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THE LEGITIMACY OF WELFARE

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MOTIVES FOR CONTRIBUTING TO WELFARE SCHEMES

Paper for

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Abstract

Theoretically deduced concern about a declining legitimacy of the welfare state has been expressed regularly over the last thirty years. However, in that period empirical studies have repeatedly shown a permanent and substantial popular support for welfare. This mismatch might be due to two factors. Firstly, an inadequate understanding of people’s motivations to support welfare, since the prognostic theories tend to overemphasise either an interest-base for such motivations, or a value-base, thereby neglecting the possibility that people might be motivated in both ways, at the same time, and that possibly other types of motivation might play a role too. Secondly, thus far people’s motivations to contribute to welfare have been measured indirectly only, which can easily lead to false conclusions. A direct measurement would allow for more accurate conclusions, as well as more adequate analyses of the structural and cultural determinants of motivations, which is an area largely uncovered at present. In this article an empirical instrument is developed and applied for measuring directly the various motivations people may have to contribute to welfare. For this purpose different types of motivation are deduced from sociological theories on solidarity, which address the general question why individual people would give priority to collective over personal interests. Four motives are found: perceived self-interest, moral obligation, affection and identification with others, and accepted authority. The core of the measurement instrument consists of asking respondents to what degree the first three motives for contributing to social security apply in their case, given that paying such contributions is a legal obligation. The instrument is applied in a national survey among the Dutch adult population in 1995. The main conclusions are: that indeed a large majority of the Dutch is motivated to pay for welfare on several grounds at the time; that the motive of self-interest plays a most important role; that older people, men and the highest educated are more strongly motivated to contribute to welfare, while welfare use and income level only have a modest influence; and that the main patterns can be understood from the encompassing character of the Dutch welfare state, from which (nearly) all Dutch citizens profit personally.
1. Introduction

From a sociological perspective the most critical variable for the future of the welfare state, as for any major social institution, lies in its societal legitimacy, which is the degree to which people endorse its principles and operations, and accept its requirements and outcomes. What motivates people to do such is therefore crucial for understanding welfare legitimacy.

From the moment on that post-war welfare states in the Western world reached the first stages of their maturation sociologists have been concerned with their future. Downright fear for a major crisis in the legitimacy of the welfare state, due to falling popular support as a result of certain political, cultural and structural developments in society, has been expressed by various authors since the 1970s. Among the early worrying prophets were e.g. Illich (1973) and Lasch (1978), who expressed concerns about the undemocratic and suppressing effects of the increasing bureaucratic and statist aspects of welfare. Rose and Peters (1978) claimed that support for welfare would fall to the degree that wage earners would experience a drop in real disposable income due to economic recession and rising welfare demand. The ‘abused taxpayer’ would ultimately refuse to contribute. Crozier et al. (1975) feared a growing ungovernability of the welfare state due to ‘rising expectations’, i.e. when the operations of democratic processes would lead to an overload of demands on government, exceeding its capacity to respond. And Wilensky (1975) argued that the new ‘middle mass’, resulting from the ongoing differentiation of labour and social life and driven by economic individualism, would oppose to pay for welfare, since they would perceive lesser or no benefits from it. From a cultural point of view Inglehart (1977) posited the emergence and growth of post-materialistic values among post-war generations, stressing quality of life, in stead of material aspects of economic and physical welfare state protection, while Zijderveld (1979) argued that the comprehensive welfare state contributed to an immoral ethos among its citizens, where everybody tries to benefit much and contribute little, leading to a morally corrupting and economically unsustainable situation. Voices warning against falling welfare support have not quieted in the meantime. The ‘middle mass’ argument is still repeated regularly, e.g. in terms of the ‘comfortable majority’ who are reluctant to extend the welfare gained for itself to the minority of the poor (Galbraith 1992), or in terms of the ‘one-third/two-thirds society’ concept of Leisering and Leibfried (1998). Inglehart has extended its argumentation for a dissolving consensus about welfare, seeing post-materialistic values as only one part of the problem, the other being that the successful welfare state has reached a ‘point of diminishing returns’, leading to withdrawal of popular support (Inglehart 1990). Recently a new argument is introduced from the debate on ‘risk society’, holding that ‘manufactured uncertainty’ reaches across all social groups, while at the same time people have become more suspicious of government’s capability for offering solutions (Beck 1986, Giddens 1994, Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994).

However, despite all this concern, empirical studies on welfare state legitimacy have not detected any substantial decline in popular support. On the contrary, all comparative studies conclude that support for welfare has remained high from the 1970s onwards. A dip occurred generally in the recessionary 1980s, but even then it was ‘...simply nonsense to speak of a crisis of legitimacy.’ (Ringen 1987,63). More recently, Pierson (1991) concludes from several public opinion studies that ‘There is little evidence ... of large-scale popular backlash against the welfare state’ (p. 171). While Pettersen (1995), comparing trends in various European countries on the basis of various data-sets, concludes that ‘...there is no evidence that welfare states, or specific welfare programs, are generally losing support over time...’ (p. 229). Similar conclusions are drawn in the (EU) comparative studies of Ferrera (1993), Ploug (1996) and Abrahamson (1997).

Clearly, actual registered trends defy theoretical expectations regarding developments in the legitimacy base of the modern welfare state. An obvious question to put forward is of course, how this could be explained? Although the mismatch has been noticed by others, no explicit account of the question exists. Most authors simply draw the conclusion that apparently theories do not explain actual developments. Pettersen (1995) goes a little further and suggests that in order to understand welfare support patterns one should mix two types of theory. The dominant one, seeing support for welfare as being based on people’s considerations of self-interest, like the theory of Rose and Peters on the ‘abused taxpayer’ theory, of Wilensky on the ‘middle mass’, and Galbraith on ‘comfortable majority’ (but see also Esping-Andersen and Korpi 1984). The other assuming that people follow social values and norms...
regarding welfare contribution, like e.g. Inglehart’s ‘post-materialism’ theory (but see also Taylor-Gooby
1985, Coughlin 1991). Other authors, discussing theoretically the motivational basis for welfare support,
have made a similar dichotomy. For instance, Kangas (1997) and Lindenberg (1990) speak in this respect
of ‘homo economicus’ and ‘homo sociologicus’ models of men, Taylor-Gooby (1999) of ‘instrumental
rationality’ vs. ‘normative’ behaviour, Elster (1990) of ‘selfishness’ vs. ‘altruism’ and Mansbridge (1990)
of ‘self-interest’ vs. ‘love and duty’. All agree that people might be motivated to contribute to welfare on
the basis of both types of considerations, at the same time, and that social contexts condition type and
strength of motivations. This would suggest that mixing factors of self-interest on the one hand, and of
values, norms and beliefs on the other, would be a solution to understand the observed mismatch between
actual trends and theories. For instance, people with higher incomes, are usually seen as a group with
stronger anti-welfare sentiments since they have a lesser personal interest in collective social protection,
but on average they will have a higher educational level, which might imply a stronger internalisation of
citizenship obligations to contribute to societies needs, which in turn might dim their possible interest
based anti-welfare sentiment.

On principle it can be accepted that support patterns might be better understood when various
types of motivation are taken into account. Empirically, however, there are two problems here. First, it is
still largely unknown what mixes actually exist among the public, to what degree people differ in their mix
of motivations, and how differences could be explained. The insight seems to be growing that the ‘value
basis’ of welfare state legitimacy is of more fundamental importance than its ‘interest basis’ (Ofte 1988,
Papadakis 1993, Hinrichs 1996, Taylor Gooby 1999, Peillon 1996), but the dominant view still is that
citizens are acting on basis of their self-interest. Second, thus far people’s motivations for contributing to
welfare have only been measured indirectly. Usually, the prevalence or dominance of the two types of
underlying motivations are deduced from the specific influence on welfare support from ‘interest
indicators’ like age, household type, income and class position, and ‘value indicators’ like egalitarianism,
left-right preferences, individualism, social ideologies and a range of welfare attitudes (see Coughlin 1980
and Peillon 1995 for reviews of such empirical studies). We know, however, of no empirical study,
except our own which we will discuss later, that directly asked people what motivates them whether or
not to support welfare. The obvious drawbacks of indirect measurement are that it is not possible to
assess adequately the relative importance of both motivational types, nor to analyse the structural and
cultural determinants of people’s motivational mixes.

This paper aims at contributing to a better theoretical and empirical understanding of people’s
motivations for supporting welfare, as well as of the determinants of such motivations. For this a
typology of motivations will be developed, and the results of a Dutch public opinion study in which the
typology was applied will be presented. The typology will be derived from a discussion of sociological
theories of solidarity, which are concerned with the question why and under which conditions people are
willing to let collective interests prevail over their personal interests. For measuring differences in types
and degrees of motivation an instrument is developed that awards a higher degree of legitimacy to those
welfare arrangements or systems that encounter more willingness to contribute, both in terms of strength
of motivation, as in numbers of different motivational types. The implications of our findings for
understanding the future legitimacy of welfare will be discussed in the concluding section.

2. Sociologists on solidarity: motivations for supporting collective interests

Mechanic and organic solidarity

Emile Durkheim saw individual contributions to the common good as a functional prerequisite for the
integration of a society. He distinguished between two sources of such social solidarity: ‘...the likeness of
consciences and the division of social labour’ (Durkheim, 1966/1893: 226). ‘Likeness of consciences’
refers to a situation in which individuals share the same fundamental cultural elements, which they use as
a basis for recognising and accepting each other as members of the same collectivity. On these grounds
such individuals can empathise with one another, become interested on each other’s behalf and form a
solidaristic whole. In such a situation of mechanic solidarity the individual identifies strongly with the
group. This type of culturally-based mutual bond inherently implies that group interests can prevail over
the interests of the individuals involved. The second source of solidarity lies in the division of labour,
which causes people to become mutually dependent on each other for their life opportunities. The division of labour thus gives rise to structural bonds. According to Durkheim the structural interdependence in a modern and complex society needs to be acknowledged and actively regulated to function properly. Modern, complex, organic solidarity has to be organised by means of rules for co-operation which force the individual ‘...to act in view of ends which are not strictly his own, to make concessions, to consent to compromises, to take into account interests higher than his own’ (Durkheim, 1966/1893: 227). In other words, organic solidarity presupposes explicitly that individuals allow collective interests to prevail over their own. The coercion accompanying the rules for co-operation, however, need not be experienced by individuals as an unpleasant burden that they are inclined to resist. Like any institutional obligation, these rules can be internalised during the socialisation process. Acting in accordance with the obligations of society and contributing to the common good will then be seen and experienced as an intrinsic moral duty, not as externally enforced behaviour.

Durkheim emphasises the functional necessity of solidarity: a social system with insufficient solidarity, i.e. one in which the cultural and structural ties are too few or too weak, is bound to disintegrate, simply because its overarching interests will not be served adequately (see also Parsons, 1951: 96). Furthermore, Durkheim regards solidarity as a characteristic of a social system. The existence and survival of a collectivity depend on the de facto cultural and structural interrelatedness within its boundaries and not on the feelings of solidarity which actors may have towards each other. Admittedly, such feelings are somewhat relevant to solidarity. The solidarity ties actually present in society have to be accepted and supported by the people and groups involved. While feelings may play a role in this acceptance and support other motives are possible too, as will be shown later.

Communal and associative relationships
While Durkheim analyses solidarity from a macro point of view by perceiving it as a characteristic of broader collectivities and societies, Max Weber sees solidarity as characterising social relations between individuals (Weber in Henderson and Parsons, 1964 [1922]: 136-139). Such relations, Weber argues, are ‘solidary’ (solidär) if they are directed at interests that transcend those of the individuals involved and as such establish a bond between them. Referring to Tönnies’ well known dichotomy of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, Weber identifies two types of solidaristic relations, which bear a remarkable resemblance to Durkheim’s concepts of mechanic and organic solidarity. First there is Vergemeinschaftung, translated as ‘communal relationship’, in which case individuals treat each other according to a subjective feeling of belonging together. According to Weber, such a feeling can have affective, emotional and traditional bases. Examples include a religious brotherhood, an erotic relationship, a relation of personal loyalty, a national community and ‘esprit de corps’. The core of the communal relation lies in a shared we-ness, in the understanding and acceptance that one is a member of the same group. Here Weber formulates the micro version of Durkheim’s mechanic solidarity. Second, there is Vergesellschaftung, translated as ‘associative relationship’, in which case people treat each other according to a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similarly motivated agreement. The essence of the associative relationship is that it is ‘utility directed’. That is, it is aimed at a certain material or non-material utility which is of interest to both actors. Durkheim’s organic solidarity, which is derived from an interdependence of life opportunities, is easily recognisable in this second type of ‘solidary’ relationship.

Weber argues that both types can be present in one and the same relationship. For instance, within family relations there is a we-feeling but usually also (sometimes only after heavy bargaining) rational agreement on the best way to deal with each member’s personal interests and those of the family as a whole. Furthermore, according to Weber communal solidarity should not necessarily be associated with harmony and voluntariness. On the contrary, conflict and coercion in communal relations, even in the most intimate ones, is not uncommon. Third, solidarity is not the same as equality or homogeneity. This means that extensive sharing does not suffice to establish a communal bond.

Sources of solidarity: shared identity and shared utility
At this stage a conclusion from Durkheim and Weber can be that both perceive solidarity as a characteristic of social relations, at the macro level as well as at the micro level. They view solidarity not
as a cultural value or feeling but as an objective attribute of a social system. The degree of solidarity in a social system is seen by both as a function of those ties between individuals and groups that enable interests to be served in a manner that transcends the ties between the individuals and groups involved. Serving the common good is not equal to solidarity itself but a possible result of social solidarity. This implies, first, that in a social system with strong solidarity collective interests can be served and realized more easily and in greater measure than in a social system with weaker solidarity. Second, broader or more extended solidarity means that more interests can be recognized and accepted as being collective (i.e. perceived as the responsibility of all), or that the collectivity is defined more broadly (for example, the evolution from early local and charitable poor relief systems to comprehensive national income protection systems is a manifestation of social solidarity being extended in both respects). The main source of solidarity is a mutual sharing of each other’s fate, which may be of two types. Either people share their fate because they identify with one another: there is a feeling of ‘we are one’. Or people share fates because they depend on each other for realizing life opportunities: there is a perception of ‘we need each other’. The first type, which will be called shared identity, is a culturally and emphatically based bond, to which Durkheim’s ‘conscience collective’ refers at the macro level and Weber’s communal relationship at the micro level. The second type, shared utility, is a structurally based bond, to which Durkheim’s concept of organic solidarity refers and Weber’s associative relationship. In short, a social system’s measure of solidarity, and thus the possibility of realizing collective interests, is higher the more people and groups involved identify with one another and the more they depend on one another.

Institutionalised role obligations

Parsons’ view of solidarity ties in with the ideas of Durkheim and Weber in that he defines it as collective interests taking precedence over individual interests. In the context of his general theory of action Parsons identifies and analyses different types of action. Solidary action is defined as collectivity-oriented action, which contrasts with self-oriented action (Parsons, 1951: 97-101). The first is explicitly aimed at the interests and coherence of a group or a wider social system, while the second has no such orientation. According to Parsons, social actions take place in and between institutions or ‘collectivities’. All institutions impose moral obligations to contribute to its collective interests on those individuals who figure in their operations. Such obligations exist for each and every institutional role. Solidary behavior then means that one conforms to the solidarity obligations of one’s role. The actual degree to which a collectivity can have its interests served by its members (i.e. the de facto level of solidarity) is thus a function of the degree to which the collectivity succeeds in imposing solidarity obligations on its members.

Clearly, like Durkheim who stressed that individuals in a modern society have to conform to rules for co-operation, Parsons states explicitly that solidarity implies a certain coercion of the individuals involved. Thus, the criticism of some (e.g. Tromp 1985) that solidaristic behavior within the modern welfare state is mainly enforced and therefore attests to a weak or deficient solidarity base does not hold. From a sociological point of view a certain degree of coercion is inherent in social solidarity.

Emotional ties and shared identity

Mayhew’s theory of solidarity elaborates on the notion that is called ‘shared identity’ here. He situates the fundamental base for social bonds in human emotional ties which are present in direct, repeated face-to-face relations between individuals (Mayhew 1971). In interactions with others, patterns and networks of attraction and loyalty arise. As a result of such patterns, individuals start defining themselves as members of a broader unified group whose integrity and interests have to be defended. In this stage individuals perceive a certain collective identity and collective interests. Once they have established a sense of fellowship and membership, people will become willing to co-operate toward realizing the common good. At that point the collectivity turns into what Mayhew calls a ‘system of solidarity’: such a degree of identity-sharing has been achieved that serving the collective interest as a co-ordinated action by group members becomes possible. Mayhew sees complex societies as conglomerations of systems of solidarity. To the degree that such systems grow more dependent on one another (as a result of the division of labor and specialization), they will have to form associative relations aimed at co-operation and exchange. The conglomerative bonds that arise and develop are less intense, more abstract and cover a broader
geographic and cultural scope than the bonds within the systems of solidarity themselves. According to Mayhew, such broader bonds are crucial for the existence of complex societies.

Mayhew locates a deeper basis for the identity-based solidarity than Durkheim. This level is not that of shared cultural elements in a collective conscience, since such a conscience presupposes that systems of solidarity have already been established (i.e. that human emotional ties have already resulted in patterns of attraction and loyalty and in group formation). Mayhew and Durkheim both distinguish between solidarity from a shared identity and solidarity from a shared utility. Durkheim analyses them from a perspective of societal modernization. Mayhew, however, analyses both sources of solidarity primarily from a perspective of the simple versus the complex. In reality, modern societies are more complex than pre-modern ones, but Mayhew’s theory allows for studying solidarity in more or less complex systems and conglomerations within any type of society, modern or pre-modern.

Interdependency and shared utility
Instead of deducing solidarity from a shared identity, Hechter (1987) basically views solidarity as derived from shared utility. His rational choice based theory on the principles of group solidarity starts from the idea that individuals rely on groups to satisfy their needs. Groups, however, can function only if their members contribute. Hechter specifies the conditions and the mechanisms enabling groups to motivate their members to contribute to the common good.

The least complex possibility in this respect is a situation in which the group can exchange proportionate or otherwise fair parts of its production for specified amounts and types of contributions. Those who do not contribute receive less or nothing. With collective goods (which no group member can be excluded from consumption), however, free-riding and thus sub-optimal production are a problem (cf. Olson 1977). Hechter does not agree with Durkheim’s and Parsons’ normative solution to this: that individuals may be motivated to contribute to the production of such goods from a moral conviction or out of a moral obligation. The mere existence of moral obligations to contribute, he asserts, does not necessarily mean that they will be met. Crucial to Hechter, then, is not only the extensiveness of obligations to contribute to the common good, but also the degree to which individual members actually comply with these obligations. Compliance will be greater, and thus the degree of solidarity higher, depending on the extent of: (1) individual dependency on the revenues of the production of the collective good; (2) effectiveness of control of contributions. Hechter submits that these two basic variables not only explain differences in the actual degree of solidarity between social systems but also reveal why under certain conditions some individuals exhibit greater solidarity than others. The theory can be refined empirically by specifying factors which influence these two variables. The degree to which individual members depend on the production of the common good of the group they belong to depends for instance on whether there are alternatives available and on the costs involved in moving to another group. The control capacity depends on the visibility of contributions, the costs of control, the availability of sanctions etc.

Conclusions
The sociologists discussed so far perceive solidarity as a state of relations between individuals and groups enabling collective interests to be served. The essence of and basis for such relations is that people have or experience a common fate. Either because they share identity as members of the same collectivity and therefore feel a mutual sense of belonging and responsibility. Or because they share utility: they need each other to realize their life opportunities. The scope and strength of solidarity in a social system is a function of such shared identities and utilities. Solidaristic behavior boils down to acting in the interest of the group and its members.

Solidarity is clearly not seen as a sentiment of people, although something like a sentiment of solidarity exists. This refers to a wish to share other peoples’ fate and to promote the interest of the (thus defined) collectivity of ego and alter. Such sentiments are not critical for the actual existence of solidarity, because people can have other types of motives to contribute to the common good.

The discussion of theories enables identification of four such motives. Mayhew, for instance, stresses mainly the role of people’s feelings and sentiments, that is, affective and emotional grounds for solidarity. The degree to which people feel attracted to one another and are loyal at the micro level, and the degree to
which they perceive a collective identity and we-feeling at the meso and macro level are decisive for the solidarity between them.

The second motive for solidarity, distilled from the theories of Durkheim and Parsons, depends on culturally-based convictions, which imply that the individual feels a moral obligation to serve the collective interest. Like the affective and emotional motive for solidarity, the strength of this motive may vary. The shared ‘conscience collective’ may contain fewer or more moral codes for co-operation; institutional role obligations can vary in number and strength; codes and obligations can be strongly or weakly internalized etcetera.

Long term self-interest can be a third motive for solidarity. It is central in Hechter’s rational choice based approach and underlies Durkheim’s organic solidarity in a modern differentiated society, where people learn that they benefit from contributing to the collective interest (if not immediately then in the long run). The motive is also the basis for Weber’s associative relationship, in which people agree to help one another, either by exchanging goods or services or by co-operating to achieve a common goal. In other words, solidaristic behaviour, or contributing to the common good, can be motivated by an individual’s perception that such a contribution is rewarded, here and now or may be in the future. This type of motive is present for instance, among those who pay their contributions to a pay-as-you-go pension scheme, not because they sympathise and identify so strongly with the elderly as a needy group, or because they regard it as a moral duty attached to their role of a working citizen, but mainly because they hope to become 65 themselves and benefit from the system in the future. Clearly, solidarity does not need to be grounded in warm feelings of love and duty; it can be based on a rational calculation. Those who argue that the legitimacy of the modern welfare state mainly stems from the fact that the middle and higher classes profit most from it, implicitly refer to this type of motive (see e.g. Baldwin, 1990; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Goodin and LeGrand, 1987).

Fourth, support for solidarity is not necessarily spontaneous, or completely voluntary. According to Parsons contributing to the collective interest is an act of solidarity only if it results from institutional role obligations. In Hechter’s theory enforcement figures even more explicitly. Free- riding necessitates coercion to and control of contributions to the common good. Empirically, one can imagine situations in which the first three motives – affection and identification, moral conviction, self-interest - fail to provide sufficient support for solidarity. For instance, the identification with other group members may be low, moral obligations may be perceived as unrealistic or unjust, and people may not have or perceive a strong personal interest in the group’s revenues. In such cases solidarity will not be supported spontaneously, making enforcement by a higher authority necessary. This can be the group, the neighbourhood or the public exercising social control, but in many fields of modern society it will be the state. It has to be remarked, though, that enforced solidarity can only be stable in the long run if it is legitimised. Of course it can be legitimised by the motives mentioned earlier, but under discussion here is a situation in which they are not sufficiently strong. The remaining possibility is that the authority has a legitimacy of itself, be it a ‘legal-bureaucratic’, ‘traditional’ or ‘charismatic’ legitimacy (Weber in Henderson and Parsons, 1964: 130). For instance, obligations to behave solidaristically, installed upon citizens by the state, can be perceived as legitimate because the state is itself seen as a legitimate authority. In the context of the legitimacy of welfare arrangements Offe (1996) and Hinrichs (1996) point to the ‘socialising function’ and effects of existing welfare institutions, which renders them a ‘traditional’ legitimacy and even generates congruent moral standards among their public.

To conclude, four different motives for solidarity can be distinguished: 1) mutual affection and identification, 2) moral convictions, 3) perceived self-interest and 4) accepted authority. It can now be specified that support for solidarity relations will generally be stronger to the degree that: such relations link up with existing patterns of mutual affections and identification; they correspond with relevant moral convictions and perceived duties being in force; they correspond to the (long term) self-interest of individuals and groups involved, and; to the degree that they are backed by a more legitimate authoritative body. Solidaristic relations and arrangements that are legitimate on the grounds of all four motives are likely to be the strongest. If one regards solidaristic welfare arrangements and institutions as serving the collective interest of a modern society then the foregoing analyses offers the possibility of measuring and analysing the
legitimacy of welfare solidarity. Such legitimacy is stronger to the degree that more people are motivated to contribute to the arrangements, and people have more different motives to contribute. Along this line of reasoning it is also true, that welfare legitimacy is higher among those citizens who are motivated to contribute by more of the various types of motive, more strongly.

A final point is that, to a certain extent, a positive correlation might usually be expected between the various types of motivation people have for solidaristic behaviour. This is because people tend to be most dependent on those collectivities they belong to, implying that shared identities and shared utilities tend to go together.

In the following it will be analysed to what degree the Dutch population is motivated by the various motives to support welfare, whether there are individual differences, and if so, what factors determine an individual’s motivational pattern.

3. Determinants of motivations to contribute to welfare

Since there exist no other studies directly measuring the type and strength of people’s motivations to contribute to welfare, there is no previous evidence of determining factors to build upon. Therefore, our empirical analysis will be highly exploratory. Two sets of explanatory factors are distinguished. One set of personal characteristics: e.g., age, educational level, income level and welfare use (whether people receive a social security benefit or not). And another set of variables indicating people’s opinions, perceptions and attitudes regarding the welfare state in general, and social security in particular.

With respect to sex one could assume that women are more strongly motivated to support welfare because there is some empirical evidence that generally they favour welfare more than men (Deitch 1988). Explanations for this might be found in cultural differences, in the sense that women might adhere more to values of caring and mutual responsibility (Deitch 1988), which would imply they agree more with motives concerning moral conviction and affection. But they might also agree more on the motive of self-interest. This is because women are supposed to profit more from welfare arrangements generally than men, because such arrangements enhance their self-sufficiency and labour market chances (Hernes 1987, Wearnes 1987, Erre and Rein 1988). This might be true generally, but in the Netherlands, where social security rights have become strongly connected to labour market performance (Van Oorschot and Engelfriet 2000), the situation might be different. The labour market participation of Dutch women is relatively low and most working women work part-time, which offers them relatively quite less income protection than men. That child care facilities are grossly inadequate might be another factor which makes Dutch women perceive less benefits from the welfare state, as they might in other comparable countries. As for age it might be expected that younger people are lesser motivated to contribute. One could argue that social protection is less significant for them personally, because they will have lower chances generally of encountering social risks like sickness and disability, and old age is still far away. Many of them might not have responsibilities towards spouses and children yet, and younger people have invested less in the welfare system than older people (see also Svallfors 1989). Next to these interest based considerations, which would make young people agree less with the motive of self-interest, there might be cultural differences between ages groups, which make that young people also agree less with the motives of moral obligation and affection. Dutch younger people are more ‘post-materialistic’ in Inglehart’s terms (van Deth 1984), and this attitude is expected to correlate with less welfare support (Pettersen 1995). Furthermore, among Dutch young people a shift has occurred towards more rightist political preferences, with the accompanying values of individual responsibility and stronger anti-welfare sentiment (Ter Bogt and van Praag 1992). It might also be that generally older people adhere more to solidaristic values of collective and mutual responsibility, than younger people, because they were born in times when culture was not that individualised as it became from the 1960s onwards. With regard to educational level expectations are contradictory. On the one hand, one would assume that people with a higher educational level would be less motivated to pay for welfare, since generally their chances on the social risks of unemployment, sickness and disability are smaller. They will also have higher incomes implying greater opportunities to provide for themselves. Two reasons why they might feel to be ‘abused taxpayers’ (Rose and Peters 1978). Furthermore, there are more ‘post-materialists’ among people with a
higher educational level, and if it is true that such an attitude correlates with higher anti-welfare sentiment (as Pettersen 1995 suggests), then this would be another argument to expect higher educated people to be less motivated to pay for welfare. On the other hand, due to their higher education they may have developed a clearer understanding of the functional and moral necessity of contributing to the common good. In Mead’s theory on the development of the Self (Mead 1934), as well as in Kohlberg’s theory on the development of moral consciousness (Kohlberg 1981), education is seen as a most important factor contributing to the internalisation of values and norms, among which those principles concerned with contributing to the common good and reckoning with others take a central position (see also Jencks 1990). Ganzenboom (1988) speaks in this respect of the higher degree of ‘moral enlightenment’ of the higher educated. With regard to income level expectations are rather straightforward. One would expect that those with lower incomes perceive a higher interest in the welfare state, and would therefore be more willing to contribute to it. Among those with higher incomes the reverse can be expected. However, it could be that this difference between lower and higher incomes is smaller in countries, like the Netherlands, with an encompassing welfare system, than in those with a more residual system. In the former even people with high incomes might profit strongly from welfare arrangements in general, if not more than lower incomes. This so-called Matthew effect, whereby is ‘taken from the poor, and given to the rich’ (Deleeck et al. 1983), actually exists in The Netherlands. Empirical studies show that here, on balance, higher incomes profit more from social and cultural government spending than the lower incomes (Muffels et al. 1986, SCP 1994). Also welfare use can be expected to be a clearly decisive variable: those on benefit will perceive more clearly all of the various reasons to pay for welfare, than those not on benefit. Again in the Netherlands, however, differences might not be that large, since benefit dependency is a reality close to the personal lives of many Dutch people. No less than 92% of the Dutch either have received social security in the past themselves, are receiving a benefit now, expect to be dependent on it in future, and/or have family members or close friends who are claiming one at present (Van Oorschot 1997; included here are unemployment insurance and assistance, sickness benefit and disability benefit).

In order to explore further possible determinants of people’s motives for contributing to welfare, a number of welfare relevant opinions, perceptions and attitudes are included. Such variables might have a direct effect on the motivational pattern of individuals, but they can also play a mediating role in the total influence of personal characteristics. Hitherto, most studies of welfare support have been limited to direct effects of personal characteristics only. The inclusion of this second set of variables thus can contribute to a fuller understanding of the complex relationships that underlie welfare legitimacy. With the variables available in our data-set it can be can formulated here as hypotheses, that those people will perceive more reasons to pay for welfare, more strongly, who are more positive or less negative about various aspects of welfare. That is, who:

- evaluate the social security system less negatively;
- perceive individual, social, moral and economic effects of social security more positively or less negatively;
- would prefer benefit levels to be higher;
- perceive actual benefit levels less as adequate for beneficiaries;
- belief less that people have a certain degree of personal control over the occurrence of social risks;
- have a more positive attitude towards income solidarity, i.e. the principle that higher incomes contribute relatively more to the costs of social protection;
- belief less in the misuse of social security;
- have a higher general trust in others, and;
- have a stronger general solidaristic attitude in life.

In addition, it can be expected that people’s political preference, and their degree of religiousness are important. Regarding political preference the expectation is that those on the political left agree more on the motives concerning moral obligation and affection, than those on the right. Socialist and social-democratic ideologies adhere more to equality and social protection of vulnerable groups, than liberal and conservative ideology. Christian-democrats are expected to be close to the left-position in this respect, because of the Christian values of charity and compassion with others. In many surveys political left-right variables account for a large, often even the largest, part of variance in various types of welfare attitudes.
(Coughlin 1980, Taylor-Gooby 1983, Whiteley 1981, Pettersen 1995, Papadakis and Bean 1993). With regard to religiousness the variable available is frequency of church attendance. Since it is assumed that people who attend church more frequently adhere more to Christian values and norms, they can be expected to be motivated more to contribute to welfare.

Finally, it is expected that the three motives are correlated positively. Generally, perceptions of shared identities and shared utilities will correlate, because people will usually be most dependent on the collectivities they actual belong to. In the case of welfare support it may be expected that those who perceive a (stronger) self-interest in certain arrangements will tend to feel more close to those who are the target group of these arrangements, implying stronger feelings of obligation and affection.

4. Data and methods

Data

Our data are from the TISSER-Solidarity study, a national representative survey (N=1500) among the Dutch public of 16 years and older, carried out in the autumn of 1995. The survey was specifically designed to measure peoples’ opinions, perceptions and attitudes regarding the welfare state in general, and the system of social security in particular. In relation to social security, questions were also put about re-insertion policies, the division of paid and unpaid work, and the rights and duties of unemployed people. (See Van Oorschot 1998 for a summary of the survey’s full results).

Instruments

Motives for welfare support: Respondents of the TISSER-Solidarity study were asked which motives they had for contributing to the Dutch system of social security benefits. Three of the above deduced motives were operationalised into separate answering categories. The motive of ‘accepted authority’ could not be operationalised meaningfully, since contributing to social security is a legal obligation for all citizens that have an income. The survey question was:

Paying contributions for social insurances is a legal obligation. Apart from that people may have other reasons for paying them. How is this in your case? In other words, to what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- For me paying contributions for social insurances is a thing I also do because:
  - a. It secures me of a benefit in case I would need one myself
  - b. I regard it as a moral duty towards the less well-off in society
  - c. I personally feel with the situation beneficiaries are in

Answering categories: (1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) agree, nor disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

The statements indicate respectively the motives of perceived self-interest, moral convictions, mutual affection and identification. For analyzing multi-variately the factors influencing individual motives it was decided not to treat each of the three motives as separate dependent variables. Firstly, because there is hardly any variation in the motive of self-interest, with which 82% of the Dutch (strongly) agreed (see results section). And secondly, there is a high Pearson correlation among the other two motives of .58 (p<.000). In stead a scale-variable MOTIVATION was construed as a combination of answers to statements a, b and c. The values of MOTIVATION are: (0) no motive mentioned (i.e. no ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ on either of the statements, implying that legal obligation is the only motive for paying contributions) (1) only ‘perceived self-interest’ mentioned (2) ‘perceived self-interest’ mentioned, plus either ‘moral duty’ OR ‘mutual identification’ (3) ‘perceived self-interest’ mentioned, plus ‘moral duty’ AND ‘mutual identification’, as well those answering ‘moral duty’ AND ‘mutual identification’ but not ‘perceived self-interest’ (which latter group is less than 2% of respondents). Higher scores on the MOTIVATION scale imply stronger support for welfare, because it means that people are motivated by more of the various motives. Higher scores also indicate a stronger moral and affectionate base of support, on top of motivations of self-interest. The scale correlates .40 with ‘perceived self-interest’, .75 with ‘moral obligation’ and .73 with ‘affection’ (all p<.000).

Explanatory variables: As indicated in the previous section, two distinct sets of relevant variables were
available from our data: personal characteristics and a set of opinions, perceptions and attitudes. Their measurement and construction are shown in Appendix A.

Analysis
In a first step the distribution of motives over personal characteristics will be described and discussed. This will show which groups in society are most or least motivated to pay for welfare. These bi-variate analyses will also give a first idea of the validity of the hypotheses defined above.

In a second step multivariate analyses are carried out. Attention is not only paid to the direct effects of all explanatory variables on motivation for welfare support, but also to the indirect effects of the personal characteristics that might be present through their influence on opinions, perceptions and attitudes. Therefore an explorative, two-stage LISREL analysis was carried out. In the first stage motivation was regressed on all explanatory variables from both sets, and at the same time all variables of the set of opinions, perceptions and attitudes were regressed on all variables of the set of personal characteristics. This analysis was repeated in the second stage, however, only with those variables included that had shown to have significant effects in the first step.

5. Results

Why pay for social security?

Table 1 shows the answers of respondents to the question what reasons they have for paying social security contributions, next to the fact that it is a legal obligation. A first conclusion is that there is no evidence whatsoever that enforcement would be the only way to motivate the Dutch to pay for welfare. On the contrary, a large majority of the Dutch public admits to have other motives than just fulfilling a legal obligation. Firstly, and most notably, paying for welfare is accepted on grounds of a perceived self-interest by a large majority. No less than 82% of the Dutch willingly contribute to welfare since they expect to be dependent upon it themselves sometime in future. Seemingly, the comprehensive character of the Dutch social security system, with its earnings-related benefits for sick, disabled and unemployed workers, its non-means-tested old age pensions and child benefits for all qualifying citizens, and its housing benefits for renters and tax credits for home-owners is experienced as a profitable institution by nearly the whole of the population. There seems to be no sign here, like in the United States, of a middle class perceiving welfare as being reserved for the poor only (Weir et al 1988, Kluegel et al.1995), or of a legitimacy depending on ‘…loyalties of the numerically weak, and often politically residual, social stratum’ as Esping-Andersen (1990) typified the situation in residualist welfare sates like the United States and Canada. The relatively strong solidaristic attitude of the Dutch population, which it shows in international comparative studies (Hofstede 1998, Stevens and Diederiks 1995), might be reflected here in the fact that as much as two-thirds of the respondents also say to be motivated to pay for welfare on moral grounds. That is, that they perceive paying contributions as a moral obligation towards the needy in society. The motive of affection, feeling with the lot of beneficiaries, is least strong, but nevertheless given by as much as 42% of the Dutch. Finally, only very small minorities of between 8% and 14% explicitly disagree (strongly) with having the motives of moral obligation and affection.

Table 1 Motivations of the Dutch to support welfare (%; Ntotal =1403)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paying contributions for social security is a legal obligation, but I also do it because...</th>
<th>(strongly) agree</th>
<th>middle</th>
<th>(strongly) disagree</th>
<th>don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...it assures me of a benefit in case I need one myself</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...it is a moral duty with regard to the needy in society</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...I personally feel with the lot of beneficiaries</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Combining the answers in the motivation-scale shows that actually only 13% of the Dutch perceive no motivation at all to contribute to social security, except for that it is a legal obligation (Table 2). (Analysis
showed that in this group people of 25 years or younger are clearly over-represented, while older people, welfare users and the group with highest education are somewhat under-represented.) Table 2 also shows that as little as 20% of the Dutch only perceive self-interest as an extra motive (the younger more than the older people), while two-thirds perceive the motives of moral obligation and/or affection on top of the motive of self-interest.

Table 2 Frequency distribution of MOTIVATION scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only perceived self-interest</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceived self-interest and moral obligation OR affection</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceived self-interest and moral obligation AND affection; only moral obligation AND affection</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, the Dutch system of social security has a strong legitimacy base among the population at large, the strongest foundation lying in perceptions of self-interest, but firmly sustained by considerations of moral obligation and feelings of mutual identification and affection too.

Nevertheless, there are differences in motivations between individuals. The following sections will focus on such differences by means of addressing two questions: (1) what differences are there between social groups, and (2) which factors directly and indirectly influence individual’s motivations to pay for welfare?

**Differences between groups?**

For a number of personal characteristics the motivational patterns of their various categories are shown in table 3. There are marked differences within some of the characteristics, but a first and general conclusion is nevertheless that social groups do not differ very much in their motivations to support welfare. Only in a few cases the percentages agreeing or disagreeing deviate more than 10% from the overall percentages. This accords with findings in Denmark and Sweden, two other countries with encompassing welfare systems, were also little variety was found in welfare state opinions between various socio-economic groups (Ploug 1996, Aguilar and Gustafsson 1988). Secondly, in each and every category the order between the three types of motivation is the same as in the overall case. That is, in each category the majority of people agree with the motive of self-interest, there is a bit less agreement with moral obligation, and the least agreement is there with the motive of affection. Clearly, a universally ordered motivational base for welfare support is present in the Netherlands.
Looking more closely at table 3 it can be seen for sex that males tend to be a bit more motivated than females to pay for social security on grounds of self-interest and moral obligation, but the differences are not significant. There is no difference regarding the motive of affection. These results contradict expectations, in the sense that a supposed greater interest in welfare among women, nor their alleged stronger adherence to values of caring and mutual responsibility are reflected in our data. Note, however, that only bi-variate relations are involved here and that the result might be specific for the Dutch situation, with its low (full-time) labour participation of women. The multi-variate analysis will show a deeper understanding of the influence of sex and the other personal characteristics. Looking at age it shows that agreeing with the three motives increases with age, indicating that welfare has a higher legitimacy among older people, than among the young. More specifically, it shows that the motive of self-interest is regarded less important by the youngest age group, while the difference is rather small between the other groups. The age differences are greater in case of moral obligation and affection, especially in the latter case. The overall pattern confirms expectations based on an alleged greater personal interest of older people in welfare arrangements and provisions, as well as on a more individualistic value pattern of young people. Note, however, that the lesser agreement of especially the youngest cohort is not proportionally mirrored in their greater disagreement with the three motives. In stead, many of the younger people said to agree, nor disagree. This would suggest that they might form clearer opinions on the subject when they grow older, implying that the difference between the younger and older categories found here is an age effect, not a generational difference. Educational level plays a role too. Expectations were contradictory, but here it shows that people with the highest educational level (higher professional and university) are most motivated. Although all categories perceive a similar degree of self-interest, the higher educated agree more on motives of moral and affection, supporting the hypothesis of their higher ‘moral consciousness’. The presumed higher proportion of ‘post-materialists’ among the higher educated does not manifest itself in our data. With regard to affection there seems to be a non-linear relation: the lower educated, who might be more close to beneficiaries or have more personal experience with benefit dependency, agree more with this motive than the people with a middle level education (but still less than the higher educated). Quite remarkably it shows that income level does not differentiate as expected. That is, Dutch people with higher incomes are motivated by considerations of self-interest to the same degree as people with lower incomes. The encompassing character of the Dutch welfare state might play a role.
here. However, the effect of income might be suppressed by e.g. educational level. There were no explicit hypotheses formulated regarding the relation between income and the motives of moral obligation and affection. Here it shows that there are no significant differences, be it that a tendency seems to be present of a U-shaped relation: middle incomes agreeing least with these two motives. With regard to welfare use it shows as expected that those on benefit agree more with the motives of self-interest and affection, than others. They also seem to be motivated more by moral obligation, but this difference is not significant. All in all, the differences between welfare users and others are not very large, which might indicate that indeed the Dutch welfare state is ‘close’ to many, including those who do not depend on benefits (themselves now).

Factors influencing people's motivations to pay for welfare

To gain a deeper insight in the factors influencing people’s motivations to pay for welfare multivariate LISREL-analyses were carried out. The results are presented in table 4. The total model shows a reasonable fit (GFI > 0.95 and RMSEA < .08: cf. Browne and Cudeck 1993).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Direct, indirect and total effects on motivation for welfare support (LISREL-analysis, max. likelihood, standardised coefficients of effects significant at p &lt; 0.05; N=1407)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct effects on MOTIVATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effects of personal characteristics on...</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total effect on MOTIVATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>male-female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>young-old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>low-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income level</td>
<td>low-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare use</td>
<td>no-yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social effect</td>
<td>ss SE neg-pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of control</td>
<td>PC low-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude income solidarity</td>
<td>IS neg-pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in others</td>
<td>TO low-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidaristic attitude</td>
<td>SA low-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political preference</td>
<td>PP left-right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concentrating firstly on the effects of the set of opinions, perceptions and attitudes, the results show that solidaristic attitude has the strongest direct effect on motivation ($\beta=.24$). This means that people who generally reckon more with the interests of others, find pleasure in doing something for others, do not believe that everybody should take care of him or herself etc. are more strongly motivated to pay for welfare. Furthermore, a relatively strong influence is exerted by people’s perception of the social effects of social security ($\beta=.14$), their perception of dependency control ($\beta=-.13$) and the attitude towards income solidarity ($\beta=.17$). That is, as expected, those who more strongly believe that social security prevents societal unrest, large scale poverty and misery and promotes a just distribution of life chances, are more motivated. The same is true for those who do not tend to blame people on benefit, i.e. who believe that beneficiaries have little control over the situation they are in, as well as for those who favour redistribution more, i.e. who think more positively about the principle that higher incomes should pay more for social security. Other direct effects are smaller, but significant. As expected, people with a larger general trust in the other-directedness of other people, are more motivated, as well as people with a stronger left political orientation, which latter confirms findings of many previous studies on welfare support. Quite remarkably people’s beliefs about characteristics of the system of social security as such do not matter for their motivation to contribute to it. There is no relation between motivation and the way in which people evaluate the system at large, whether they perceive benefits as adequate or not, or would like them to be lower or higher. And even there is no relation with the perceived degree of misuse of the system. No effects either are there from the way in which people perceive the individual, moral and economic effects of social security. Whether people are more or less strongly motivated to contribute to welfare seems therefore to depend more on factors within the person, like his or her solidarity, trust in others, political ideology, attitude towards redistribution and concern for societal cohesion and order, than on his or her perception of the (fair) workings of the welfare system and its effects on individual people and the economy. The fact that religiousness, measured as church attendance, has no influence is most probably due to an overruling effect of age and educational level, since in the Netherlands, where secularisation is nearly as high as in Denmark and Sweden (Dobbelaere 1995), mainly older people and those with a lower educational level attend church.

Turning to the personal characteristics it turns out that most bi-variately observed relations are confirmed. Older people are more strongly motivated to contribute to welfare, especially on moral and affectionate grounds, than younger people ($\beta=.21$). People with a higher educational level are more strongly motivated ($\beta=.09$), as well as people on benefit ($\beta=.06$). And as in the bi-variate case there is no direct effect from income level. Regarding sex the multi-variate analysis shows a significant effect ($\beta=-.08$), in contrast to the bi-variate analysis, but the direction is the same: men are more strongly motivated to pay for welfare than women.

The total effect personal characteristics have on motivation for welfare support, is different from their direct effect. This is because most of them, with the exception of welfare use only, (also) have an indirect influence via various perceptions, beliefs and attitudes. In the case of sex the total influence ($\beta=-.08$) is quite smaller than its direct influence ($\beta=-.08$). The reason is that, although men are more in favour of income solidarity and have a stronger left political orientation - which factors increase their motivation to pay for welfare - they also are less solidaristic generally, have a smaller trust in others, a more negative perception of the social effects of social security, and they believe more strongly that the occurrence of social risks is under people’s own control - which factors reduce their motivation. The net total effect of these opposing factors is that sex has a significant, but rather small overall effect on welfare motivation. The relatively large direct effect of age ($\beta=.21$) is enforced (to $\beta=.30$) by the fact that people in the higher age-category believe less that beneficiaries have personal control over their situation, they endorse income solidarity more strongly and they have a more general solidaristic attitude than younger people. In case of educational level the enforcement is even stronger: the total effect ($\beta=.18$) is twice the direct effect ($\beta=.09$). People with a higher educational level are more motivated to pay for welfare as such, but also because they perceive the social effects of social security more positively, endorse income solidarity more strongly, have higher trust in others and have a stronger general solidaristic attitude. The total effect
is a bit dimmed by the fact that higher educated people more strongly belief that beneficiaries have personal control over their situation. As regards income it shows that there is no direct effect on motivations for welfare support, but there are indirect effects. People with higher incomes are a bit less motivated than people with lower incomes (β=-.02) only because they belief more strongly that benefit dependency is under the control of beneficiaries and because they have a more right-wing political preference. Finally, table 4 shows that people on benefit do not differ from those not on benefit on the opinions and perceptions included in our analysis. Clearly, in the Netherlands there is no large cultural gap between both categories.

6. Concluding discussion

This paper started with the observation of a mismatch between sociological concern about a declining legitimacy of the welfare state and the contradictory results of empirical studies which over a period of the last thirty years repeatedly show a substantial popular support for welfare. It was argued that this mismatch might be due to two factors. Firstly, an inadequate understanding of people’s motivations to support welfare. Theories on declining welfare legitimacy tend to overemphasize either an interest-base for such motivations, in which case people’s support is seen as being dependent on the degree to which they might profit personally from the welfare system, or a value-base for motivations, where people are seen as being motivated by certain values, norms and attitudes. It was suggested that support patterns might be better understood when recognising that individuals might be motivated in both ways, at the same time, and that possibly other types of motivation might play a role too. Secondly, thus far people’s motivations to contribute to welfare have been measured indirectly only. Usually, the prevalence or dominance of types of motivation are deduced from the specific direct influence on welfare support that ‘interest indicators’ like e.g. income and class position, and ‘value indicators’ like e.g. egalitarianism and left-right preferences may have. The question is, however, to what degree such seemingly obvious indicators really indicate ‘interest’ or ‘value’. Alternatively, it would be better to have a direct measurement of motivations. This would also allow for a more direct analysis of the structural and cultural determinants of motivations, which is an area largely uncovered at present.

In this paper an empirical instrument for measuring directly people’s motivations to contribute to welfare has been developed and applied. For this purpose different types of such motivations were deduced from sociological theories on solidarity, which address the general question why individual people would give priority to collective over personal interests. Four motives were found: perceived self-interest, moral obligation, affection and identification with others, and accepted authority. The core of the measurement instrument consists of asking respondents to what degree the first three motives for contributing to social security apply in their case, given that paying such contributions is a legal obligation. Not opting for any of the three motives indicates the motive of ‘accepted authority’. The instrument is applied in a national survey among the Dutch adult population in 1995 and the results are presented in this article. Leaving aside here the details and concentrating on the main questions analysed a number of conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, as suggested many people do indeed combine several motivations for contributing to welfare at the same time. No less than two-thirds of our respondents said to be motivated by various combinations of a perceived self-interest, moral obligation and affection with beneficiaries. This implies that prognoses of (negative) developments in welfare legitimacy based uniquely on assumptions of self-interest or norms regulated behaviour and attitudes (like e.g. respectively Wilensky’s middle mass theory and Inglehart’s post-materialism theory) are bound to be wrong. It is not only on the basis of self-interest or values that people are willing to support welfare, but in many cases there is a combination (as suggested by Pettersen 1995), even with a third type of motive, which is affection and identification with the lot of beneficiaries. The fact that welfare legitimacy can bail out from several motivational sources offers it a robustness against specific developments in either class-interests or cultural norms and values.

Secondly, which of the motivations is most important? The dominant view in the existing literature is that self-interest prevails, but some authors argue that welfare legitimacy more fundamentally than this requires the existence of a broad normative base shared and adhered to by all those included in the welfare system. Offe (1988) argues in this respect that a basic feeling of ‘same-ness’ shared by all
citizens is necessary to prevent developments in classes and class-interest to disrupt welfare state legitimacy. Goodin (1988) argues that there are several good economic, sociological and political reasons for welfare, but that ultimately moral principles are necessary for legitimising welfare redistribution, especially to the poor. And Hinrichs (1996) states that ‘a culture of solidarity’ is even necessary in the area of mutual social insurances, because of their usually high redistributive effects. How is this in the Netherlands? It was found that nearly every Dutch citizen perceives to have a personal interest in social security, while nearly two-thirds feel they have a moral obligation to contribute to welfare and a bit less than half feels with the lot of beneficiaries. Clearly, at present the legitimacy of the Dutch welfare state seems to rest chiefly on the motive of self-interest. Its encompassing character seems to have generated its own legitimacy, as a profitable institution for all. Although there are no directly comparable data, it can nevertheless be assumed more generally that the situation is rather similar in other broad welfare states, like for instance those of the Nordic countries, Belgium, Germany and France. In countries with a more selective, or residual welfare system, like the United States, Canada, Central and Eastern European welfare states, and perhaps also the United Kingdom, one would expect significant lower proportions of people to be motivated to support welfare on the basis of perceived self-interest. Since our data confirm the theoretically deduced hypothesis of a positive correlation between the various types of motive, it can further be assumed that in these countries the proportions of people agreeing with the motives of moral obligation and affection might also be lower than those in the Netherlands. In residual systems the people who usually do not need and use benefits (now, in the past or in the future), will generally be less ‘close’ socially as well culturally, to those who do. Or, in other words, a low degree of ‘shared utility’ tends not to evoke strong feelings of a ‘shared identity’. Seen like this, one could say that were a broad welfare state generates its own legitimacy, a residual welfare state will hinder it. Or, due to popular support levels, it might be as difficult to cut down on a broad welfare state, as it is to broaden a residual one. Over the last twenty years the actual experiences in European continental countries and the United States, as specimen of both types, have learned nothing else. On the other hand, would a broad welfare state be narrowed down successfully, the risk of a downward spiral of decreasing support and legitimacy could be real. It could be that groups who loose an interest in welfare arrangements due to cutbacks, also tend to become less motivated by moral obligations and affection, since there would be a growing social and cultural gap between the contributors to and the receivers of welfare. A decrease of ‘shared utility’ might lead to a proportional decrease in ‘shared identity’. Despite strict retrenchment policies in the last 15 years there is not a downward spiral working at present in the Netherlands. Since, next to the fact that still so many Dutch perceive the welfare state as profitable for themselves, the moral and affectionate basis for its legitimacy seem to be quite substantial too. Admittedly, there are no comparable data from other countries or time periods, but two-thirds and nearly half of the population stating that they are willing to contribute to welfare because of a perceived moral obligation and of feeling with the lot of beneficiaries seem to be quite reassuring figures. That these proportions are lower than those who are motivated by considerations of self-interest does in our view not imply that generally ‘the value base’ of welfare legitimacy is less important than ‘the interest base’. In residual welfare states ‘same-ness’ or ‘a culture of solidarity’, from which feelings of affection and moral obligations are derived, might relatively be much more important to underpin any degree of welfare redistribution to the needy (cf. Goodin 1988), and broad welfare states might have started off only once sufficient levels of ‘same-ness’ and ‘social solidarity’ were established.

A third set of conclusions relates to the measurement of motivations to support welfare. Up till now it is quite common to deduce such motivations from the direct effects that certain ‘interest indicators’ and ‘value-indicators’ have on support. Our study shows that this can lead to grossly misleading conclusions. In the context of the encompassing Dutch welfare state there is relatively little variance in the degree to which people of various social categories, and their family members or close friends, profit from it. The result is that traditional interest indicators like income, welfare use, sex and educational level usually show only weak correlations, if at all, with preferences of the Dutch for welfare levels and welfare state interventions (as is e.g. shown in Van Oorschot 2000). The obvious conclusion would be that considerations of self-interest do not play a clear role in the legitimacy base of the Dutch welfare state. While here, however, from our direct measurement of motivations, the opposite has been shown, namely that perceived self-interest is the chief motivation for support. Furthermore, in some cases
it might be obvious what type of motivation is indicated by a certain variable, in other cases this is, however, much less certain. The interpretation that self-interest plays a role when higher incomes are less supportive of welfare seems to be right generally, but what with a finding that older people are more supportive than younger people? Is this because on average they profit more directly from welfare (through healthcare and (pre-)pension schemes), or are they less individualistic and perceive therefore a stronger moral obligation, or do they, because of their broader life experience, empathise more easily with needy people? Our direct measurement shows that, at present in the Netherlands, all of these interpretations have some validity. Finally, indirect measurement of motivations to support welfare, through interest- and value-indicators, has as another main disadvantage, that the structural and cultural determinants of such motivations can not be analysed adequately. Direct measurement allows for more accurate analyses. In our study a distinction was made between a set of structural determinants like e.g., age, educational level, income level and welfare use on the one hand, a set of welfare relevant opinions, perceptions and attitudes people on the other. With respect to the latter it was found in broad terms that, whether people are more or less strongly motivated to contribute to welfare, seems to depend more on factors within the person -like his or her solidarism, trust in others, political ideology, general attitude towards welfare redistribution and concern for societal cohesion and order - than on his or her perception of the (fair) workings of the welfare system as such, like regarding perceived misuse, (preferred) benefit levels and the effects of social security on individuals and the economy. These findings seem to suggest the existence of a ‘solidaristic’ personality type. Further research will be necessary to explore this suggestion. With regard to the total influence of structural variables, it was found that the motivation to contribute to welfare is higher among men, older people, welfare users and those with the highest educational level. Quite surprisingly income level had no direct effect on motivation. It is only because of the fact that those with a higher income blame beneficiaries more for their dependent situation than other income groups do, and because they have a more rightist political orientation, that on the whole people with higher incomes tend to be a bit less motivated to pay for welfare. Surprising too was that there is only a small effect from welfare use, i.e., those not on benefit do not differ much in motivation to contribute from those on benefit. Both findings confirm that profiting from the welfare system is close to nearly all Dutch citizens.

On the whole the sociological perspective on the legitimacy of welfare presented here suggests that welfare legitimacy is more robust to the degree that people are motivated to contribute to it on several grounds at the same time, and that this legitimacy certainly is stronger than one-sided interest-based or culture-based prognoses of the last thirty years have predicted. Broad welfare states, offering arrangements for large groups of citizens and their family members or near acquaintances, may appeal more easily to various motivations, than residual welfare states do. Certainly with regard to the motive of self-interest. The example of the Dutch welfare state seems to show that, within limits, it is possible to cut back on a broad and popular welfare state. The limit will be reached when a majority of the public does not perceive to profit from it anymore, that is, when welfare will be regarded by mainstream society as something for the poor only.
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Appendix A  Explanatory variables

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

SEX male - female
AGE young to old
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL low - middle - high
INCOME LEVEL gross annual household income, low - middle - high
WELFARE USE not on benefit (exclusive of old age pension), on benefit

OPINIONS, PERCEPTIONS and ATTITUDES

INDIVIDUAL EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY (Lickert-scale, alpha=.64, m=2.2, sd=.55, negative to positive). Whether one believes that because of social security (a) the life of many people is more pleasant and free (b) the Dutch population at large is happier (c) everybody gets a chance to make something of his or her life

MORAL EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY (Lickert-scale, alpha=.67, m=2.0, sd=.54, negative to positive). Whether one believes that because of social security (a) people get lazy (b) peoples' sense of self-responsibility decreases (c) people get egoistic and calculating (d) people divorce too easily (e) people do not want to take care of each other anymore

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY (Lickert-scale, alpha=.67, m=2.2, sd=.55, range=1-3, negative to positive). Whether one believes that because of social security (a) societal unrest is prevented (b) large scale poverty and misery is prevented (c) there is a more just distribution of life chances

ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY (Lickert-scale, alpha=.65, m=2.0, sd=.55, negative to positive). Whether one believes that because of social security (a) Holland can compete less with other countries (b) labour costs are too high (c) unemployment increases

PREFERRED LEVEL OF BENEFITS (Lickert-scale, alpha=.71, m=3.0, sd=.54). Opinion on whether benefit levels should be decreased or increased (unemployment insurance, unemployment assistance)

CONTROL (Lickert-scale, alpha=.63, m=2.1, sd=.77, not at all to absolutely). Degree to which one believes that benefit dependency due to unemployment, disability, sickness and being on social assistance is under the control of beneficiaries (degree to which they are to be blamed for it)

EVALUATION OF SYSTEM (Lickert-scale, alpha=.82, m=2.9, sd=.77, negative to positive). Feelings about the system of social security: positive vs negative, badly administered vs well administered, unjust vs just, content vs discontent

ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCOME SOLIDARITY To what degree one endorses that people with higher incomes pay higher social security contributions (very to not at all)

PERCEPTION OF BENEFIT ADEQUACY (Lickert-scale, alpha=.78, m=3.4, sd=.59, easy to difficult) Perception of the adequacy of benefit levels for meeting ends meet (unemployment insurance, unemployment assistance, disability insurance)

MISUSE OF SYSTEM (Lickert-scale, alpha=.79, m=3.7, sd=.57, low to high) Perception of degree of misuse of social protection (employees stay home sick too easily, many disabled people could work if they wanted to, unemployed are too passive in looking for jobs, beneficiaries work in the black economy)

TRUST IN OTHERS (Lickert-scale, alpha=.65, m=2.8, sd=.51, no to yes) Perception of other-directedness or selfishness of other people. Whether other people (a) usually promote their self-interest (b) reckon with the interests of others (c) are driven only by the pursuit of money and personal profit (d) are always inclined to help someone

SOLIDARISTIC ATTITUDE (Lickert-scale, alpha=.72, m=2.3, sd=.49, strong to weak). Whether one generally is directed at ones own interests or at the interests of others. Answers to statements (a)solidarity is nonsense, everybody has to take care of himself (b) in life you have to follow your own plans not bothered by others (c) mostly I put my own interests first instead of those of others (d) I enjoy it doing other people a pleasure (e) if I do something for someone else, I want something in return (f) I never think of the interests of other people (g) I easily get interested on behalf of other people

RELIGIOUSNESS frequency of church attendance

POLITICAL PREFERENCE (which party one would vote for if next week there were to be an election) left to right (Green Left, Socialist Party, Social-democrats, christian-democrats, progressive liberals, conservative liberals, religious right, extreme right)

23
1 The LISREL-analysis for this article has been carried out by John Gelissen of Tilburg University.

2 Our typology deduced from sociological theories resembles to quite an extent those presented by a various authors from different disciplines in Mansbridge’s edited volume *Beyond Self-interest*. Affection and identification, moral obligation and perceived self-interest correspond with Mansbridge’s love, duty and self-interest, with Miller’s altruism, principle of social justice and mutual insurance, and with Jencks’s empathy/communitarian unselfishness, moralistic unselfishness and selfishness. (See Mansbridge 1990, Miller 1990, Jencks 1990). However, accepted authority as a motivational base for giving priority to collective interests is not recognised by either of them.

3 Szusza Ferge (1999) recently argued that the legitimacy of various types of social exchange contracts depends on the number of distributive principles that underlie them. ‘Hazy contracts’, like social insurances, are based on more of such principles, than e.g. social assistance schemes, and therefore have a stronger legitimacy base.

4 To a certain extent only, since there can be cases in which the various motivations, as e.g. empathy and perceived self-interest, may conflict. Jencks (1990) asserts in this respect: ‘*Many of the moral dilemmas that fascinate philosophers and novelists involve … conflicts between varieties of unselfishness, rather than just conflicts between selfishness and unselfishness*’ (p. 55).

5 The bi-variate analysis suggested that a U-shaped relation could be present between income level and motivation to contribute to welfare. For this reason the square of the income variable was put into the LISREL-analysis. However, it showed that this variable did not have a direct or indirect effect.