time. For example, Europeans seem to think that the unemployed were worse off in 2008/09, when the financial crisis struck the European continent, than in 2016/17, when most European economies had largely recovered from the crisis. What these findings emphasize is the importance of studying popular deservingness perceptions in diverse national settings and over different years, in order to gain a better understanding of their contextual drivers. In addition to the economic context, future research should also pay closer attention to the often-neglected cultural-political (e.g., the role played by mass media) and demographic context (e.g., the impact of population ageing) in which deservingness perceptions take shape.

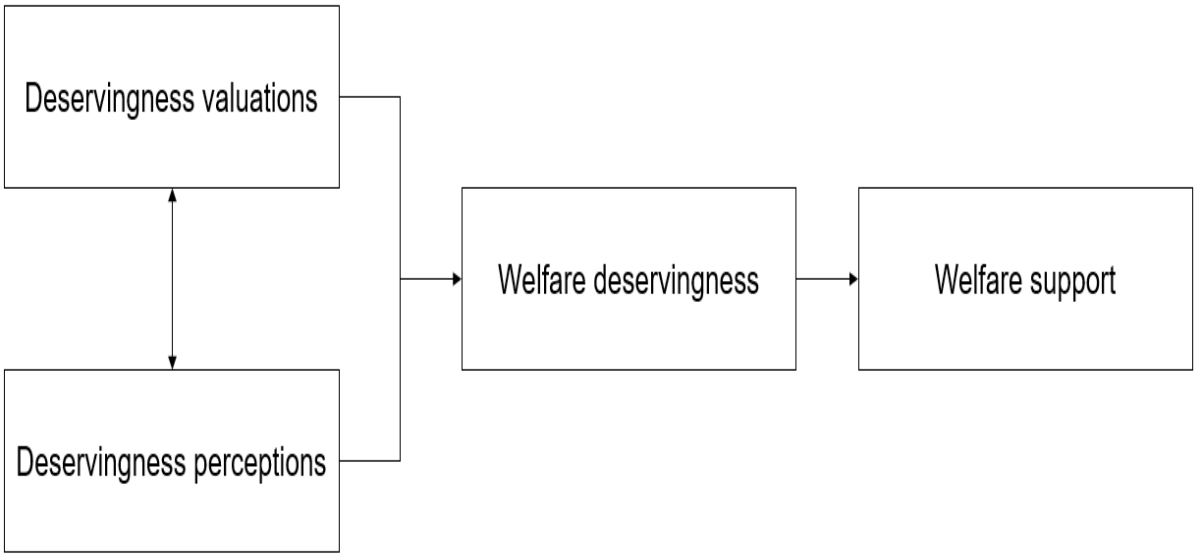
Deservingness perceptions also prove to be highly consequential with regard to support for social welfare: people are consistently less generous (in terms of social rights) and more conditional (in terms of social obligations) towards the unemployed if they evaluate them relatively negatively on the CARIN criteria. Chapters 8 and 9, for example, show that citizens who think that most unemployed people are not willing to work (the criteria of control and reciprocity), not really in need (the criterion of need) and not one of 'us' (the criterion of identity), are generally less inclined to designate the state as being responsible for providing the unemployed with a decent standard of living. At the same time, citizens who hold such adverse deservingness perceptions are much more inclined to favour job-seeking obligations being imposed on the unemployed, such as the requirement to accept jobs that are well below the previous pay level. By empirically examining how deservingness perceptions are related to support for social obligations, our study is a notable exception in a research field where the primary concern has been with the link between welfare deservingness and support for social rights. It remains to be seen, however, whether deservingness perceptions have an equally strong and stable impact on support for social welfare targeted at groups other than the able-bodied poor and unemployed, such as the old, the sick, and the disabled.[2] Another important task for future research is to explore how different types of deservingness perceptions interact in shaping welfare support. There are suggestions in the literature that the deservingness criteria do not operate independently from one another, as is implicitly assumed in most of our empirical analyses. Instead, indications exist that the criteria are interrelated, and may reinforce, or conversely temper, each other's impact on welfare support. For example, van Der Aa and colleagues (2018) found that claimants' personal responsibility for being sick (the control criterion) only impacts on support for public health care provision if their medical need exceeds a certain minimum threshold (the need criterion) (see also Huddy et al., 2015). Likewise, Kootstra (2016) found that citizens apply a double standard when considering the welfare deservingness of migrants and ethnic minorities (the criterion of identity), because they punish them more severely for the same undesirable behaviour, such as a lack of job-seeking efforts (the criteria of control and reciprocity) than natives (see also DeSante, 2013).

Simultaneously including multiple types of deservingness perceptions into integrated empirical models was one of the methodological approaches we adopted in order to grasp people's deservingness *valuations* (see Chapter 3). Chapter 8, for example, compares the (isolated) impact of two types of deservingness perceptions on support for the social rights of unemployed people, and shows that their relative importance differs strongly between countries. While in some countries perceptions of the job-seeking efforts of the unemployed are most decisive in shaping welfare support (e.g., Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands), in other countries, perceptions of their material needs are more important (e.g., Portugal, Spain and Slovenia). A similar observation is made in Chapter 6, where a qualitative approach is taken to measuring deservingness valuations: the relative importance people attach to different deservingness criteria is to some extent dependent on the country in which they live. While the criterion of reciprocity appears the most important motivator of welfare support in Germany, it is clearly the criterion of need in the UK. In Denmark, citizens place more or less equal emphasis on the deservingness criteria of need and reciprocity. The main conclusion arising from these findings is that the relative importance of deservingness criteria is context dependent. More empirical research is needed, however, into the contextual determinants of such popular deservingness valuations (see below for their relation to the institutional-policy context). There is also a pressing need to conduct deservingness studies in national settings other than the typical countries that have received the bulk of attention in empirical literature: namely Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK and the US.[3]

Chapter 5, for one, studies the relationship between people's deservingness valuations and their support for social welfare in Belgium, a country that has attracted preciously little attention in prior deservingness research (but see De Wilde, 2017; Meuleman et al., 2019). Using direct measurements of the importance people attach to deservingness criteria, we find that those who emphasize (some of) the criteria more strongly are considerably less generous and more conditional towards the unemployed (see also Chapter 7). It is crucial to note, however, that the impact of the deservingness criteria seems to differ between the two types of welfare support under consideration (see also Chapter 9). Emphasizing the criterion of attitude, for example, has a stronger (positive) effect on Belgians' support for social obligations than it has a (negative) effect on their support for social rights. In a similar vein, a recent German study shows that citizens apply different deservingness criteria in relation to different aspects of the unemployment benefit system (Buss, 2018). When evaluating the generosity of unemployment benefits, claimants' child-caring responsibilities seemed to be most important for determining deservingness: the more children a person has, the higher the level of benefit should be. By contrast, when considering the conditionality of unemployment benefits, the age of the recipients was of crucial significance: older unemployed were exempted far more frequently from work-related requirements than their younger counterparts.[4] An important lesson we can draw from these findings is that there seem to be different deservingness logics underlying support for social rights and support for social obligations (see also Gielens et al., 2019). However, the relative importance of deservingness criteria not only depends on what is being judged (rights or obligations), and on when and where these judgements are made, but also on who is being judged. As shown in Chapter 7, for example, placing emphasis on the criterion of need has a significant (negative) impact on support for the social rights of pensioners, but not on support for the rights of unemployed people and social assistance recipients. Instead, public support for the able-bodied policy target groups depends more strongly on the criterion of reciprocity. Future research should delve much deeper into the target specificity of the deservingness-support relationship (see for example Kootstra, 2017). Another promising avenue for future studies is to examine the extent to which the relative importance of deservingness criteria depends on the structural (for example, age) and cultural (for example, political ideology) characteristics of the decision-making individuals (see for example Jeene et al., 2013).

Up to this point, deservingness perceptions and deservingness valuations have been dealt with separately in this book, both in the theoretical discussions and in the empirical analyses. The two types of deservingness opinions are, however, strongly interconnected (see Figure 10.1). On the one hand, people's valuations could influence their perceptions. Imagine, for example, an individual (let us call her Ms Y this time) who attaches little importance to the criterion of need, and because of that, hardly notices other people's needs and thinks that most of her fellow citizens are relatively well-off financially. In this case, the emphasis placed on the deservingness criterion will shape the way in which policy target groups are 'scored' on that criterion. It could also be the case that Ms. Y completely disregards her perceptions of people's need when forming welfare preferences, because she does not value the underlying need criterion (see Chapter 2). On the other hand, people's perceptions could also influence their valuations. Suppose that after observing an increasing number of elderly homeless people during her holiday to the city, Ms Y starts believing that the elderly are not as wealthy as she first thought. This changing deservingness perception could, in turn, make Ms Y more sensitive to other people's needs, and more likely to emphasize the criterion of need when deciding who should get what from the welfare state. In this case, a target group's 'score' on a deservingness criterion will determine the importance attached to that criterion in welfare opinion formation. Future research should explore further the various ways in which deservingness valuations and deservingness perceptions are related to one another, and how they combine in shaping people's support for social welfare. To this end, researchers should develop measurements of both types of deservingness opinions, and use empirical models to discover how they interact with each other.

Figure 10.1 How deservingness valuations and perceptions combine to shape welfare deservingness and welfare support



Notes: *Deservingness valuations* refer to the relative importance people attach to deservingness criteria. *Deservingness perceptions* refer to the way in which people 'score' a target group on deservingness criteria. *Welfare deservingness* refers to the extent to which people consider a target group to be worthy of receiving social welfare. *Welfare support* refers to the degree to which people support granting social rights to (or imposing social obligations on) a target group.

In addition to the conceptual distinction between deservingness perceptions and deservingness valuations, the book also stresses the need to distinguish welfare deservingness from welfare support. In our view, the heretofore standard practice of using target-specific government responsibility (or government spending) preferences to measure the perceived welfare deservingness of a target group is ill-advised, because it risks ignoring the fact that welfare support is not only driven by deservingness opinions but also by other factors, such as self-interest, ideological beliefs and performance evaluations.

For this reason, most of the empirical chapters estimate integrated models that assess the direct impact of deservingness opinions (both perceptions and valuations) on support for social welfare, relative to other explanatory factors. In doing so, the book puts the welfare deservingness framework in a much broader perspective, by comparing it with alternative explanatory frameworks in unprecedented detail. Much of the empirical evidence suggests that the effects of deservingness opinions outweigh those of other, well-established explanatory factors. With regard to self-interest, the pattern is clear and consistent: deservingness opinions are much stronger predictors of welfare support compared with considerations of self-interest. First, (perceived) self-interest in social welfare provision was captured by means of social-structural characteristics, such as age, educational level, income and work status. Compared with deservingness opinions, however, such characteristics explain only a fraction of the variance in people's support for social welfare rights and obligations (see for example Chapter 5). Second, (perceived) self-interest was measured more directly, by gauging people's self-predicted likelihood of receiving welfare benefits. From this approach, deservingness also outweighs self-interest in explaining individual variation in welfare support (see Chapters 7 and 9). With regard to ideology, a similar (albeit less prominent) pattern emerges. Chapter 5, for example, demonstrates that support for imposing social obligations on the unemployed (to a greater degree than support for granting them social rights) is rooted more strongly in deservingness opinions than in general ideological beliefs, such as egalitarianism, individualism and political left-right orientation. These findings indicate that welfare deservingness is an indispensable factor to include in future welfare attitudes research, and should perhaps even be added as a third protagonist in the welfare attitudes scene, next to the two 'traditionally recognized' protagonists of self-interest and (political) ideology.

Although it is proven to be a very important factor, deservingness alone cannot fully explain public support for social welfare. Other factors, such as self-interest and ideology–but also performance evaluations (see Chapter 7)–continue to play a part in explaining the individual variation in welfare support. Furthermore, not everyone seems to adhere to logics of welfare deservingness. Chapter 6, for example, shows that citizens also justify their welfare policy preferences using normative criteria that fall outside of the deservingness framework, because they refer to characteristics of broader society rather than characteristics of welfare targets (that is, the logics of cost awareness, social investment and equality/universalism). The existence of a relatively large group of 'welfare egalitarians', who choose not to differentiate between various policy target groups (see Chapter 4), also suggests that not everyone is equally prone to deservingness thinking. What this goes to show is that the search for the individual-level determinants of welfare policy preferences is far from over, also when welfare deservingness is taken into consideration. What the book also lacks, however, are empirical examinations of the intricate ways in which some of the different explanatory factors interact with one another. In fact, the welfare deservingness model (see Figure 2.1) suggests that popular deservingness opinions function as some sort of mediating factor in the relationship between individuals' social-structural characteristics and ideological beliefs, and their support for social welfare (see also Cook & Barrett, 1992; Gilens, 1999; Meuleman et al., 2017). Some of the empirical chapters present initial, albeit indirect, evidence that this is indeed the case. In Chapter 5, for example, it is shown that the effects of social-structural position and ideological dispositions weaken considerably after taking deservingness opinions into account, which implies that there are mechanisms of mediation at play (see also Chapter 9). The idea that much of the impact of self-interest and ideology might be indirect also helps to explain why deservingness opinions have stronger statistical effects on welfare support. However, more research is needed to examine in greater detail if and how people's deservingness opinions are shaped by their (allegedly causally prior) social-structural and ideological characteristics.

A third important conceptual distinction that has often been overlooked in literature is the one between absolute deservingness (defined here as the degree to which a policy target group is considered deserving of social welfare irrespective of other target groups) and relative deservingness (which refers to the degree to which a target group is considered more, or less, deserving than other groups). A major issue with the relative variant of welfare deservingness, however, is that it depends greatly on the specific target groups under consideration (Cook, 1979). For example, when the unemployed are compared with the old and the sick, they are generally assigned the lowest position in the deservingness hierarchy (see Chapter 4). When the reference groups are instead social assistance recipients and migrants, the unemployed are likely to rank much higher (Coughlin, 1980; van Oorschot, 2008). Our study focuses primarily on the most 'traditional' target groups in the social welfare state (the elderly, the sick, the disabled and the unemployed), and accordingly also on the most 'traditional' social welfare schemes (healthcare, old-age pensions, unemployment benefits and social assistance). A glaring exception in this regard are families with children, who have been paid relatively little attention in this book (as well as in the broader body of welfare attitudes literature), despite the fact that they are the primary target of various welfare benefits and services. The results from the few existing empirical studies on the welfare deservingness of families with children seem to point in different directions. On the one hand, it is often shown that citizens are more generous and less conditional towards welfare claimants if they have (a larger number of) children (Buss, 2018; Castillo et al., 2019; Groskind, 1991; Roosma & Jeene, 2017).[5] On the other hand, there is ample evidence from American studies that many Americans have extremely stigmatizing attitudes towards the recipients of welfare programmes targeted at poor (single-mother) families with children, such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programme (TANF, formerly known as AFDC) (Gilens, 1999; Soss & Schram, 2007). These seemingly contrasting findings suggest that it would be interesting for future research to investigate who exactly citizens have in mind when they evaluate the welfare deservingness of families: the children, the parents or both? Another task for future research is to shift the analytical focus of deservingness theory away from the traditional social risks and welfare schemes and towards some of the 'new' risks and schemes (Taylor-Gooby, 2004), such as in-work benefits for the working poor, the social protection of migrants and universal basic income.

Lastly, it should also be noted that the book largely ignores the significant heterogeneity that exists within the relatively generic policy target groups that it studies. Most social welfare policies are the institutional result of (at least) a two-stage process of targeting, in which public resources are first distributed between groups that are clustered along broadly defined social risks–such as old age, sickness/disability and unemployment–and subsequently allocated further among secondary subcategories within the primary target groups on the basis of additional eligibility criteria such as age, household type and work history (van Lancker, Ghysels & Cantillon, 2015; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Accordingly, people may hold very diverging deservingness views with regard to different secondary target groups. Within the realm of unemployment provision, for example, it is often suggested that the public are less supportive of imposing strict work-related obligations on older unemployed people, because they are 'scored' much more favourably on (some of) the CARIN criteria than their younger counterparts (Buss, 2018; Larsen, 2008b; Naumann et al., 2019; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). In a similar vein, many scholars have reacted against the common practice of treating migrants as one homogenous group, and argue that deservingness studies should instead differentiate between various migrant subgroups, including labour migrants, political refugees and soon perhaps also climate refugees (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016; Kootstra, 2017; Larsen et al., 2018; van Oorschot & Uunk, 2007). Much more research is needed, however, to improve our understanding of popular deservingness opinions regarding such secondary policy target groups.

10.2 BRINGING THE WELFARE DESERVINGNESS FRAMEWORK CLOSER TO THE BROADER WELFARE POLICY CONTEXT

In addition to bringing greater conceptual clarification and empirical examination to the welfare deservingness framework, the book also brings popular deservingness opinions closer to the broader welfare policy context in which they take shape. By bridging two streams of literature that had lived somewhat separate lives in the past–one concerning welfare deservingness and one concerning welfare policy–the introductory chapter exposes a close correspondence between public opinion and public policy that has been present throughout the history of social welfare. Opinion-wise, we show that compared with the old, the sick and the disabled, the able-bodied, working-aged unemployed are seen as relatively less deserving (but certainly not undeserving) of social welfare. Policy-wise, it seems that starting from the early poor laws up to present-day welfare states, the same groups that are deemed least deserving by the general public are offered somewhat less generous and more conditional social protection. In that sense, both policymakers and citizens want the welfare state to lay a modest table at which all can sup, including the least-deserving groups, but a high table at which the deserving can feast. As argued by the heuristic model (see Figure 1.1) and the general theoretical framework (see Chapter 2), the close correspondence between policy and opinion is no coincidence, but can instead be read as the product of a reciprocal relationship between popular deservingness opinions and welfare state policies. On the one hand, deservingness opinions affect the way in which welfare policies are designed and implemented through various mechanisms of policy responsiveness. On the other hand, welfare policies influence popular notions of deservingness through various mechanisms of policy feedback. By linking welfare deservingness to the perspectives of policy responsiveness and policy feedback, the book helps to open the 'black box' between welfare policy and welfare support (Larsen, 2006) and offers theoretical guidance that will surely be of great value to future researchers when formulating hypotheses and building empirical models.

The book is, however, much more than a theoretical guide. We also examine how popular deservingness opinions are empirically related to the design features of real-world welfare policies and find a number of theoretically meaningful empirical associations. First, there seems to be a close connection between welfare policy design and people's deservingness *valuations*. Chapter 6 shows that citizens justify their welfare policy preferences using first and foremost the normative criteria that are most strongly embedded in the institutional structure of the welfare regime in which they live. These are respectively the criteria of need and reciprocity in the 'liberal' UK and 'corporatist-conservative' Germany (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Taylor-Gooby et al., 2019). In 'social-democratic' Denmark, welfare preferences are primarily informed by a combination of the criteria of need, reciprocity and equality/universalism, rather than one criterion being dominant. Nevertheless, the fact that considerations of equality and universalism play a much more prominent role in Denmark than in Germany and the UK also suggests that as indicated by Larsen (2006, 2008), there is indeed an 'institutional logic' to welfare attitudes. However, as shown in Chapter 7, deservingness valuations not only correlate with macro-level welfare regimes, but also with meso-level welfare schemes (see also Reeskens & van der Meer, 2017). When considering different income benefit schemes, Dutch citizens seem to place greatest emphasis on the deservingness criteria that are actually embedded in the institutional design of the schemes. While the criterion of reciprocity is stressed most in the case of contribution-based unemployment insurance, the criterion of need is emphasized most in the case of poverty-based social assistance.

Second, there is also a close connection between welfare policy design and people's deservingness *perceptions*. As shown in Chapter 8, Europeans' perceptions of the job-seeking efforts and material needs of unemployed people are associated with the level of generosity and conditionality (but not so much with the level of selectivity) of the unemployment benefits system. As our analyses show, Europeans are more inclined to think that most unemployed people have a relatively good standard of living (the criterion of need) and are not actively looking for a job (the criteria of control and reciprocity) if they live in a society that has comparatively higher unemployment benefit replacement rates, less spending on active labour market policies and less stringent work-related eligibility criteria. A major contribution in this regard is that the book not only analyses the ways in which popular deservingness opinions–both perceptions (as in Chapter 8) and valuations (as in Chapter 7)–relate to macro-level welfare regimes, which has hitherto been the dominant institutional framework in previous literature, but also scrutinizes how they interact with meso-level welfare policies (e.g., unemployment benefit design).

The opinion-policy associations revealed in this book are, however, admittedly only the tip of the iceberg. Much work remains to be done in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between popular deservingness opinions and welfare state policies. Without being exhaustive, we suggest two new and promising research agendas that merit special attention. The first involves comparative and systematic analyses of the social protection of different policy target groups with varying levels of perceived welfare deservingness. To the best of our knowledge, only Hubl and Pfeifer (2012: 162) have so far taken up this task, by systematically comparing 'two types of minimum income protection [MIP] programmes that can be placed on the two endpoints of the continuum of deservingness perceptions: minimum income benefits for immigrants and the disabled'. What they found is that for categorical MIP schemes targeted specifically at migrants, benefit levels are often lower, means tests more stringent and activation requirements more strict. By the same token, future studies could compare, for example, categorical social assistance schemes for elderly people with those for the able-bodied, or in another welfare state domain, compare social insurance for the sick or the disabled with that for the unemployed. Also with regard to secondary target groups (see above), such comparative policy analysis is a promising path to pursue in future research. For example, how do unemployment benefits for the younger unemployed differ from those for the older unemployed in terms of their generosity and conditionality?[6] To explore further how differently targeted welfare policies compare in terms of generosity and conditionality, researchers should make more use of already existing data concerning social rights, social expenditure and benefit recipiency (van Oorschot, 2013).

Even more insightful would be to investigate when, how and why social welfare policies are *not* in line with popular deservingness opinions. For example, there are countries that seem to spend less on old-age pensions than they do on unemployment benefits (see Appendix 1.1), despite the fact that pensioners tend to be viewed by the general public as more deserving of social welfare. Likewise, in some countries old-age pensions have at times been retrenched more severely (or with less public resistance) than unemployment benefits (Jensen et al., 2018; Palier, 2010). What these examples underscore once more is that public opinion (and welfare deservingness in particular) is just one of the many factors shaping welfare policy (Burstein, 2018). For example, there are other explanations as to why the able-bodied unemployed have generally received less generous and more conditional welfare benefits and services than the old, the sick and the disabled. One important alternative account is that these policy target groups differ strongly in the political resources they have at their disposal (Bell, 2019; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The elderly, for example, may be given preferential policy treatment because they are particularly well-organized, have plenty of time, money and political involvement to allow their interests and concerns to be heard, and constitute a major voting bloc in an era of population

ageing (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Goedemé & Marchal, 2016; Watkins-Hayes & Kovalsky, 2016).[7] By contrast, the able-bodied unemployed–especially those on last-resort social assistance–are less numerous and tend to have considerably less political bargaining power (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Gilens, 1999; Nelson, 2007).[8] Another credible explanation is that unemployment benefits and general social assistance schemes are less resilient to retrenchment because they are, if too generous, detrimental to the work incentives of the unemployed, and will also raise their reservation wage and, by implication, the cost of labour (Green-Pedersen, 2002; Korpi & Palme, 2003). Such labour market concerns, whether valid or not, do not apply to benefit schemes targeted at groups that are exempted from working, such as the (fully) disabled and the elderly.

The second promising line of research involves the development of study designs capable of examining empirically the ways in which popular deservingness opinions and welfare state policies are *causally* related to each other. Many welfare attitudes studies, including our own, have too easily blamed the lack of detailed longitudinal data for their failure to establish causality between public opinion and public policy. Although it is true that longitudinal data would undoubtedly broaden our knowledge base, we should be careful not to treat it as a panacea for all the problems regarding causal inference. Scholars adopting a longitudinal approach all too often seem to assume that the relationship between public policy and public opinion is (quasi-)linear: when one goes up, the other almost automatically goes down (see for example Wlezien, 1995). However, we argue that this might be too mechanical a view of the opinion-policy association, especially in the case of welfare deservingness and welfare policy. That is, we do not expect policymakers to modify a welfare scheme whenever there is some change in popular deservingness opinions about its target group (policy responsiveness). Nor do we anticipate that members of the public will always adjust their deservingness opinions when changes are made to a welfare scheme (policy feedback). There are, however, other ways to examine the causal (and probably non-linear) relationship between welfare deservingness and welfare policy. Promising techniques to study policy responsiveness mechanisms include opinion or observational studies conducted among policymakers and/or policy administrators (see for example Cook & Barrett, 1992; van Der Aa et al., 2017). To what extent is their decision-making informed by popular deservingness opinions? An innovative method to scrutinize policy feedback mechanisms is the use of vignette surveys that assess the causal effects of welfare policies on popular deservingness opinions in an experimental setting.[9] The idea behind this is to present people with different vignettes of hypothetical (but realistic) welfare schemes that randomly vary in terms of design characteristics (such as their generosity, conditionality and selectivity), and subsequently gauge people's deservingness opinions concerning the welfare targets. For example, researchers could vary the replacement rate of an unemployment benefit across vignettes and then measure how respondents perceive the level of need of the unemployed (a deservingness perception), or the (relative) importance they attach to the criterion of need (a deservingness valuation). An additional advantage of the vignette approach is that it allows us to inspect how *qualitatively* different welfare policy constellations (which can be constructed by combining multiple design characteristics) influence deservingness opinions. Together with the comparative policy analysis approach we suggest above, the vignette approach could go a long way towards furthering the book's primary objective: to offer new perspectives on popular deservingness opinions and their interaction with welfare state policies.

Notes

[1] There is also some external survey evidence suggesting that the European public does not consider elderly people to be very needy, at least not when compared with the unemployed (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012a).

[2] For some initial evidence, see Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Fang & Huber, 2019; Gollust & Lynch, 2011; Huddy et al., 2015; Jensen & Petersen, 2017.

[3] For example, all the following welfare deservingness studies are based on data gathered in Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK or the US: Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Cook, 1979; Cook & Barrett, 1992; De Vries, 2017; Gielens et al., 2019; Gilens, 1999; Groskind, 1991, 1994; Hansen, 2018; Huddy et al., 2015; Jeene et al., 2013, 2014; Jensen & Petersen, 2017; Kootstra, 2016, 2017; Petersen, 2012; Petersen et al., 2010; Ponza et al., 1988; Raven, Achtberg, & Van Der Veen, 2017; Reeskens & van der Meer, 2017, 2019; Roosma & Jeene, 2017; Uunk & van Oorschot, 2017; van Der Aa et al., 2017, 2018; van Oorschot, 2000 and Will, 1993.

[4] Buss (2018) also finds that when it comes to sanctions in case of non-compliance, job-seeking efforts and the reason for being unemployed stand out as the most critical deservingness dimensions: claimants who are held personally responsible are sanctioned much more harshly.

[5] However, see Hjorth (2016), who shows that Swedish citizens are actually less generous (in terms of cross-border welfare rights) when there are more children in the family, but only if the family comes from more-distant Bulgaria; not if it comes from the Netherlands.

[6] There is some evidence suggesting that the older unemployed receive more generous and less conditional social protection than their younger counterparts, but this evidence is very much scattered across the literature, as opposed to being the object of systematic policy analysis (see for example Clasen et al., 2001; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Larsen, 2008b; Watts & Fitzpatrick, 2018; see also Chapter 9).

[7] Illustrative of the political power of the elderly is the fact that in some countries, such as the Netherlands, they have their own political parties (e.g., 50PLUS), which are mainly concerned with defending the (social security) rights of older people, and have occasionally managed to obtain a sufficient number of votes to become a member of political institutions and to influence public policy.

[8] Even in countries where unemployed workers are represented by trade unions, most unions do not see themselves as the sole defenders of this particular group, but also have the fates of sick, disabled and retired workers to worry about, and–perhaps even more so–also care about the labour conditions of those currently in work.

[9] This approach is innovative, because it randomly varies the characteristics of welfare policies instead of the characteristics of welfare targets, which has been standard practice in welfare deservingness literature (see Chapter 3 and Appendix 2.1.).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1

Based on data from the OECD, we created a (admittedly crude) measurement of needs-adjusted social spending figures in the policy domains of unemployment benefits and old-age pensions. In a first step, unemployment spending and pension spending were divided by the unemployment rate and the proportion of people above 65 years of age, respectively. In a second step, the needs-adjusted spending figures were standardized (as in, divided by their standard deviations), so that they can be compared on a similar scale. During this process, we followed the definitions provided by the OECD:

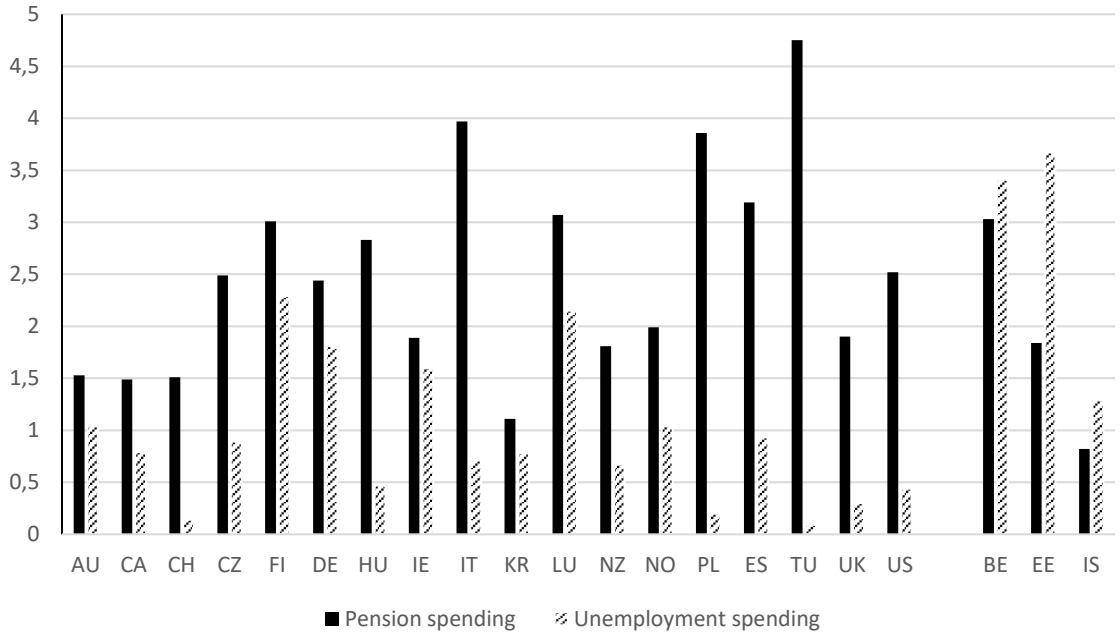
Public unemployment spending is defined as expenditure on cash benefits for people to compensate for unemployment. This includes redundancy payments from public funds, as well as the payment of pensions to beneficiaries before they reach the standard pensionable age, if these payments are made because the beneficiaries are out of work or for other labour market policy reasons. This indicator is measured in percentage of GDP.

Unemployment rate is the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force, where the latter consists of the unemployed plus those in paid or self-employment. Unemployed people are those who report that they are without work, that they are available for work and that they have taken active steps to find work in the previous four weeks.

Public pension spending is defined as all cash expenditures (including lump-sum payments) on old-age and survivors pensions. Old-age cash benefits provide an income for persons retired from the labour market or guarantee incomes when a person has reached a 'standard' pensionable age or fulfilled the necessary contributory requirements. This category also includes early retirement pensions: pensions paid before the beneficiary has reached the 'standard' pensionable age relevant to the programme. It excludes programmes concerning early retirement for labour market reasons. Old-age pensions includes supplements for dependants paid to old-age pensioners with dependants under old-age cash benefits. Old age also includes social expenditure on services for elderly people, such as day care and rehabilitation services, home-help services and other benefits in kind. It also includes expenditure on the provision of residential care in an institution. This indicator is measured in percentage of GDP.

The *elderly population* is defined as people aged 65 and over. This indicator is measured as a percentage of the population.

Figure A1.1.1 Needs-adjusted pensions and unemployment spending, 2014



Notes: We included only those OECD countries for which data was available for the four different indicators: public unemployment spending, public pension spending, unemployment rate and elderly population. We chose 2014 because it was the most recent year for which data was available for the four indicators.

Countries are: AU Australia; CA Canada; CH Switzerland; CZ Czech Republic; FI Finland; DE Germany; HU Hungary; IE Ireland; IT Italy; KR Korea; LU Luxembourg; NZ New Zealand; NO Norway; PL Poland; ES Spain; TU Turkey; UK United Kingdom; US United States; BE Belgium; EE Estonia and IS Iceland.

Appendix 2.1

Table A2.1.1 The relative importance of deservingness dimensions in vignette-based experiments embedded in public opinion surveys

	Country	Social welfare domain	Dependent variable	Deservingness dimensions
Cook (1979)	United States (Chicago)	General social services	Support index (ranging from sympathy for the vignette to willingness to pay higher taxes for social programmes)	1. severity of disability* 2. reason for condition* 3. severity of poverty* 4. age*
Groskind (1991) Iyengar (1990) Will (1993)	United States	Public assistance	Net benefit amount for: Mother-only and two-parent families	1. number of children* 2. father's work status* 3. family's weekly income* 4. mother's work status* mother's education
			Mother-only families	1. number of children* 2. family's weekly income* 3. father's work status* mother's work status mother's education
			Two-parent families	1. father's work status* 2. family's weekly income* 3. number of children* 4. mother's work status*
Appelbaum (2001)	United States	General welfare policies	Likelihood of recommending liberal policies/no benefits	1. deservingness* 1. attribution of responsibility* adherence to mainstream norms race
DeSante (2013)	United States	Welfare assistance	The desired amount of welfare assistance	1. work history* 2. race*
Hjorth (2016)	Sweden	Child benefits	Approval of the right of intra-EU migrants to receive Swedish child benefit	1. children's country of residence* 2. nationality* 3. number of children*
Kootstra (2016)	UK and the Netherlands	General welfare policies	Deservingness of financial support from government UK	1. job-seeking efforts* 2. ethnicity* 3. family status* 4. work history* 5. migration status* 5. financial support from relatives* 6. type of job* 7. gender*

			the Netherlands	1.	job-seeking efforts*
				2.	work history
				3.	migration status*
				4.	family status*
				5.	financial support from relatives*
				6.	type of job*
					gender
van Der Aa et al. (2017, 2018)	the Netherlands	Healthcare	Forced choice between two care-seeking individuals in a given scenario: who deserves the allocation of collectively financed healthcare resources most?	1.	severity of illness*
				2.	financial resources*
				3.	lifestyle prior to onset of illness*
				3.	behaviour during treatment*
				4.	health insurance premium*
Reeskens & van der Meer (2017, 2019)	the Netherlands	Unemployment benefits	Desired level of replacement rate	1.	job-seeking behaviour*
				2.	reason for being unemployed*
				3.	country of origin*
				4.	length of residence*
				5.	labour market consistency*
				5.	salary*
				5.	number of children*
				5.	age*
				6.	motivation for migration*
Buss (2018)	Germany	Unemployment benefits	Benefit generosity	1.	child-caring responsibilities*
				2.	job-seeking efforts*
				3.	reason for unemployment*
				4.	age*
				5.	ethnic background*
			Benefit conditions	1.	age*
				2.	child-caring responsibilities*
				3.	ethnic background*
					reason for unemployment
					job-seeking efforts
			Sanctions	1.	job-seeking efforts*
				2.	reason for unemployment*
				3.	age*
					ethnic background
					child-caring responsibilities
Castillo et al. (2019)	Chile	Old-age pensions	Just pension amount	1.	number of years in workforce*
				1.	last salary*
				1.	current pension income
				2.	gender*
				3.	number of dependents*
					number of children raised
					ethnic/social background
					educational level

Notes: The numbers indicate the relative importance of the deservingness dimensions in explaining support for social welfare in terms of the (standardized) effect sizes on the outcome variables. If no asterisks (*) are shown, the deservingness dimension had no significant effect on the outcome (p>.05).

Appendix 5.1

Table A5.1.1 Simultaneous CFA for dependent variables, ideological beliefs and deservingness criteria – standardized factor loadings (N=1,403)

	Social obligations	Social rights	Ideological beliefs				Deservingness criteria		
			Egali-tarianism	Work ethic	Indivi-dualism	Need	Recipro-city	Control	Attitude
Long-term unemployed people should be obliged to accept any job, even if they earn much less than before by doing so.	.65								
People on social assistance should be obliged to do community work.	.70								
Long-term unemployed people should be obliged to re-educate themselves, otherwise they lose their social benefits.	.50								
Government responsibility for: Making sure that the unemployed have a reasonable standard of living.		1.00							
The differences between classes ought to be smaller than they are at present.			.69						
The differences between the high and low incomes should stay as they are.			-.60						
The government should reduce income differentials.			.64						
To completely develop your talents, you need a job.				.40					
It is embarrassing to receive money without having had to work for it				.44					
Work is a duty towards society.				.70					
Work should always come first, even if it means less leisure time.				.65					
Humanity, brotherhood and solidarity are all nonsense; everybody has to take care of himself first.					.73				
Striving for personal success is more important than providing for good relations with your fellow man.					.67				
In our society, everything revolves around one's own interest, power and material success. That is why it is better to take care first and foremost of oneself.					.72				
Social security should only be available to those who truly live in poverty.						.57			
People with sufficient financial resources should not receive social benefits.						.63			

Only people in dire need may receive social benefits.	.89				
Social security should be reserved for those who have contributed to collective prosperity.		.73			
It is not fair that people receive social benefits to which they have not contributed.		.74			
Only people who work are entitled to government social services.		.70			
People who have worked and contributed in the past deserve better social services than people who have contributed little or nothing.		.61			
It is unfair that people contribute to social services they don't use.		.52			
People who have themselves to blame for their problems do not deserve any support from social security.			.66		
People who fall into poverty because of their own mistakes should be entitled to social assistance.			-.66		
People receiving social benefits should show more gratitude.				.71	
People on social assistance should be pleased about this and do not have any right to complain.				.70	
Fit indices: Chi-square=684.37; Df=266; RMSEA=.033; CFI=.952; TLI=.941; SRMR=.034					

Notes: Support for social rights is measured by one item only. To identify the model, the factor loading for this item is fixed to one, and the residual to zero.

Table A5.1.2 Correlations between the latent variables

	Social obligations	Social rights	Ideological beliefs			Deservingness criteria			
			Egali-tarianism	Work ethic	Indivi-dualism	Need	Recipro-city	Control	Attitude
Social obligations	1.00								
Social rights	-.38	1.00							
Egalitarianism	-.27	.31	1.00						
Work ethic	.55	-.12	-.06	1.00					
Individualism	.33	-.14	-.16	.28	1.00				
Need	.25	-.06	-.03	.17	.26	1.00			
Reciprocity	.50	-.22	-.18	.40	.51	.41	1.00		
Control	.48	-.17	-.11	.30	.34	.11	.52	1.00	
Attitude	.63	-.28	-.19	.37	.39	.23	.48	.59	1.00

Appendix 6.1

In each country, four relatively homogenous focus groups consisting of about five to ten participants were formed using the following recruitment guidelines:

Middle class: completed higher education (i.e., 3 years or more), an income level equivalent to 150 per cent of national median wage for a full-time worker over 25, homeownership for the majority of the participants, maximum two students or unemployed, variation in their marital status (e.g., married/partner, single parent, parent with primary school children, parent with teenage children, empty nest parents and persons without children).

Working class: less than three years higher education, the presence of at least four persons in the group without higher education, household income level below the third decile (e.g., under £348 weekly for the UK), maximum two students or unemployed and variation in marital status.

Old-age pensioners: age 62 to 75 years (with majority age 67+), variation in pension benefit level (with at least two persons on lowest pension level/minimum pension), sufficient hearing as a condition for participation, some participants from single person households (e.g., widowed, divorced) and some childless participants or with children who live far away.

Young adults: age 18 to 35 (with the ideal aim to achieve as even an age distribution as possible), three students, at least three parents and with some variation in family status.

Furthermore, some common criteria for all groups were agreed upon: a gender balance, exclusion of politicians and persons working as market analysts; a balance between left-wing and right-wing participants; and inclusion of members of ethnic minorities. Table A6.1.1 reports for each country separately the list of participants from all focus groups with their main socio-demographic characteristics. Unfortunately, there was an unexpectedly large number of cancellations and non-show ups in Denmark, which is why most of the Danish focus groups only had five participants.

Table A6.1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the focus group participants

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Education	Work status	Income	Migration background	Political orientation
Germany					(monthly in €)		
Middle class group							
DE-MC-2	34	Female	secondary	PT employed	1200-2200	yes (Ukraine)	SPD, Left Party
DE-MC-3	44	Female	tertiary	FT employed	>3500	yes (Turkey)	conservative-liberal
DE-MC-4	41	Female	secondary	PT employed	1200-2200	no	FDP
DE-MC-5	57	Female	tertiary	FT employed	>3500	no	CDU, FDP
DE-MC-6	34	male	secondary	FT employed	1700-3500	no	CDU, SPD, FDP
DE-MC-7	35	male	tertiary	FT employed	1700-3500	no	SPD, Green Party, Left Party
DE-MC-8	48	male	secondary	PT employed	1700-3500	no	FDP, CDU, SPD
DE-MC-9	49	male	tertiary	FT employed	>3500	no	Green Party, Left Party
Working class group							
DE-WC-2	34	female	secondary	PT employed	<1200	no	SPD, AfD
DE-WC-3	34	female	secondary	FT employed	<2100	no	conservative
DE-WC-4	44	female	secondary	PT employed	<1200	no	SPD, FDP, Green Party
DE-WC-5	52	female	secondary	PT employed	<1200	no	Green Party, SPD, CDU
DE-WC-7	34	male	secondary	FT employed	<1200	no	SPD, AfD, Pirates
DE-WC-8	48	male	secondary	PT employed	<1200	no	CDU, AfD
DE-WC-9	47	male	secondary	PT employed	<2500	yes (Turkey)	conservative
DE-WC-10	55	male	secondary	'mini-job'	<1200	no	indifferent
Young group							
DE-YO-1	19	female	secondary	student	/	yes (Thailand)	conservative-liberal
DE-YO-3	25	female	secondary	student	/	no	Left Party, Green Party, Pirates
DE-YO-4	26	female	tertiary	trainee	/	no	CDU, FDP
DE-YO-6	18	male	secondary	self-employed	/	no	Left Party, FDP
DE-YO-7	19	male	secondary	trainee	/	no	SPD
DE-YO-8	25	male	secondary	student	/	yes (Bangladesh)	Left Party, Green Party
DE-YO-10	34	male	tertiary	FT employed	/	no	conservative
Elderly group							
DE-OL-2	63	female	secondary	retired	2500-3500	no	SPD
DE-OL-3	69	female	secondary	retired	2500-3500	yes (Poland)	Green Party
DE-OL-4	71	female	secondary	retired	<1200	no	FDP

DE-OL-5	64	female	secondary	retired	1200-2500	yes (Poland)	CDU
DE-OL-6	64	male	tertiary	retired	>3500	no	Green Party, SPD
DE-OL-7	63	male	secondary	retired	2500-3500	no	AfD
DE-OL-8	73	male	primary	retired	>3500	no	Left Party, Green Party, SPD
DE-OL-9	73	male	secondary	retired	2500-3500	no	'Everything except CDU and AfD'
Denmark					(yearly in DKK)		
Middle class group							
DK-MC-1	>65	male	tertiary	retired	300.000-400.000	no	left-wing
DK-MC-2	35-64	female	tertiary	PT employed	300.000-400.000	yes	n/a
DK-MC-3	43	female	n/a	FT employed	>400.000	no	right-wing
DK-MC-4	65	male	tertiary	retired	>400.000	no	left-wing
DK-MC-5	73	male	tertiary	retired	>400.000	no	right-wing
Working class group							
DK-WC-1	47	female	tertiary	FT employed	200.000-300.000	yes	right-wing
DK-WC-2	69	female	n/a	retired	200.000-300.000	no	left-wing
DK-WC-3	33	male	primary	FT employed	100.000-199.000	no	n/a
DK-WC-4	22	female	secondary	student	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-WC-5	22	female	secondary	FT employed	100.000-199.000	no	right-wing
Young group							
DK-YO-1	21	male	secondary	student	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-YO-2	23	male	secondary	student	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-YO-3	23	male	tertiary	unemployed	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-YO-4	23	female	secondary	student	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-YO-5	24	female	secondary	student	100.000-199.000	no	left-wing
Elderly group							
DK-OL-1	65	female	tertiary	retired	100.000-199.000	no	left-wing
DK-OL-2	80	male	tertiary	retired	300.000-400.000	no	right-wing
DK-OL-3	68	female	tertiary	retired	n/a	no	left-wing
DK-OL-4	65	female	tertiary	retired	200.000-300.000	no	left-wing
DK-OL-5	81	male	tertiary	retired	200.000-300.000	yes	left-wing
DK-OL-6	72	male	primary	retired	100.000-199.000	no	left-wing
DK-OL-7	71	female	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UK							
Middle class group					(yearly IN GBP)		
UK-MC-1	30	female	tertiary	self-employed	£90k+	white British	right

UK-MC-2	65	male	tertiary	employed	£70k - £89,999k	white British	right
UK-MC-3	30	male	tertiary	employed	£70k - £89,999k	White British	central
UK-MC-4	29	female	tertiary	employed	£70k - £89,999k	White British	left
UK-MC-5	30	male	tertiary	employed	£60k - £69,999	multiple ethnic British	left
UK-MC-6	31	male	tertiary	employed	£37K - £49,999	white British	central
UK-MC-7	48	male	tertiary	employed	£60k - £69,999	black British	left
UK-MC-8	51	female	tertiary	self-employed	£70k - £89,999k	white British	right
UK-MC-9	41	female	tertiary	employed	£90k+	black British	left
UK-MC-10	28	female	tertiary	employed	£37K - £49,999	white British	left
Working class group							
UK-WC-1	38	female	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white British	left
UK-WC-2	23	male	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white Spanish	central
UK-WC-3	54	female	n/a	employed	up to £19K	white British	left
UK-WC-4	46	male	secondary	self-employed	up to £19K	Asian British	left
UK-WC-5	31	male	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white British	central
UK-WC-6	39	female	secondary	employed	up to £19K	black British	central
UK-WC-7	20	male	secondary	employed	up to £19K	Asian British	right
UK-WC-8	29	male	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white British	left
UK-WC-9	33	female	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white Portuguese	central
Young group							
UK-YO-1	25	male	tertiary	student	£50k - £59,999	white British	left
UK-YO-2	25	female	tertiary	PT employed	£37k - £49,999	white British	right
UK-YO-3	20	female	secondary	student	£90K Plus	multiple ethnic British	central
UK-YO-4	21	female	secondary	student	up to £19k	multiple ethnic British	right
UK-YO-5	32	male	tertiary	employed	£50k - £59,999	white British	central
UK-YO-6	30	male	secondary	employed	£25k- £30,999	black British	left
UK-YO-7	34	male	secondary	employed	£70k - £89,999k	white British	right
UK-YO-9	24	female	tertiary	employed	£50K- £59,999	white British	left
UK-YO-10	28	female	tertiary	employed	£37K - £49,999	white British	central
Elderly group							
UK-OL-1	67	female	secondary	retired	up to £19k	white British	left
UK-OL-2	71	male	secondary	retired	up to £19K	white British	left

UK-OL-3	72	female	secondary	retired	£19K - £24,999	white British	left
UK-OL-4	73	male	secondary	retired	£19K - £24,999	white British	right
UK-OL-6	67	female	tertiary	retired	up £19,000	black British	right
UK-OL-7	63	male	tertiary	retired	£25k - £30,999	white British	central
UK-OL-8	73	female	tertiary	retired	up to £19k	white British	left
UK-OL-9	63	male	tertiary	retired	up to 19K	black British	left
UK-OL-10	65	male	secondary	retired	£19K - £24,999	white British	left

Notes: Education=highest level attained. Income=monthly net household income in Germany, yearly gross personal income in Denmark and yearly household income in the UK. Migration background in the UK is a combination of ethnicity and nationality.

Appendix 6.2

Table A6.2.1 Examples of how the warm-up exercise, the vignettes and the ranking exercise were introduced in the different countries

	UK	Germany	Denmark
Stage 1: warm-up exercise	When you hear the words 'welfare state', what issues do you think about? What does the welfare state mean to you and what problems and challenges do you think the welfare state faces in the future? Could you give me your first name and some thoughts on that question?	We're going to be talking here about the social welfare state of the future. If you let your thoughts run free, what do you think of when you think of the social welfare state? That term? Spontaneously. It can be anything at all.	I would like to ask you all very briefly what comes to mind when we say 'welfare state'. I mean, what does the welfare state mean to you? What are the first things that pop into your head when we put on slides like these (refers to the screen). So, if we could just take a very short round, where we just state our age and then very briefly some thoughts about what is the welfare state. So that's how we'll get this started.
Stage 2: discussion of the vignettes representing different target groups	V1: We are going to talk about an unemployed person of working age in good health. V2: We are next going to be talking about a 70 year old who is in good health. V3: We are now going to talk about a family with children. Imagine a family on an income of £28,100 a year with children aged under three where everybody is in good health. We chose that number because that is the medium income in the UK. V4: We are now going to talk about low-income worker. A low-income worker has been someone who is on the minimum wage or on less than £13,500 a year. V5: The next one is someone further up that scale of income so someone who is earning £40K a year. What kind of benefits or services would a person like that be entitled to?	V1: We have Udo, who is 45 years old and in good health. He's been unemployed for some time. V2: Gisele is 70 years old and in good health. She does not work anymore. V3: The Meinberg family has two children under 3 years of age, the family has 2,940 euros available per month. V4: Hannes is 30 years old and earns a gross income of 1400 euros a month, and after taxes and social security payments, he has 1045 euros net left over. V5: Jens is 30 years old and earns gross income of 4,500 euros a month. After taxes and social security payments, he's left with 2,660 euros. V6: Adrian has immigrated to Germany.	V1: Imagine an unemployed person of working age, who is in good health. V2: Imagine a 70 year old who is in good health. V3: We have a family in good health and with an average income and with a child under three years (Additional, not in the elderly group: y an average income, we are thinking of something in the range of about DKK 29,000 a month earned by the family once taxes have been paid and after having received any state subsidies) V4: The next type of citizen is a person in a low-paid job and here we are imagining an income of about DKK 23,000 a month. V5: The next person is in a well-paid job, which means someone who earns in the region of DKK 55,000 a month before tax. V6: The last citizen type is an immigrant

	V6: What sort of services and benefits do you think people who are immigrants should get access to and why?		
Stage 3: ranking exercise	We have got written on these pieces of paper each of these categories of person that we have been talking about. I would like you to take this all as a group and decide together how you would rank these people in terms of their level of entitlement to the services and benefits.	Please put these in order of who the state should concentrate on in the future. You are the policy makers and must decide where the money and provisions from our state are to be invested in first place, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth place. Please create a rank ordering based on which cases the social welfare state should focus on.	Can you try to place them on some kind of a scale going from plus to minus, where plus indicates someone who to a high degree needs our help, the welfare state's help, and where minus indicates someone who to a very low degree deserves to get help.

Appendix 6.3

Table A6.3.1 Summary table of the final ranking for each group across countries

	Focus group	Position 1	Position 2	Position 3	Position 4	Position 5	Position 6
UK	Middle class	No ranking					
	Working class	Elderly and family		Low-income	Immigrant	Well-off	Unemployed
	Young	Unemployed	Low-income	Family	Immigrant	Elderly	Well-off
	Elderly	Low-income	Unemployed	Family	Elderly	Well-off and immigrant	
Germany	Middle class	Elderly	Low-income	Family	Unemployed	Well-off	Immigrant
	Working class	Family	Elderly	Low-income	Unemployed	Well-off	Immigrant
	Young	Family	Low-income	Unemployed	Elderly	Immigrant	Well-off
	Elderly	Family	Low-income	Unemployed	Elderly	Well-off	Immigrant
Denmark	Middle class	Unemployed	Family	Immigrant	Low-income	Elderly	Well-off
	Working class	Elderly	Low-income	Well-off	Family	Unemployed	Immigrant
	Young	Unemployed	Elderly	Immigrant	Low-income	Family	Well-off
	Elderly	Unemployed	Immigrant	Family	Low-income	Family	Well-off

Notes: The UK middle-class group did not reach an agreement concerning the ranking. For Germany, we calculated the mean of each vignette's ranking position across participants in each group.

Appendix 7.1

Table A7.1.1 Question wordings and response scales of the dependent and independent variables

Construct	Question wordings	Response scale
Public support for social welfare	To what extent do you think that society should grant *pensioners/social assistance recipients/unemployed people* the right to financial support, given that public funds are limited?	1 (no right) to 10 (extensive right)
Perceived self-interest in benefit X		
Likelihood of receiving benefit X	How likely do you consider it to be that you will ever receive *(early) retirement benefit/unemployment benefit/social assistance benefit*?	1 (no chance) to 7 (currently receiving the benefit)
Perceived performance of benefit X		
Benefit fraud	How often do you think people abuse *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance?*	1 (rarely) to 3 (often)
Complexity	How do you feel about the current system of *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance benefits?*	1 (complicated) to 5 (simple)
Efficiency	How do you feel about the current system of *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance benefits?*	1 (poor implementation) to 5 (good implementation)
Fairness	How do you feel about the current system of *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance benefits?*	1 (unfair) to 5 (fair)
Societal cost	How do you feel about the current system of *pensions/unemployment benefits/social assistance benefits?*	1 (costly for society) to 5 (cheap for society)
Deservingness criteria for benefit X		
Reciprocity	See Appendix 7.2	0 (no); 1 (yes)
Need	See Appendix 7.2	0 (no); 1 (yes)

Appendix 7.2

Table A7.2.1 CFA of deservingness criteria for the Dutch state AOW pension

Survey items	Standardized factor loadings	
Reciprocity (Cronbach's α=.850)		
Should the pension be higher for those elderly		
…who have paid a higher versus a lower contribution to the system?		.889
…who have a longer versus a shorter work history before receiving the benefit?		.897
…who have had a paid job versus those who have not had a paid job?		.888
Need (Cronbach's α=.719)		
Should the pension be lower for those elderly		
...who have supplementary income versus no supplementary income?		.783
…who have a partner with income versus a partner without income?		.832
…who have children with income versus no children with income?		.696
…who have a large amount of savings versus little or no savings?		.641
…who live together with one of their children vs those who live alone?		.827
…who share a household with a sibling versus those who live alone?		.813
Goodness of fit indices	RMSEA=.064 TLI=.977	CFI=.983

Table A7.2.2 CFA of deservingness criteria for Dutch unemployment insurance

Survey items	Standardized factor loadings	
Reciprocity (Cronbach's α = .607)		
Should unemployment benefit be higher for those unemployed people		
…who became unemployed at an older versus a younger age?		.630
…who have paid a higher versus a lower contribution to the system?		.706
…who have a longer versus a shorter work history before receiving the benefit?		.918
Need (Cronbach's α = .655)		
Should unemployment benefit be lower for those unemployed people		
...who have a smaller versus a larger household?		.704
…who have a partner with income versus a partner without income?		.815
…who have children with income versus no children with income?		.713
…who have a large amount of savings versus little or no savings?		.709
…who have rich parents versus those who do not have rich parents?		.624
Goodness of fit indices	RMSEA=.052 TLI=.937	CFI=.956

Table A7.2.3 CFA of deservingness criteria for Dutch social assistance

Survey items	Standardized factor loadings	
Reciprocity (Cronbach's α=.640)		
Should the social assistance benefit be higher for those people		
…who previously had a high income versus a low income?		.605
…who are older versus younger?		.536
…who have paid a higher versus a lower contribution to the system?		.880
…who have a longer versus a shorter work history before receiving the benefit?		.918
Need (Cronbach's α=.693)		
Should the social assistance benefit be lower for those people		
...who have supplementary income versus no supplementary income?		.639
...who have a smaller versus a larger household?		.680
…who have a partner with income versus a partner without income?		.914
…who have children with income versus no children with income?		.681
…who have a large amount of savings versus little or no savings?		.624
…who have a partner versus those who have no partner?		.617
Goodness of fit indices	RMSEA=.046 TLI=.948	CFI=.960

Appendix 8.1

Table A8.1.1 Definition and web sources per social policy indicator

Policy indicator	Definition	Retrieved from:
MT_ue	The ratio of spending on means-tested unemployment benefits relative to the total amount of spending on unemployment benefits	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/social-protection/data/database), accessed on 17 September 2018
MT_all	The ratio of spending on means-tested social benefits relative to the total amount of spending on social benefits	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/social-protection/data/database, accessed on 17 September 2018
NRR_in	Net replacement rates (as in % of previous net wage) of insurance benefits during the first 12 months of unemployment, averaged across six different family types (i.e., single person with no children, lone parent with two children, one-earner married couple with children, one-earner married couple without children, two-earner married couple with children, two-earner married couple without children) and three different earnings levels (i.e., 67%, 100% and 150% of average wage). Where applicable, cash housing and social assistance top-ups are included.	http://www.oecd.org/els/benefits-and-wages-statistics.htm, accessed on 17 September 2018
NRR_lt	Net replacement rates (as in % of previous net wage) of insurance benefits after the fifth year of unemployment, averaged across six different family types (i.e., single person with no children, lone parent with two children, one-earner married couple with children, one-earner married couple without children, two-earner married couple with children, two-earner married couple without children) and three different earnings levels (i.e., 67%, 100% and 150% of average wage). Where applicable, cash housing and social assistance top-ups are included.	http://www.oecd.org/els/benefits-and-wages-statistics.htm, accessed on 17 September 2018
NRR_5y	The average of net replacement rates (as in % of previous net wage) of insurance benefits during the first five years of unemployment, averaged across six different family types (i.e., single person with no children, lone parent with two children, one-earner married couple with children, one-earner married couple without children, two-earner married couple with children, two-earner married couple without children) and three different earnings levels (i.e., 67%, 100% and 150% of average	http://www.oecd.org/els/benefits-and-wages-statistics.htm, accessed on 17 September 2018

	wage). Where applicable, cash housing and social assistance top-ups are included.	
SOCXP	Total amount of social expenditures as a percentage of GDP per capita	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/social-protection/data/database and http://www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm, accessed on 17 September 2018
ALMP	Spending on active labour market policies (i.e., employment services, training, employment incentives, integration of the disabled, direct job creation, and start-up incentives) as a percentage of GDP per capita, divided by the unemployment rate	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/labour-market/labour-market-policy/database, accessed on 17 September 2018
WREQ	The overall strictness of work-related eligibility criteria in unemployment insurance (i.e., availability criteria, job-search requirements and monitoring, sanctions)	Venn (2012) and Immervoll & Knotz (2018), downloadable at https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/oecd-social-employment-and-migration-working-papers_1815199x

Table A8.1.2 Data matrix of the contextual variables

Country	MT_UE		MT_all		NRR_in		NRR_lt		NRR_5y		SOCXP		ALMP		WREQ		GDP		UE	
	'08	*'15*	*'08*	*'15*	*'08*	*'15*	*'08*	*'15*	*'08*	*'15*	*'08*	*'15*	*'08*	*'16*	*'11*	*'17*	*'08*	*'16*	*'08*	*'16*
AT	np	.245	np	?	np	68	np	60	np	69	np	27.8	np	.097	np	2.91	np	?	np	6.0
BE	0	0	.051	.049	62	69	60	54	64	63	27.7	30.3	.072	.067	2.39	2.98	115	118	7.0	7.8
BG	0	np	.047	np	61	np	34	np	40	np	14.7	np	.043	np	2.96	np	44	np	5.6	np
CH	.056	.034	.065	.076	83	80	53	52	72	71	23.2	27.3	md	md	3.55	3.55	143	161	3.4	4.9
CY	.005	np	.122	np	md	np	md	np	Md	np	17.6	np	.028	np	1.84	np	97	np	3.6	np
CZ	0	0	.021	.027	67	70	48	48	56	57	17.9	19	.025	.061	2.69	2.71	81	88	4.4	4.0
DE	.532	.535	.120	.125	74	73	52	48	65	57	27.1	29.1	.075	.064	3.14	3.14	116	124	7.3	4.1
DK	0	np	.032	np	76	np	61	0	76	np	28.9	np	.284	np	3.45	np	123	np	3.3	np
EE	0	0	.004	.005	62	65	33	41	35	48	14.7	16.4	.005	.026	4.19	4.19	68	75	5.5	6.8
ES	.182	.305	.136	.134	69	66	35	34	47	43	21.4	24.6	.052	.022	2.70	2.70	103	92	11.3	19.6
FI	.187	.297	.042	.062	69	75	57	61	70	72	25.1	31.6	.100	.095	2.76	2.79	118	109	6.4	8.8
FR	.103	.073	.142	.109	72	72	46	46	60	59	33.9	30.4	.077	.070	3.19	3.3	107	104	7.8	10.1
GB	.267	.325	.146	.119	53	54	52	52	61	60	25.8	28.6	.006	md	3.29	3.65	115	108	5.6	4.8
GR	.002	np	.075	np	49	np	16	np	21	np	26.0	np	.018	np	2.73	np	94	np	7.7	np
HR	md	np	md	np	md	np	md	np	Md	np	18.8	np	md	np	3.80	np	64	np	8.4	np
HU	.304	.495	.054	.042	69	58	47	28	53	24	22.3	20.0	.033	.170	2.05	2.47	64	67	7.8	5.1
IE	.428	.775	.253	.302	69	66	67	64	80	74	20.7	16.3	.083	.047	2.97	2.71	133	183	6.3	8.4
IL	md	md	md	md	71	84	38	39	43	47	15.4	16.1	md	md	2.39	md	md	md	6.1	4.8
IS	np	0	np	.230	np	68	np	56	Np	64	np	22.8	np	md	np	3.08	np	128	np	8.4
IT	np	0	np	.077	np	71	np	17	Np	23	np	29.9	np	.035	np	3.31	np	97	np	11.7
LT	np	0	np	.032	np	66	np	md	Np	37	np	15.6	np	.030	np	3.06	np	75	np	7.9
LV	0	np	.020	np	83	np	43	np	48	np	12.1	np	.010	np	3.13	np	56	np	7.5	np
NL	.365	.263	.145	.145	75	74	58	55	73	70	26.4	30.2	.216	.080	3.43	3.09	134	128	3.1	6.0
NO	0	0	.044	.036	70	69	53	52	69	69	21.8	27.9	.162	.080	3.05	3.37	189	148	2.5	4.7
PL	.124	.193	.043	.038	55	57	43	42	50	48	19.3	19.1	.065	.059	3.10	3.10	56	68	7.1	6.2
PT	.181	.136	.099	.080	84	78	40	33	61	49	23.4	25.7	.051	.037	4.15	3.89	78	77	7.7	11.1
RO	1	np	.048	np	53	np	26	np	26	np	13.7	np	.010	np	3.40	np	47	np	5.8	np
RU	md	md	md	md	md	md	md	md	Md	md	md	md	md	md	md	md	md	md	md	md
SE	0	0	.027	.026	65	60	52	50	67	62	27.7	29.2	.102	.128	3.37	3.37	122	123	6.2	7.0
SI	.002	0	.085	.078	74	75	57	56	67	65	21.0	23.8	.021	.020	4.06	4.06	91	83	4.4	8.0
SK	.006	np	.049	np	72	np	35	np	37	np	15.7	np	md	np	3.38	np	75	np	9.5	np
TR	.176	np	md	np	52	np	14	np	8	np	11.4	12.0	md	np	2.41	2.41	47	64	9.7	10.8
UA	md	np	md	np	md	np	md	np	md	np	md	np	md	np	md	np	md	np	md	Np

Notes: Np=not participating in the ESS wave. Md=missing data due to data unavailability. From the data matrix, one can read which countries were excluded in the multilevel models introducing contextual variables because of missing data. Russia and Ukraine, for example, were excluded altogether because of missing data across the board, but Cyprus, as a second example, was only excluded from the models including net replacement rates.

Appendix 8.2

Table A8.2.1 The impact of the individual-level control variables on popular deservingness perceptions

	Need (low-high)	Job-seeking efforts (low-high)
Individual level		
ESS round (ref.=2008/09)		
2016/17	-.076 *	-.048
Age (in years)	.054 ***	-.086 ***
Gender (ref.=male)		
Female	-.002	-.015 *
Education (in years)	.139 ***	-.019 *
Current work status (ref.=paid work)		
in education	.045 ***	-.016 *
unemployed/disabled	.053 ***	-.043 ***
retired	-.025 **	-.010
other (incl. housework)	.004	-.017 **
Past experience of unemployment for more than 3 months (ref.=no)		
yes	.036 ***	.051 ***
Predicted likelihood of future unemployment	.015 *	-.017 *
Subjective income (ref.=living comfortably on present income)		
coping	-.038 ***	-.024 **
difficult	-.018	-.073 ***
very difficult	.036 ***	-.112 ***
Left-right ideology (ref.=centre)		
left-wing	.087 ***	-.050 ***
right-wing	-.012	.043 ***
missing	.010	-.024 **
Egalitarianism	.061 ***	-.087 ***
Country-year level		
Net replacement rate, long-term unemployment	-.272 **	-.313 **
Total social expenditures	-.200 **	
Spending on active labour market policies		.330 *
Strictness of work-related eligibility criteria	.095	
GDP per capita (in PPS per head)	-.525 ***	.535 ***
unemployment rate	.193 **	.219
R^2 individual level	.062	.042
N individual level	76197	67167
R^2 country-year level	.841	.375
N country-year level	43	37

Notes: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Data was weighted using the post-stratification weights provided by the ESS. The reported parameters are standardized regression coefficients.

Table A8.2.2 The impact of the individual-level control variables on public support for unemployment provision

Fixed effects		
Intercept	6.758	***
ESS round (ref.=2008/09)		
2016/17	-.107	
Deservingness perceptions		
need	.175	***
job-seeking efforts	.309	***
Interaction terms		
need*ESS round 2016/17	.019	
job-seeking efforts*ESS round 2016/17	-.084	*
Age (in years)	.001	
Gender (ref.=male)		
Female	.077	**
Education (in years)	-.023	***
Current work status (ref.=paid work)		
in education	.082	
unemployed/disabled	.217	***
retired	.136	***
other (incl. housework)	.102	**
Past experience of unemployment for more than 3 months (ref.=no)		
yes	.095	***
Predicted likelihood of future unemployment	-.015	
Subjective income (ref.=living comfortably on present income)		
coping	.021	
difficult	.177	***
very difficult	.311	***
Left-right ideology (ref.=centre)		
left-wing	.161	***
right-wing	-.050	
missing	.166	***
Egalitarianism	.332	***
Random effects		
Random slope variances		
need	.010	***
job-seeking efforts	.012	***
Residual variance (individual level)	4.184	***
Random intercept variance (country-year level)	.261	***
$N_{\text{individual level}}$	89974	
$N_{\text{country-year level}}$	52	

Notes: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Data was weighted using the post-stratification weights provided by the ESS. The reported parameters are unstandardized regression coefficients.

Appendix 8.3

Table A8.3.1 Country-specific standardized effects of deservingness perceptions on public support for unemployment provision

	ESS 2008		ESS 2016	
Country	Job-seeking efforts	Need	Job-seeking efforts	Need
AT			.204 ***	-.014
BE	.179 ***	.083 **	-.283 ***	.065 **
BG	.163 ***	.142 ***		
CH	.161 ***	.086 ***	.115 ***	.075 **
CY	.014	-.121 ***		
CZ	.180 ***	.126 ***	.223 ***	.278 ***
DE	.067 **	.172 ***	.228 ***	.060 **
DK	.246 ***	.009		
EE	.134 ***	.125 ***	.150 ***	.162 ***
ES	.078 ***	.140 ***	.169 ***	.209 ***
FI	.179 ***	.057 **	.177 ***	.088 ***
FR	.248 ***	.188 ***	.219 ***	.173 ***
GB	.205 ***	.185 ***	.223 ***	.150 ***
GR	.181 ***	.133 ***		
HR	.163 ***	.214 ***		
HU	.084 **	.268 ***	.180 ***	.121 ***
IE	.167 ***	.139 ***	.224 ***	.081 ***
IL	.137 ***	.075 ***	.062 **	.068 **
IS			.177 ***	.135 **
IT			.231 ***	.248 ***
LT			.236 ***	.217 ***
LV	.162 ***	.151 ***		
NL	.219 ***	.045	.188 ***	.133 ***
NO	.171 ***	.023	.173 ***	.028
PL	.092 ***	.122 ***	.183 ***	.145 ***
PT	.092 ***	.175 ***	.082 **	.272 ***
RO	.150 ***	.237 ***		
RU	.188 ***	.158 ***	.239 ***	.244 ***
SE	.110 ***	.084 ***	.215 ***	.019
SI	.119 ***	.175 ***	.150 ***	.215 ***
SK	.117 ***	.151 ***		
TR	.034	.271 ***		
UA	.193 ***	.189 ***		

Notes: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Data was weighted using the post-stratification weights provided by the ESS. Reported parameters are standardized regression coefficients, controlled for age, gender, education, work status, subjective income, past experience of unemployment, perceived unemployment risk, egalitarianism and political ideology. Cyprus is a clear outlier because need perceptions have a negative effect on support for social welfare, meaning that Cypriots are more inclined to share welfare resources with unemployed people who they perceive as well-off than with unemployed people who they perceive as poor.

Appendix 9.1

Table A9.1.1 The decline of social rights and the rise of social obligations in Dutch and Danish unemployment insurance

	Denmark	The Netherlands
Work record requirement	1993: Activation abolished as qualifying work. 1995: from 26 weeks of ordinary employment within 78 weeks to 26 weeks within 156 weeks. 2010: from 26 weeks to 52 weeks of ordinary employment within 156 weeks.	1987: From 130 days to 26 weeks in the previous 12 months for the short-term benefit. For the prolonged benefit and the follow-up benefit there is the additional requirement of having worked at least 52 days in 3 out of the previous 5 years. 1995: From 26 weeks in the previous 12 months to 26 weeks in the previous 39 weeks for the short-term benefit. For the prolonged (from here on called the 'salary-related benefit') and the follow-up benefit there is the additional requirement of having worked at least 52 days in 4 out of the previous 5 years. 2007: From 26 weeks in the previous 39 weeks to 26 weeks in the previous 36 weeks for both the short-term benefit and the salary-related benefit.
Benefit level	1985: Benefit reduction after 5.5 years for those below 25 years old. Later also for older groups. 1995: Reduced for those below 25 years old without education. 2015: Reduced for the newly educated (without job experience).	1987: From 80% to 70% of the previous wage for the short-term and the prolonged benefit. The newly introduced follow-up benefit was set at a flat-rate of 70% of the minimum wage. 1995: Expansion of the flat-rate amount of 70% of the minimum wage to those in receipt of the short-term benefit. 1993-1995: Freezing of most unemployment benefits. 2009: From 70% to 75% of the previous wage for the first two months of unemployment; 70% thereafter.
Benefit duration	1993: Reduced to 7 years (from endless in principle). 1994: Prolonged duration for unemployed above 50 years old. 1995: Reduced to 5 years 1998: Reduced to 4 years. Abolishment of prolonged period for those above 50 years old. 2010: Reduced to 2 years. 2012-15: Temporary prolonged period - general 6 months (2012). - six months education at reduced benefit level. (2013). - 'Temporary labour market benefit' at reduced benefit (2014) - 'Temporary cash benefit' (2015). 2015: Transitional rules abolished. Possibility to earn 1 year extra through temporary employment.	1987: From a maximum of 2.5 years to 6 years, but only for those with an extensive work record eligible for the prolonged and the follow-up benefit. For people with shorter work history, the maximum period is reduced from 2.5 years to 6 months. 1995: From a maximum of 6 years to 7.5 years, but only for those with an extensive work record eligible for the salary-related and the follow-up benefit. For people with shorter work history, the maximum period stays at 6 months. 2003: From a maximum of 7.5 years to 5.5 years, due to the abolishment of the follow-up benefit. 2008: From a maximum of 5.5 years to 44 months, due to the shortening of the maximum period of the salary-related benefit from 5 years to 38 months. 2009: From a maximum of 44 to 41 months, due to the shortening of the short-term benefit from 6 to 3 months. 2016-2019: From a maximum of 41 to 27 months, due to the gradual lowering of the maximum period of the salary-related benefit from 38 to 24 months.

Work-related obligations	1993: Compulsory participation in activation schemes after 3 years of unemployment. 1994: Strengthening of the monitoring of job searching and increased sanctions. 1995: Obligation to take 'suitable' jobs after 6 months. Obligation increased from 3 to 4 hours daily commuting time. Increased sanctions for absence from activation. 1998: Compulsory participation in activation schemes after 1 year (6 months for those below 25 years). Obligation to take 'suitable' jobs after 3 months. 2002: Obligation to take 'suitable' jobs from day one (also during activation). Increased monitoring and sanctions. 2006: Increased monitoring (meeting every 3 months; weekly login at Jobnet) and new sanctions if absent from meetings. Activation after nine months, full time activation after 2.5 years.	1992: Tougher demands on occupational, geographical, and wage mobility. After 6 months of benefit receipt, unemployed people are expected to accept job offers at an increasingly lower educational level or wage level. The unemployed are also expected to accept jobs with a maximum travel time of 3 hours. 1996: Introduction of the Law on Penalties and Measures (*Wet Boeten en Maatregelen*), which requires social security administrators to enforce the existing sanctioning policies more vigorously. 1996: Tightening of the suitable work definition for school leavers; they are expected to accept any job offer from the first day of unemployment. 2008: Tightening of the suitable work definition. All unemployed people are expected to accept any job offer after 12 months. 2015: Tightening of the suitable work definition. All unemployed people are obliged to accept any job offer after 6 months.

Appendix 9.2

Table A9.2.1 'Need for reform' ideas of the core constituency, peripheral constituency and non-constituency

	Question wording	Response categories		Denmark			The Netherlands		
				Core constituency	Peripheral constituency	Non-constituency	Core constituency	Peripheral constituency	Non-constituency
Impact of UI on the economy	'To what extent do you think unemployment benefits are a problem for the national economy?'	1	A problem	8.7%	6.4%	10.5%	8.1%	1.4%	2.5%
		2		10.3%	9.6%	17.4%	10.0%	17.0%	19.7%
		3		29.6%	32.4%	41.7%	32.1%	37.1%	31.4%
		4		16.6%	21.0%	13.9%	24.5%	21.1%	21.9%
		5	Not a problem	34.8%	30.6%	16.5%	9.5%	8.9%	5.5%
			Don't know				16.2%	14.5%	19.0%
Impact of UI on work motivation	'In the future, unemployment benefits should be lowered to increase unemployed people's motivation to get a job'	(strongly) disagree		59.7%	59.8%	36.4%	43.6%	41.7%	31.6%
		agree nor disagree		13.9%	15.4%	19.3%	27.2%	32.0%	32.7%
		(strongly) agree		26.4%	24.8%	44.3%	29.2%	26.3%	35.7%
Financial sustainability of the welfare state	'In the long term, we cannot afford to preserve the welfare state as we know it today'	(strongly) disagree		47.6%	53.0%	43.7%	26.7%	30.4%	28.4%
		agree nor disagree		24.6%	17.4%	20.7%	31.4%	36.3%	34.9%
		(strongly) agree		27.8%	29.6%	35.6%	41.9%	33.3%	36.7%

Appendix 9.3

Table A9.3.1 Principal component factor analysis of the deservingness items

Denmark		1st factor
Control/reciprocity	Most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted to.	.833
Attitude	Unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community because they receive benefits and services.	.791
Identity	I have little in common with typical unemployed people.	.604
Need	How do you estimate the living standard for unemployed people in Denmark?	.508
Eigenvalue		1.943
R^2		.486
N		1405
The Netherlands		1st factor
Control/reciprocity	How often do you think it is the case that unemployed people make little or no effort to find a job?	.729
Attitude	Unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community because they receive benefits and services.	.787
Identity	I have little in common with typical unemployed people.	.678
Need	To what extent do you think it is difficult to make ends meet on unemployment benefits?	.378
Eigenvalue		1.753
R^2		.438
N		1422

Appendix 9.4

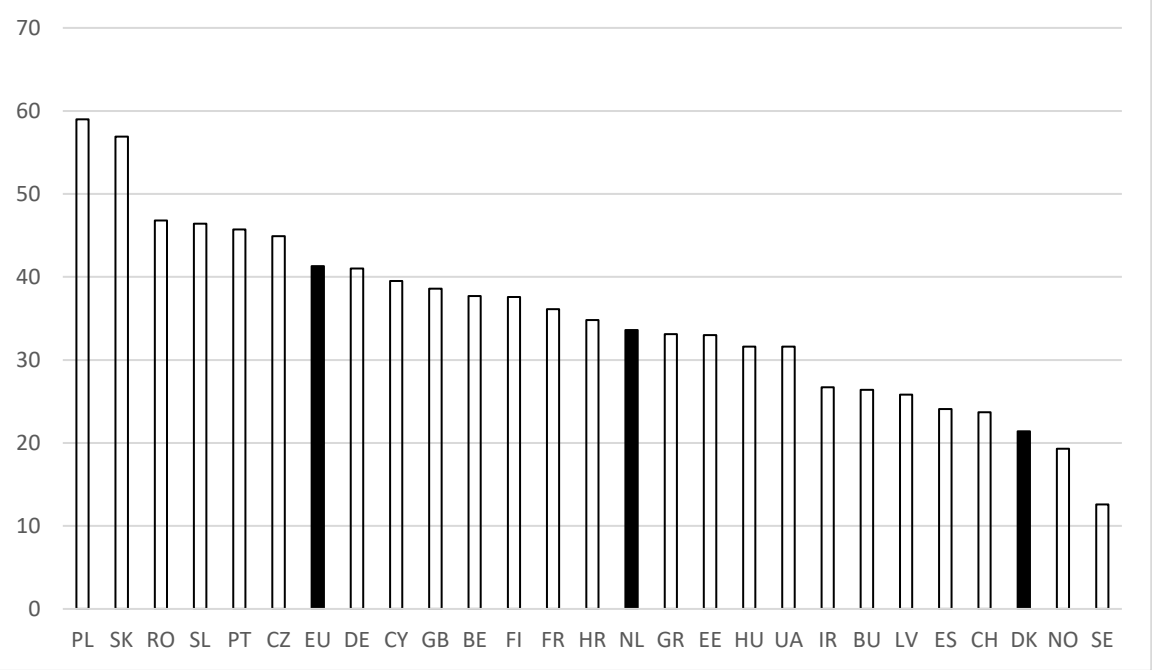
Table A9.4.1 OLS regressions estimating the constituency and deservingness effects on generosity and conditionality, while controlling for age, gender, education, income and political ideology

	Generosity (0-10)		Conditionality (0 – 6)	
	DK	NL	DK	NL
Welfare constituency				
non-constituency	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
peripheral constituency	.050 ns	.040 ns	-.072**	-.043 ns
core constituency	.041 ns	.008 ns	-.076**	-.064*
Deservingness				
control/reciprocity	-.130**	-.154**	.238**	.083**
attitude	-.153**	-.138**	.111**	.183**
identity	-.119**	-.086**	.036 ns	.098**
need	-.144**	-.093**	.127**	.068**
core x deservingness factor	.028 ns	-.045 ns	.006 ns	.033 ns
Age				
15-24	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
25-34	-.068*	-.012 ns	-.160**	-.084*
35-44	-.058 ns	-.035 ns	-.137**	-.012 ns
45-54	-.019 ns	-.039 ns	-.148**	-.011 ns
55-64	-.011 ns	-.031 ns	-.052 ns	.059 ns
65+	-.072**	-.112**	-.139**	.217**
Gender				
Male	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Female	.010 ns	-.024 ns	-.088**	-.032 ns
Education				
lower	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
medium	-.047 ns	-.009 ns	.053 ns	.003 ns
higher	-.100**	.050 ns	.078*	.017 ns
Income				
Cat. 1 (lowest)	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Cat. 2	-.036 ns	-.064 ns	.033 ns	.060 ns
Cat. 3	-.041 ns	-.066 ns	.050 ns	.089**
Cat. 4 (highest)	-.045 ns	-.081**	.097**	.116**
Political ideology (left – right)	-.034 ns	-.096**	.059*	.101**
R^2	.161	.157	.229	.205
n	1376	1476	1354	1476

Note: **Significant at .01-level, *significant at .05-level, ns non-significant. DK=Denmark. NL=the Netherlands.

Appendix 9.5

Figure A9.5.1 The proportion of ESS respondents (in %) with experience of unemployment in the previous five years who agree (strongly) with the statement that ‘most unemployed people do not really try to find a job’



Notes: The countries are: PL Poland; SK Slovakia; RO Romania; SL Slovenia; PT Portugal; CZ Czech Republic; DE Germany; CY Cyprus; GB Great Britain; BE Belgium; FI Finland; HR Croatia; NL the Netherlands; GR Greece; EE Estonia; HU Hungary; UA Ukraine; BU Bulgaria; LV Latvia; ES Spain; CH Switzerland; DK Denmark; NO Norway and SE Sweden. EU is the European average. Israel, the Russian Federation, and Turkey were not included because they are generally not considered to be part of Europe. The question wording for experience with unemployment is: ‘Have you ever been unemployed and seeking work for a period of more than three months in the past 5 years?’. The question wording for the deservingness perception is: ‘Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statement about people in [country]. Most unemployed people do not really try to find a job’.

GEPOPULARISEERDE NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Wie moet wat krijgen in onze welvaartsstaat, en waarom? De vraag piekt al decennia lang hoog op de politieke agenda. Zeker vandaag, wanneer allerhande ontwikkelingen zoals de vergrijzing en massamigratie in toenemende mate druk zetten op de financiële houdbaarheid en maatschappelijke legitimiteit van de welvaartsstaat. In zulke tijden staan we als maatschappij voor een erg moeilijke keuze: hoe verdelen we de almaar schaarser wordende middelen op een zo rechtvaardig mogelijke wijze onder de bevolking? Deze doctoraatsstudie benadert de (her)verdelingskwestie vanuit het perspectief van de burger, door na te gaan wie het meest hulpwaardig is volgens de publieke opinie. Het uitgangspunt daarbij is dat mensen doorgaans beroep doen op een vijftal criteria om te bepalen wie het al dan niet verdient gebruik te maken van sociale uitkeringen en voorzieningen. Over het algemeen wordt men als meer hulpwaardig beschouwd wanneer men (a) niet persoonlijk verantwoordelijk wordt geacht voor zijn of haar behoeftige situatie (‘Controle’), (b) zich houdt aan de in de maatschappij heersende normen en waarden, zoals het tonen van dankbaarheid voor de aangeboden hulp (‘Attitude’), (c) veel bijdragen levert aan onze samenleving, hetzij in het verleden, het heden of de toekomst (‘Reciprociteit’), (d) behoort tot de dominante culturele groep waarmee de meeste mensen zich makkelijk kunnen identificeren (‘Identiteit’), en (e) ernstige financiële en/of medische noden heeft (‘Nood’).

Deze zogenaamde ‘CARIN-criteria’ verklaren waarom sommige sociale groepen, zoals ouderen, als meer hulpwaardig beschouwd worden dan andere groepen, zoals werklozen. De meeste mensen lijken er immers van uit te gaan dat ouderen, door de band genomen, reeds een verdienstelijke maatschappelijke bijdrage geleverd hebben (reciprociteit), niet verantwoordelijk zijn voor het eigen verouderingsproces (controle) en de daarmee samenhangende aftakelende gezondheid (nood), behoren tot het eigen ‘soort’ mensen (identiteit), en erg dankbaar zijn voor de ontvangen hulp (attitude). Werklozen op actieve leeftijd daarentegen ‘scoren’ doorgaans een pak slechter op de verschillende hulpwaardigheidscriteria, wat maakt dat er beduidend minder steun is onder de bevolking om hen te voorzien van sociale uitkeringen en voorzieningen. Dat vertaalt zich in de beleidspraktijk in het veel voorkomend fenomeen waarbij groepen die minder hulpwaardig bevonden worden door burgers eveneens een minder genereuze sociale bescherming genieten. Een goed voorbeeld hiervan zijn de drastische besparingen die de laatste jaren in vele Europese landen zijn doorgevoerd in de werkloosheids- en sociale bijstandsuitkeringen. Ouderdomspensioenen en gezondheidszorg daarentegen waren vaak in mindere mate het slachtoffer van zulke besparingspolitiek, ondanks het feit dat ze het leeuwendeel van de sociale uitgaven opslorpen.

Het centrale argument in dit doctoraatsonderzoek is dat zulke opmerkelijke samenhang tussen beleid en opinie het resultaat is van een constante wisselwerking tussen de twee. Enerzijds lijken onze democratisch verkozen beleidsmakers enigszins ontvankelijk te zijn voor de publieke opinie, allicht uit vrees voor electorale afstraffing tijdens de volgende verkiezingsronde maar mogelijk ook vanuit een soort morele plicht om de ‘stem van het volk’ te respecteren. Anderzijds beïnvloedt het bestaande beleid ongetwijfeld ook de publieke opinie. Zo kan de manier waarop verschillende

sociale regelingen zijn ingericht wel eens erg belangrijk zijn voor de opvattingen die mensen hebben over de ontvangers van sociale steun. Denk daarbij bijvoorbeeld maar aan de typische sociale verzekering, die zo georganiseerd is dat enkel mensen die voldoende hebben bijgedragen (door het betalen van sociale zekerheidspremies) kunnen genieten van de voordelen die de verzekering biedt. In zulk systeem doen de meeste steunontvangers het vrij goed op het gebied van reciprociteit, het hulpwaardigheidscriterium waar door het specifieke institutionele ontwerp van de sociale verzekering allicht ook het meest belang aan gehecht wordt door burgers. Sociale verzekeringsgerechtigden worden echter niet altijd als erg behoeftig beschouwd, precies omdat het genieten van een uitkering of voorziening niet (of slechts in beperkte mate) afhankelijk is van iemands financiële middelen.

Dit doctoraat tracht met een brede waaier aan verschillende databronnen en onderzoekstechnieken -zowel van kwantitatieve als kwalitatieve aard- aan te tonen dat er ook daadwerkelijk een empirisch verband is tussen populaire hulpwaardigheidsopinies en sociaal beleid. Zo wordt onder andere aangetoond dat de generositeit en conditionaliteit van werkloosheidsuitkeringen belangrijke implicaties heeft voor populaire opvattingen omtrent de werkbereidheid en behoeftigheid van werklozen, en dat de institutionele organisatie van sociale regelingen in zekere mate bepaalt aan welke hulpwaardigheidscriteria burgers belang hechten. Wie verder wil ontdekken hoe beleid en opinie nog op elkaar kunnen inwerken, wordt vriendelijk uitgenodigd de volledige doctoraatsthesis te lezen.

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