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deservingness and public support for welfare policy**

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Layout: Inge Merete Ejsing-Duun

Print: Uni-Print, AAU  
Aalborg 2006

ISBN 87-90789-79-2

ISSN 1398-3024-2006-39

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This paper seeks to explain why previous empirical studies have found a connection between welfare regimes and public support for welfare policy that concern the living conditions of poor and unemployed. Previous attempts to establish the theoretical link between welfare regimes and public support for welfare policy, or call it the expected electoral feedback process, have not been successful. The empirical studies have had large difficulties in finding the expected effects from regime dependent differences in self-interest, class-interest, and egalitarian values. This paper develops a new theoretical macro-micro link by combining the literature on deservingness criteria and the welfare regime theory. The basic idea is that three regime characteristics – degree of selectivism, degree of generosity, and degree of job opportunities - influence the judgement of deservingness and thereby public support for welfare policy.

## **Introduction**

In Esping-Andersen famous 1990 book he distinguished between liberal, conservative, and social democratic welfare state regimes. Furthermore, he argued in 1996 that these regimes developed along regime dependent trajectories in their transition from industrial to post-industrial societies. Also Pierson (2001) emphasises the impact that the welfare regimes have on ‘the new politics of the welfare state’. The idea of regime dependent transition follows the historical institutionalism, which in the recent decade has become a mainstream position in comparative welfare state research. However, it is also broadly recognised that the notion of ‘path-dependency’ is often under specified, i.e. it is not clearly spelled out how the feedback process actually works (e.g. Pierson, 2000; Goul Andersen & Albrekt Larsen, 2002). One theoretical possibility is that the path dependency observed by comparative welfare state scholars partly is caused by a connection between welfare state regimes and public support for welfare policy. In general we do not have good comparative survey data on public opinion towards the welfare state but a number of scholars have started out by analysing items primarily made available by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). At first glance the findings from these studies point in different directions; some find evidence for a regime pattern, especially if they restrict the analysis to the countries that come closest to Esping-Andersen’s ideal types (Evans, 1996; Svallfors, 1997, Heien & Hofäcker, 1999; Andress & Heien, 2001), other do not find the expected pattern (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Gelissen, 2000; Arts & Gelissen, 2001). However, a closer review of the previous studies reveals that to some extent the discrepancy between the results are caused by differences in the items used as dependent variables. The items that measure attitudes towards policies that primarily concern poor and unemployed actually seem to follow a regime pattern (Albrekt Larsen, (forthcoming),

ch. III). Thus, in terms of support for welfare policy in the ‘narrow’ or ‘American’ meaning we have indication of a pattern with low support in the liberal regimes, moderate support in the conservative regimes, and high support in the social democratic regimes.

Nevertheless, one thing is to find the expected regime pattern in public attitudes, another thing is to explain how this pattern comes about. In this latter respect none of the previous empirical studies have been successful. With (often implicit) reference to the power resource theory (Korpi, 1983) scholars have looked for different class effects. Especially the position of the middle class – believed to form a ‘welfare coalition’ with the working class in the social democratic regimes and to form an ‘anti-welfare coalition’ with the upper class in the liberal regimes – should be of relevance. But the empirical studies do not find such a class effect; actually class differences seem to be very similar in the different regimes (e.g. Evans, 1996; Svallfors, 1997). With reference to rational choice arguments of concentrated versus dispersed cost primarily used in the ‘new politics’ literature (Pierson, 2001, e.g. point to the fact that the ‘welfare clientele’, those who receive benefits plus public employees, is very big in the social democratic regime, moderate in the conservative regimes and low in the liberal regimes) scholars have also looked for effects from short-term self-interest. In most studies there is a positive effect from being unemployed (e.g. Svallfors, 1997; Gelissen, 2000; Andress & Heien, 2001) but otherwise it has been difficult to find the expected effects. These ‘disappointing’ findings often lead scholars to emphasise the importance of ‘culture’ or ‘dominant welfare state ideology’ (e.g. Andress & Heien, 2001; Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003) but it remains a residual explanation and an underspecified line of reasoning. Actually, it is a general characteristic that the grand theories of welfare state development (and thereby also the previous empirical studies guided by these theories) have a rather ‘mechanical’ perception of the electorate, i.e. it is assumed that the welfare attitudes of individuals can be directly deduced from (long-term) class-interest, (short-term) self-interest, or internalised values and norms. This partly has to do with the fact that little empirical work has been done in the field. In 1998 Korpi & Palme – being the prime defenders of the power resource theory – rightly argue that *‘the empirical testing of the macro-micro-links among institutions and the formation of interest and coalitions provides a major challenge for social scientists’* (1998:682). However, even at the theoretical level these ‘mechanical’ positions stand in sharp contrast to modern election research, where it is broadly recognised that voters’ stand on concrete policy issues cannot directly be deduced from their self-interest, class-interest, or internalised values and norms (e.g. Merrill & Grofman, 1999).

With this research frontier as our point of departure the aim of the paper is to create a theory that explains how characteristics of the three welfare regimes influence attitudes towards welfare policies that concern the living conditions of poor and unemployed; call it a theoretical construction of the missing link between welfare regimes and attitudes or a specification of the intervening variables. At an overall level we will try to operate with a more reflexive ‘political man’, whose policy attitudes are open to different perceptions of reality. Such a position fits nicely with studies that have shown that attitudes towards concrete policy proposals are highly dependent on the framing of the political issues (e.g. Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Nelson,

Clawson & Oxley, 1997; Kangas, 1997). The idea is that the institutional structure of the different welfare regimes influences or - in another terminology - frames the way the public perceives the poor and unemployed. Thus, the political preferences of individuals are not exogenous, as in rational choice theory, but highly influenced by the institutional structures. The line of reasoning has a lot in common with normative institutionalism, which in political science often is associated with March & Olsen (1984; 1989), but actually goes back to Talcott Parson and the old classic sociologists (Peters, 1999).

At a more concrete level we base our line of reasoning on a combination of the welfare regime theory and the literature on deservingness criteria, which for some strange reasons have lived rather separate lives. In the first section we briefly introduce some of the main arguments within the deservingness literature and criticise the tradition for being 'institution blind'. We also present a figure of our theoretical reasoning. In the following three sections we describe how three different regime characteristics are likely to influence the public perceptions of poor and unemployed and thereby the judgement of deservingness and the support for concrete welfare policies. We discuss the impact from degree of selectivism, degree of generosity, and degree of (perceived) job opportunities. In section five we describe how this add up to the overall expectation (which without much discussion is taken for granted in previous empirical studies) that support for welfare policy is low in liberal regimes, moderate in conservative regimes, and high in social democratic regimes; at least when we speak about welfare policy in the narrow sense. Finally, we summarise the arguments and discuss the further application of the suggested theoretical framework.

### **The five deservingness criteria and public support for welfare policy**

The main effort of the deservingness literature has been to pinpoint which criteria the public uses to judge whether a person or a group deserves help. In that regard, the studies conducted by Fegin (1972), Feather (1974), Cook (1979), De Swaan (1988), Will (1993) and Van Oorschot (2000) are extremely helpful to our purpose. On the other hand, the studies have – in our opinion – not been very successful in finding the independent variables that influence the public perceptions, which is the raw material for the judgement of deservingness. The one expectation is the importance of the welfare clientele in question. The literature on deservingness seems capable of explaining the pattern of public support for welfare policy that Coughlin found in his pioneering cross-national study (1980). He found what he calls 'a universal dimension of support' because the ranking of the deserving groups followed the same line in all the countries included in his study. The public was most in favour of support for old people, followed by support for sick and

disabled, needy families with children and unemployed. The group given least support were people on social assistance. Petterson (1995), Van Oorschot (2000; 2005), Van Oorschot & Arts (2005) and others have confirmed this ranking. But besides this distinction between groups of recipients, the deservingness literature has been rather weak in terms of causality. At least the literature seems to overlook societal factors and many of the proposed explanations at the individual level seem to operate in different directions (Lepianka, 2004).

Therefore it is fruitful to combine the empirically deduced deservingness criteria with the regime theory as it delivers a theoretical description of the context in which the public makes these deservingness judgments. However, before doing so we need to take a closer look at the deservingness criteria found by the previous studies. If we follow the review in Van Oorschot (2000), we arrive at the following five criteria:

- 1) Control (the less in control of neediness, the higher degree of deservingness).
- 2) Need (the greater level of need, the higher degree of deservingness).
- 3) Identity (the higher degree of group belonging, the higher degree of deservingness).
- 4) Attitude (the more grateful, docile and compliant, the higher degree of deservingness).
- 5) Reciprocity (the higher previous or future payback, the higher degree of deservingness).

Both Van Oorschot's empirical findings on the Dutch case (2000) and the previous studies show that the issue of control is especially important. Thus, the key to explain modest support for unemployed is the perception that they are much more in control of their situation than e.g. disabled, sick and pensioners. In De Swaan's (1988) historical study of the modern welfare state, he labelled the criterion 'disability'. In Cook's (1979) study of Americans' views on supporting the poor, she labels the criterion 'locus of responsibility'. Finally, Will (1993) also found that the most important deservingness criterion was the degree to which the problems facing poor families were beyond the immediate control of the individual family. Naturally, the level of need also plays a part, but within the Anglo-Saxon poverty tradition 'need' is more or less taken for granted; as welfare policy is all about support for those in need. The application of the need criterion is more difficult in social democratic regimes where everybody are entitled and in conservative regimes where those who pay contributions are entitled. We will return to this question below.

The identity criterion refers to the importance of feeling a shared identity with the groups who are to be supported. Using the label of proximity, De Swann argues that the boundary of the area can be defined by kinship relations, by place of residence, or more generally, by the boundaries of a certain identity group, like 'our family', 'our town', 'our church' or 'our people'. The question of identity has been given strong attention in recent primarily American studies that investigate the link between ethnic divides and public welfare attitudes (e.g. Gilens, 2001, Alsina & Glaeser, 2004, see also Quadagno, 1994). These studies, however, do not explicitly relate to the deservingness literature and they do not apprehend the institutional embeddedness of this identity discussion.

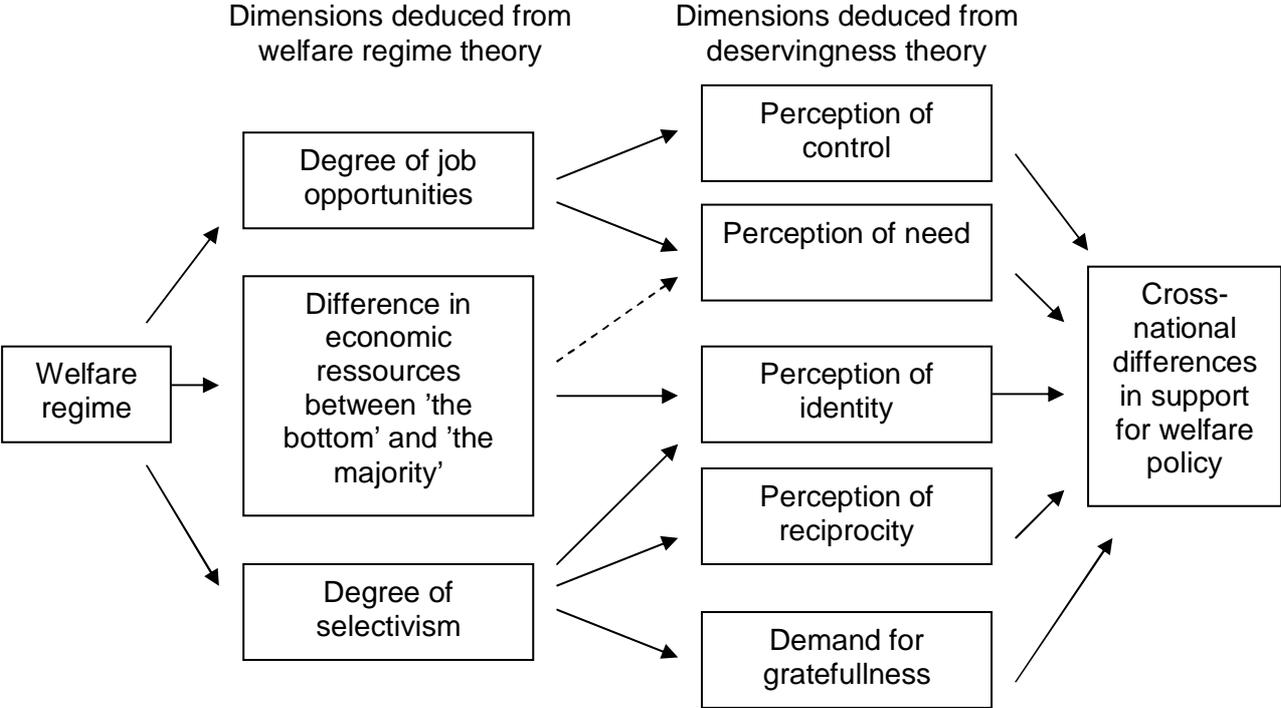
The attitude criteria refer to the ways recipients respond to public support. De Swann uses the term 'docility' to highlight that poor who hide their misery and ask for nothing are seen as more deserving than those who make impudent demands. Cook uses the terms 'gratefulness' and 'pleasantness'. Finally, the attitude criteria can be linked to a more general criterion of reciprocity, e.g. such behaviour as 'the smile of thanks', but also in a modern context actively looking for a job, willingness to participate in re-insertion programmes. Oorschot furthermore argues that needy who at the moment are unable to reciprocate might fulfil this criterion if they have contributed to 'us' in the past, or are likely to do so in the future.

Thus, the large support for public assistance to the old found by Coughlin and others might be explained by the perception that 1) they are not in control of their neediness, 2) they belong to 'us', 3) they are often grateful, docile and compliant, and 4) they have contributed to 'us' during their working age. At the other extreme, the low support for the group on social assistance might be caused by the perception that 1) they could get a job if they wanted, i.e. they are in control of their neediness, 2) they do not fully belong to 'us', 3) they are often ungrateful, and 4) they have often not contributed much to 'us' in the past. It is more difficult to see how the old and people on social assistance differ in terms of need.

Following this logic is not without reasons that scholars have argued that immigration might threaten the public support for welfare policy. Immigrants may be expected to score particularly badly on the criterion of identity and reciprocity, i.e. they are not a part of the common 'us' and they have not contributed to the common 'us' in the past. Furthermore, they may be accused for having put themselves in a situation of welfare dependency and not receiving help with the right attitude. Measured as the concern respondents have about different group's living conditions, the relative low deservingness of immigrants is clearly revealed by results from the European Values Survey (Van Oorschot, 2005). However Oorschot also finds that in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands the difference between the public concern about the living conditions of immigrants and unemployed is modest (2005:15). Below we will argue that this probably

has to do with variations in welfare institutions. The point is that these social democratic regimes (the Netherlands can be described as a hybrid between the a conservative and social democratic regime) have welfare institutions that through various mechanisms avoid identifying racial minorities, immigrants, poor and unemployed as distinct groups in the welfare discussions. And the other way around; that the liberal regimes have mechanisms that generate such divides (unfortunately the countries closest to the ideal type liberal regime, USA and Canada, were not included in Oorschot’s study). The task in the following is to theorise how the regime context influences the ability of poor and unemployed to fulfil these seemingly universal deservingness criteria. Figure 1 presents the main causal reasoning, which will be elaborated in the following sections.

Figure 1. The theoretical link between welfare regime and cross-national differences in welfare attitudes.



**The link between degree of selectivism and fulfilment of deservingness criteria**

According to Esping-Andersen (1990, 2000) the three welfare regimes are distinguished by differences both in welfare state, labour market, and family structures. But it is especially on the state dimension we can find theoretical inspiration from previous studies. Within welfare *state* literature it is a classic thesis that systems dominated by universal

programmatic structures of benefits and services, i.e. the ideal type policy of the social democratic welfare regime, and system dominated by a selective programmatic structure of benefits and services, i.e. the ideal type policy of the liberal welfare regime, generate quite different public discussions and perceptions of recipients. The typical coverage of the incidence of long-term unemployment in liberal and social democratic welfare regimes is quite different. If we take USA, the country closest to the liberal ideal type, the unemployed is covered by a short period with unemployment benefits and after that those in need, i.e. those not having private savings or insurances, are covered by selective benefits and services such as Medicaid, TANF, food stamps, general assistance etc. In contrast unemployed in Sweden, the country closest to the social democratic ideal type, are covered by a long period with unemployment benefits combined with a large number of citizenship-based services and benefits such as general healthcare, child allowance, basic old age pension, housing allowances etc. Means-tested social assistance is available to those who have not qualified for unemployment benefits but it only plays a minor role.

Following Rothstein (1998), the first step of the argument is simply to point out the fact that a selective policy that aims to provide ‘the needy’ with economic resources or what Rothstein calls basic capabilities must determine 1) who is needy, and 2) how much they need. Therefore *‘the public discussion of social policy in a selective system often becomes a question of what the well-adjusted majority should do about the less well-adjusted, in varying degrees, socially marginalized minority’* (Rothstein, 1998:158). The general fairness of the policy is also open to challenge as the majority might start asking *‘a) where the line between the needy and the non-needy should be drawn, and b) whether the needy themselves are not to blame for their predicament’* (Rothstein 1998:159). Relating this argument to the deservingness criteria presented in the previous section, one could say that a system dominated by selective welfare policies opens discussions of ‘need’ and ‘control’ (see table 1). The identity dimension of deservingness is also influenced by this logic connected to selective policy as *‘the very act of separating out the needy almost always stamps them as socially inferior, as “others” with other types of social characteristics and needs’* (Rothstein, 1998:158).

Furthermore, one could argue that the boundaries between ‘them’ and ‘us’ generated by selective welfare policy highlight who benefits from the welfare state (i.e. those who pay little or no tax and receive targeted benefits) and who loses on the welfare state (i.e. those who pay tax, but do not receive any benefits). Thus, the reciprocity of the system will be perceived as being very low, which probably increases the importance of grateful, docile and compliant attitudes among those who receive targeted benefits or services. Finally, one could argue that this logic of selective welfare policy might generate vicious circles or even self-fulfilling prophecies because the ‘needy’, exactly because they are labelled as not being ‘ordinary’ people, alter their behaviour. It creates a further division

between ‘them’ and ‘us’ and probably makes it more difficult to find grateful, docile and compliant attitudes among recipients. This social mechanism is e.g. known from ethnic second-generation immigrants, who because they are labelled as outsiders sometimes start practising the religion and culture of their country of origin much more intensively than first-generation immigrants; even though they are born and educated in the new country and may never have visited their country of origin.

*Table 1. The effects from respectively selective and universal social policy on different dimensions of deservingness.*

Dimensions of deservingness	A welfare state dominated by selective benefits and services	A welfare state dominated by universal benefits and services
Need	Open the discussion of whether recipients are in need	Close the discussion of whether recipients are in need
Control	Open the discussion of whether recipients are to be blamed	Close the discussion of whether recipients are to be blamed
Identity	Define the recipients as a special group distinguished from the well-adjusted majority	Define the recipients as equal citizens who belong to a national ‘us’
Reciprocity	Highlight the boundary between those who give and those who receive	Blur the boundary between those who give and those who receive
Attitude	Open the discussion of whether recipients receive benefits and services with a grateful, docile and compliant attitude	Close the discussion of whether recipients receive benefits and services with a grateful, docile and compliant attitude

The logic of systems dominated by universal welfare policy, i.e. the ideal type social democratic welfare regime, is in all aspects contrary to the welfare policy within the ideal type liberal regime. In the Scandinavian systems of ‘Rolls Royce universalism’ no line needs to be drawn between the needy and the non-needy. Thus, the discussion of need and to what extent the poor and unemployed are in control of their neediness becomes more or less irrelevant. As Rothstein argues, *‘welfare policy does not, therefore, turn into a question of what should be done about “the poor” and “the maladjusted,” but rather a question of what constitutes general fairness in respect to the relation between citizens and the state. The question becomes not “how shall we solve their problem?” but rather “how shall we solve our common problem (healthcare, education, pensions, etc.)?’* (Rothstein, 1998:160). Instead of defining a line between ‘them’ and ‘us’, the universal benefits and services actually help define everybody within the nation state as belonging to one group.

The vicious cycle of selective welfare policy is replaced by a positive circle where the whole population is given the basic capabilities that place them '*on a more or less equal footing in respect to their ability to act as autonomous citizens*' (Rothstein 1998:157). It is probably no coincidence that the link between welfare policies and a well-functioning democracy, often analysed within a so-called citizenship perspective, has been intensely explored by Scandinavian social scientists. Thus, within this regime welfare policy is not just seen as a measure to avoid poverty, generate security or even economic equality, but also as a way to generate free, responsible and democratic citizens, who can produce and reproduce a democratic nation state.

The reciprocity discussion is also suppressed in the social democratic regimes. For the majority of people it is not an easy task to calculate whether one is net-winner or net-loser, even though welfare states dominated by universal policy have been shown to be the most redistributive nation states in the OECD area. If the cost-benefit analysis is done at the individual level in a given year, the calculation could be manageable. The market value of the universal benefits and services received in that year should be subtracted the amount paid in VAT, income tax and different duties. But the calculation is complicated, and it becomes even more complicated if the cost-benefit analysis is done at the household level and within a lifetime perspective. In that case, the amount of VAT, income tax, duties etc. paid by the family over a lifetime should be subtracted the value of free education for the children, the old-age pension of one's partner, the likely use of free hospitals, the likely use of unemployment benefits etc. The point is that the programmatic structure, but also the very size of the ideal type social democratic regime (see also Korpi & Palme, 1998) blur the boundary between net-winners and net-losers, which makes it difficult to judge whether recipients of benefits and services have reciprocated. And combined with the influence on the other dimensions of deservingness, the most likely end result is that an ordinary citizen does not start to calculate at all.<sup>1</sup> Finally, as the institutional logic suppresses the discussion of need, control, identity and reciprocity, the attitudes among recipients of benefits and services also become more or less irrelevant. Nobody expects citizens – including the poor and the unemployed – to be grateful because they receive a basic old-age pension, have access to free hospital treatment, heavily subsidised childcare etc. Following this line of reasoning, which highlights the institutional logic, we have theoretical reasons to believe that the poor and unemployed in the liberal regimes will be asked to fulfil much harder deservingness criteria than the poor and unemployed in the social democratic regimes. Not because the citizens in the liberal regimes have very

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<sup>1</sup> This argument is in line with Goul Andersen's findings on the Danish case. He shows that even if we delimit the analyses to the group of private employees without own or family experience of unemployment, there is no majority against the welfare policy in general. He also shows that support for increased public expenditures in a given area is not higher among employees working in this area (Goul Andersen, forthcoming).

different egalitarian values but because their welfare state is dominated by selective welfare policy.

Now the question is how this reasoning applies to the welfare policy conducted by the ideal type conservative regime. In terms of expected support for welfare policy, the previous empirical studies simply put – without much further discussion - the conservative regimes in between the ‘extreme’ liberal and social democratic welfare regimes. However, in terms of degree to which poor and unemployed are covered by selective policy more substantive arguments can be made but it is important to have the overall conservative regime context in mind. The primary programmatic structure of the welfare policy of the conservative regime is compulsory insurance systems financed by social contributions from employers and employees. Entitlement of benefits and services through this insurance mechanism might suppress the deservingness discussion even more than a universal programmatic structure. As these people have paid the insurance, the discussion of need, control, and attitude becomes more or less irrelevant. And the boundaries of ‘us’ can simply be drawn between those who paid their contribution (and their families) and the others. The same goes for the question of reciprocity. ‘Earmarked’ compulsory contribution (in contrast to universal benefits and services typically financed through general taxes) makes it clear that recipients of welfare benefits primarily have paid themselves. Thus, in cases where the male breadwinner of the ideal type conservative regime becomes long-term unemployed, he very easily fulfils the deservingness criteria; this mechanism might also help explaining the strong electoral reactions against welfare reforms in the conservative regimes.

However, in the conservative regimes we still have a large group outside the labour market, which is not directly entitled to benefits and services. In the Southern European countries the family still basically picks up these social risks of ‘the outsiders’. The European Labour Force survey e.g. shows that in 1995, only 6.8 pct. of the Italian unemployed received public benefits (unemployed defined as people answering that they would like a job, they are looking for a job, and they can begin within two weeks). The share is 8.6 in Greece, 23.8 in Spain, and 27.3 in Portugal (Gallie & Paugam, 2000:8). Thus, most unemployed are not exposed to any welfare *state* policy at all. Those ‘bad risks’ that are not absorbed by the family are sometimes supported by rudimentary social assistance schemes, which are extremely selective. Thus, for this small minority, the effects of selective policy discussed above should be present, but still they do not live in systems where selective welfare policies dominate. What dominates is the family. In the Northern Continental European countries more and more of the social risks of ‘the outsiders’ – those not entitled through participation on the labour market – are picked up by more generous social assistance schemes. Gallie & Paugam e.g. speak of ‘advanced intergenerational autonomy’ in Germany and ‘relative inter-generational autonomy’ in

France and Belgium (2000:17). In this case, we have a more developed selective welfare policy than in the Mediterranean countries but poor and unemployed do still not live in a system where selective welfare policy dominates. Thus, on a one-dimensional scale of the degree to which poor and unemployed is covered by selective policy we can defend the argument that is high in liberal regimes, moderate in conservative regime (with big internal variations), and low in social democratic regimes, see coming table 2.

### **The link between degree of generosity and fulfilment of the need criterion**

The degree of generous and the degree of selectivism of the welfare regimes are often not distinguished clearly from each other – probably because they go together. In terms of poverty risk empirical studies have demonstrated that the risk tends to be highest in the liberal regimes, in-between in conservative regime, and lowest in social democratic regimes; at least if we take the countries closest to the ideal types. Naturally, poverty rates and especially overall inequality in disposal income in a given year are not only a consequence of welfare institutions. Förster & Pearson describes the final distribution of income as *'the result of a complex set of relationships, including family formation and dissolution, longevity and fertility, as well as the more obvious trends in earnings, taxes and the returns to capital'* (2002:8). Nevertheless, if we take the countries closest to the ideal type social democratic, conservative, and liberal regime we find the expected pattern. Measured by Gini-coefficients based on OECD data from the mid-1990s the disposal income distribution was most equal in Sweden (23.0), less equal in Germany (28.2), and most unequal in USA (34.4) (Förster & Pearson, 2002:38). If we take the percentage of the total population that have an income below 50 percent of the median (equivalence) income we see the same pattern. In Sweden 6.6 percent fell below this threshold in the mid-1990, in Germany the share was 8.2 percent, and in USA the share 17.8 percent.<sup>2</sup> These conventional figures for the whole population also include poverty among children and elderly. Therefore we have also tried to find figures that more narrowly measure the poverty risk among the group of able-bodied persons in the working age, which is our main concern. Relative poverty rates among the unemployed can be calculated from the European Household Panel Study and the results are very convincing even though the extreme cases of Sweden and USA are not included. In Denmark, another social democratic regime, only 8.1 percent of the unemployed fell below the relative poverty threshold of 50 percent of the mean income. In Germany the share was 26.8 percent and in Great Britain the share was 48.5 percent (Galli, Jacobs & Paugam, 2000:51). Thus,

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<sup>2</sup> The estimates of the proportion of citizens living below the poverty line are heavily influenced by the method of calculation. Here we have simply taken the overall figures provided at the webpage of the Luxembourg Income study, around 2000.

it is fair to conclude that speaking about the countries with the largest differences in attitudes towards welfare policy, i.e. countries within the cluster of liberal regimes and the cluster of social democratic regimes, we also find considerable differences in income inequality and poverty.

Now it is a classic thesis that pursuing a welfare policy that allows recipients to continue a normal life style reduces the risk of stigmatising (otherwise) poor and unemployed citizens. The basic argument is that reduced differences in economic resources between 'the majority' and 'the bottom' of society generates more similar living styles, which as a consequences makes it easier for 'the bottom' to fulfil the identity criterion. Thereby we have a self-reinforcing feedback mechanism where policies that generate good living conditions among the potential poor produce public support for 'more of the same'. And the other way around; if those at 'the bottom' of society is not provided descent economic resources they are forced to have a way of living that is quite different from the way of living of the majority. Thereby it becomes harder to fulfil the identity criterion and we have a 'negative' feedback mechanism on public opinion. It is quite symptomatic that the largest discussions about dependency culture took place in liberal regimes, which provide the least generous benefits and services (Murray, 1984 for the US; Dean & Taylor-Gooby, 1992 for the UK). To put it boldly one can argue that the lack of identification with the black in USA it not only a matter of black being black. It is also a matter of black being poor. Thereby we reach the same result as the power resource theory; namely that it basically becomes easier and easier to create good living conditions for 'the bottom' in a welfare state becomes more and more 'institutionalised' (Korpi & Palme 1998) but our line of reasoning is different. On a one-dimensional scale we suggest that the difference in economic resources between 'the bottom' or 'the potential poor' and 'the majority' is high in the ideal type liberal regime, medium in the ideal type conservative regime, and low in the ideal type social democratic regime, see coming table 2. Thus, we can expect a regime dependent effect, which should make it most difficult to fulfil the identity criterion in the liberal regimes and easiest in the social democratic regimes.

However, one also could argue that if the pursued welfare policy – following whatever principle – manages to provide (potentially) poor and unemployed groups with good life conditions one should expect the public to make tougher judgements about the fulfilment of the need criterion. As anecdotal evidence one could point to the fact that in Denmark not even a person concerned with welfare policy issues like myself gives money to 'needy-looking' beggars. The rationale is that these beggars are not really needy, as the Danish welfare policy provides 'the bottom' with some of the best living conditions in the world (e.g. Hauser & Nolan 2000). To put it boldly, it fosters the perception that if you give money to 'hungry' beggars at the Danish railway stations, they will spend it on beer. The argument is supported by the fact that Albrekt Larsen, based on figures provided by

Taylor Gooby (1995), finds a very strong relationship between social expenditures and the share of the public that finds poor ( $R^2=0.63$ ) and unemployed ( $R^2=0.74$ ) to be sufficient protected by the welfare state (2005:59). This finding could be without relevance if the ISSP items used in the previous studies only measure welfare attitudes in absolute terms, i.e. if we assume that the public is not influenced by the actual pursued welfare policy. The questions are asked in absolute terms (e.g. should it be a governmental responsibility to....) but it is questionable whether the public can neglect the present level of welfare policy (Albrekt Larsen 2005:135). Therefore figure 1 includes a dotted arrow to the need criterion. The point is that more advanced welfare states (or at least welfare states believed by the public to be advanced) might experience a feedback process that influences the judgement of 'need'. Thus, we probably have a 'second order' feedback process on deservingness that restrain what above seemed to be self-reinforcing 'first order' feedback processes. Nevertheless, in order to explain the regime pattern in public support for welfare policy it is fair to assume that the first order 'identity effect' is more relevant than the second order 'need effect'.

### **The link between degree of job opportunities and fulfilment of the control criterion**

Esping-Andersen and a number of 'institutional economists' have shown that the programmatic structure of the welfare state has a huge impact on – or at least is interwoven with - the labour market. In his 1990 book, Esping-Andersen described how welfare policy creates important structures that influence how workers through early retirement can exit from the work force, how workers can claim paid absence from work, and how especially women can enter the work force (Esping-Andersen 1990: chapter 6). However, his real interest was how these institutional regime differences have influenced the transformation from industrial to post-industrial economy (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1996, 2000). The pressure on the industrial production structure comes from external factors such as increased economic integration and new technologies and from internal factors such as the women's desire to participate in the work force.

The most discussed indication of these pressures is the high rates of unemployment that haunted most Western welfare states during the 1980s and 1990s. Very generally speaking the situation is that the social democratic regimes have followed a trajectory where new jobs were generated in the public sector. It boosted employment considerably, created opportunities for women, and prevented declining wages in service jobs. At the same time, an active labour market policy was designed to train manual workers for new post-industrial jobs. The liberal regimes followed a neo-liberal trajectory where new service jobs are provided in the service sector. It also boosted employment and created opportunities for women, but at the same time it established a large number of working

poor. Finally, conservative regimes followed a labour reduction route. It did not boost employment in the service sector, but instead protected the male insider against the risk of unemployment through strict job protection and early retirement schemes (Esping-Andersen, 1996).

Now the point is that these different employment trajectories associated with the different welfare regimes might also influence the public perception of poor and unemployed. Especially the degree to which poor and unemployed groups are believed to be in control of their neediness might be influenced by job opportunities. Therefore the poor and unemployed in the conservative regimes should be seen as less in control of their neediness than the poor and unemployed in the social democratic and liberal regimes where job growth in the public and private sector respectively has generated job opportunities. Recent empirical studies actually support such an impact from labour market structures. Using Eurobarometer surveys Gallie & Paugam found a clear connection between level of unemployment in European countries and a perception of poverty as being due to laziness among unemployed (2002:21). Using the World Value Study the same finding is reached by Albrekt Larsen (forthcoming, ch, V). Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003), using the ISSP role of government module, also found a strong connection between level of unemployment and support for welfare policy. More directly Albrekt Larsen (2005:62) shows that the share sharing answering that most poor people have very little chance of escaping poverty is very high in Germany (83 percent) and Spain (73 percent).

We will argue that not only the degree of service sector expansion (and thereby unemployment rates) but also the differences in the wage setting mechanisms in each regime matters. We expect poor and unemployed to be perceived to be more in control of unemployment in countries where individuals are able to negotiate the wages themselves. This is possible in liberal regimes, where the importance of unions has always been modest, and where the position of the unions has been further undermined by the neo-liberal employment strategy during the 1980s and the 1990s. To put it boldly, this institutional setting is believed to facilitate the perception that everybody can get a job in the private service sector if they only are willing to reduce their wage demands. This is not possible in social democratic and conservative regimes, where the unions still have considerable influence on wage setting – especially in blue-collar sectors. So poor and unemployed cannot escape unemployment by lowering their wage demands. Finally, the degree of job protection for the ‘insiders’ (Lindbeck & Snower, 1988), which is very high in the conservative regimes, might also contribute to the perception of poor and unemployed being out of control. Alesina & Glaeser (2004) have rightly argued that the American perception of poor having good chances to escape poverty does not coincide with the facts. Referring to Gottschalk & Spolaore (2002), who compare USA and

German, and Checchi, Ichino & Rustichini (1999), who compare USA and Italy, reality seems to be that the poor are more 'trapped' in USA than in Germany and Italy. In USA, 60 pct. of the bottom quintile in 1984 were still in this quintile in 1993 compared to 43 pct. in Germany. In USA, 25 pct. of the fathers in the bottom quartile have children who also are in this quartile. In Italy, the share is 21 pct. To explain this paradox, Alesina & Glaeser refer to different ideologies (p. 76) and later to a general negative perception of poor caused by racial divides (133-183). In contrast, we point at regime-dependent labour market structures as a more straightforward explanation. Job growth in the private service sector and the ability of individuals to negotiate the salary might not on average increase the chance of moving out of the lowest quintile but the possibilities of getting a job gives the public the impression that each individual has a decent chance.

Thus, the perception of unemployed as 'victims' of the general labour market structure might be especially pronounced in conservative regimes, where strong unions not only prevent low wage jobs, but also obstruct employment of outsiders through high job protection of the insider male breadwinner. So based on the argument of structural differences in service sector expansion, wage setting mechanisms and job protection, we would expect the labour markets to facilitate perceptions of little control of neediness among poor and unemployed in conservative regimes, medium control of neediness in social democratic regimes, and high control of neediness in liberal regimes, see coming table 2.

### **The three regime characteristics, perceptions of poor and unemployed, and fulfilment of deservingness criteria**

In table 2 we have summarised the variation in the independent variables or, in less technical terms, how each ideal type welfare state regime is placed on the three dimensions, which we believe are important for the public judgement of deservingness. The logic of the table is that a low score on a given dimension should make it easier for poor and unemployed to fulfil the deservingness criteria, and a high score should make it more difficult.

The ideal type liberal welfare state regime has high scores on all three dimensions. The degree to which the welfare system is dominated by selective welfare policies is high, the difference in economic resources between 'the bottom' and 'the majority' is high, and the degree of perceived job opportunities for poor and unemployed is high. Following the arguments above this suggests that poor and unemployed in the ideal type liberal regime will have difficulties meeting the deservingness criteria. The only thing that in the eyes of

the public might speak in favour of the poor and unemployed in liberal regimes is that they really are in need.

*Table 2: Three regime dimensions that influence perceptions of poor and unemployed. The theoretical position of the ideal type countries of Sweden, West Germany and USA.*

	Ideal type social democratic regime	Ideal type conservative regime	Ideal type liberal regime
Degree to which welfare systems are dominated by selective welfare policies (Primarily effect on 'identity', 'attitude' and 'reciprocity' discussion):	Low	Medium	High
Difference in economic resources of 'the bottom' / 'the potential poor' and 'the majority' (Primarily effect on 'identity' but also on 'need' in opposite directions)	Low	Medium	High
Degree of perceived job opportunities for poor and unemployed (Primarily effect on 'control' and 'need')	Medium	Low	High

In the ideal type social democratic welfare state regime, the degree of selective welfare policy is low, and so is the difference in economic resources between 'the bottom' and 'the majority'. These positions should make it easier for poor and unemployed to fulfil the deservingness criteria. The perceived job opportunities are believed to be lower than in the liberal welfare state regime, which should decrease the perception of poor and unemployed being in control of their neediness, but still not as low as in the conservative regimes. The only thing that in the eyes of the public really speaks against poor and unemployed in social democratic regimes is the fact that they are not very much in need (at least by comparative standards).

Finally, we argued that the ideal type conservative welfare state regime has a middle position in terms of degree of selective welfare policy and degree of generosity towards poor and unemployed. In terms of fulfilling the deservingness criteria in the ideal type conservative regime, the position on these two dimensions suggests that it should be more difficult than in the social democratic regime and easier than in the liberal regime. However, on the dimension of perceived job opportunities, we argued that the ideal type conservative regime has the lowest position, which should make it easier to meet the (not in) control criterion. Still we believe that in the overall judgement of deservingness, the

poor and unemployed are worse off in conservative regimes than in social democratic regimes. Hence, we expect public support for welfare policy to be higher in the ideal type social democratic regime than in the ideal type conservative regime.

One could argue that these cross-regime expectations are part of a circular argument because we already know the result; namely that support for welfare policy in the 'narrow sense' should end up being high in the social democratic regime, medium in the conservative regime, and low in the liberal regime. In favour of this argument speaks the fact that the model contains contradiction forces without a theory of the relative importance of these forces. Thus, without hesitation we will admit that the model presented in figure 1 is more an explanatory framework than a testable theory. However, firstly, just the task of explicitly pinpointing the intervening variables between welfare regimes and the regime pattern of public support found in previous empirical studies is a theoretical step forward. Secondly, we are in need of new theories about the regime dependent electoral feedback process, as previous studies have had difficulties in finding the expected effect from class-interest (deduced from the power resource theory), the effect from self-interest (deduced from rational choice institutionalism), and the effect from egalitarian values (deduced an underspecified culture thesis). To put it heroically the grand theories of welfare state development need a better micro-foundation. Thirdly, the theoretical framework can be an inspiration for future empirical studies (which probably can make much better operationalisations than the few items available at the moment) and be used to generate a number of lower level theses that are more testable (see e.g. Albrekt Larsen, forthcoming, ch. V - IX). Finally, it gives a new perspective on the future public support for welfare policy that is more incline with modern election research; maybe support will not depends so much on the future configuration of class-interest, self-interest, racial homogeneity, or shift in egalitarian values. Maybe it will depend much more on changes in the 'political men's' regime dependent perceptions of reality.

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