

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY
PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL SCHOOL

HEAD OF PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL SCHOOL: PROF. DR. ATTILA OLÁH

SOCIALISATION AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL PROCESSES PROGRAMME

HEAD OF PROGRAMME: PROF. DR. GYÖRGY HUNYADY

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MÁRTON HADARICS

**ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL EQUALITY IN WESTERN AND EASTERN
EUROPE: MOTIVATIONAL BASES AND BEHAVIORAL CONSEQUENCES**

SUPERVISOR: PROF. DR. GYÖRGY HUNYADY

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The three studies presented here examine the effect of two motivational traits (*selflessness* and *conventionality*) on political opinion formation and through this, on three different areas of political behavior. Revealed effect-patterns are compared between Western and Eastern Europe.

Introduction

It is not a newly emerged question in psychology and in other social sciences how different psychological characteristics affect political-ideological preferences and beliefs. Common starting point of the most relevant theories is that our personality and other stable dispositional characteristics make us motivated to accept particular political beliefs and ideologies and refuse others. That is why political opinion formation can not be considered as a wholly rational and objective process. It is motivated and the motivational background of cognition is largely determined by different psychological roots (for a review see Jost et al. 2003, 2009).

Plenty of psychological characteristics have been examined so far in respect of their influence on social and political beliefs. These traits can be classified in two broader groups exerting two sharply distinguishable motivational effects. Dispositional characteristics from the first group make us care for others well-being and consider their interests and viewpoint, that is, how they augment the motivation of *selflessness*. Dispositional characteristics from the other group make us follow dominant social norms and conventions and to seek security provided by these, that is, how they augment the motivation of *conventionality*.

Traits catching the extent of *rigidity* in personality and cognitive functioning contribute simultaneously to both of the mentioned motivational groups. That is because the overly rigid cognitive structure and/or dynamics of ones belief system results in the inability to disregard ones central and personally significant beliefs. Because of this, flexible and critical thinking is not possible, which establishes both conform rule-following – *conventionality* – and ignoring others different interests, perspectives – low level of *selflessness* (Adorno et al., 1950; Allport, 1954; Rokeach, 1960; Tetlock, 1983; Kruglanski, 2004, 2011).

Beside of these, many other personality traits and trait-clusters were examined in this regard, which traits can be related separately to one of the two broad motivational dimensions. From the „Big5” factors of personality *agreeableness* can be related to selflessness, while low level of *openness* and high level of *conscientiousness* is related to conventionality (Haslam et al., 2009; Parks&Guay, 2009; Vecchione et al., 2012). By the Dual-Process Model of Prejudice *social conformity* and *though-mindedness* are identified as primary bases in personality of our beliefs regarding social equality (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt&Sibley, 2009).

If we take a closer look at how the two motivational dimensions affect our politically and ideologically relevant opinions, we can see that selflessness – and its bases in personality – makes us to accept more egalitarian opinions both in economical and cultural/inter-group issues (Sibley&Duckitt, 2008; Gerber et al., 2010; Hirsch et al., 2010). But if we take conventionality – and its personality-related bases – and examine how it affects our political attitudes, we have to emphasize the key role of the *environment*, because conventionality motivation makes one to follow the normative ideological elements of the given social environment.

According to the *System Justification Theory* (Jost&Banaji, 1994) and the *Social Dominance Theory* (Sidanius&Pratto, 1999), most consensual conventions can be serving as *legitimizing myths*. By accepting these, different social groups can rationalize and conserve differences in social power, and by this the currently functioning social-political system, even if it is contrary to their rational self- and/or group-interests. Need for conservation becomes stronger in case of environmental *threat* or *uncertainty* what enhances conventionality

motivation, because by adhering to dominant social norms we can reduce experienced uncertainty (Jost&Hunyady, 2005).

Hence the ones with a high level of conventionality motivation tend to be more prejudiced against those people and groups that in some way contradict dominant social conventions (e.g. different ethnic, sexual-orientational and subcultural minorities), and besides that they tend to resist rapid social changes (Jost et al., 2003; Kruglanski, 2011; Sibley&Duckitt, 2008).

If the effect of conventionality on personal economic policy preferences is examined, it is essentially important to highlight the relevance of the given social context again. The well documented pattern from the US and Western Europe shows that in countries with long-term political pluralism and competition-based free market, conventionality motivation – and other dispositional characteristics related to that – makes people more likely to accept differences in material and economic resources, and to refuse great extent of governmental redistribution (Kossowska&Van Hiel 2003; Duriez et al., 2005; Gerber et al., 2010). That is because in these countries many beliefs and ideological elements are widely accepted and propagated which offer explanation to the existing economic inequalities (e.g. meritocracy, free-market ideology, social mobility, individualism etc., see Jost&Hunyady, 2005).

We can expect a completely different pattern in case of the *former socialist Central-Eastern European countries*, where in the decades preceding the Change of Regime the socialist state used centralized dictatorial means in its attempt to carry out the elimination of economic-income inequalities. According to many international comparative survey studies the effect of this era can be still observed in the public thinking of these countries. Compared to their Western European counterparts, citizens of this region are much more in favour of *reducing income inequalities* and *governmental redistribution* (Verwiebe&Wegener, 2000; Suhrcke, 2001; Alesina&Fuchs-Schündeln, 2006; Lelkes, 2009; Murthi&Tinongson, 2009). At the same time they have a higher need for *state paternalism*, *welfare services* and *social security* (Andres&Heien, 2001; Lipsmeyer, 2003; Alesina&Fuchs-Schündeln, 2006; Hunyady, 2009, 2012). However it is important to emphasize that these tendencies are observed only if respondents do not have to take into account potential personal losses and costs of realization of economic equality (Lelkes, 2009). Besides this, it is important to note that after the Change of Regime principle of *meritocracy* was perceived to function to a much lesser extent in practice than in Western Europe (e.g. Örkény&Székelyi, 2000; Csepeli et al., 2004). On the other hand, studies carried out after the Millenium found that a great variance among Eastern European countries in the acceptance of the normative principle of meritocracy (Lelkes, 2009; Molnár&Krekó, 2011).

Studies from the CEE-region examining the effect of traits related to conventionality motivation on economic attitudes in most cases found, that these characteristics – e.g. authoritarianism, conservational values, need for cognitive closure – enhance preferences towards income equality, governmental redistribution and paternalism, because a very strong normative power is attached to these beliefs in this region (Kossowska&Van Hiel 2003; Duriez et al., 2005; Korzeniowski 2006; Todosievic, 2008).

Aims and Topics

The aim of the studies presented in the dissertation is to reveal the effect of selflessness and conventionality motivations on political attitudes towards social equality, and on different specific areas of political behavior on a regional level. Also, we were interested in the differences of the emerging relationship patterns between Western and Eastern Europe.

The dissertation summarizes three logically consequential studies relating to three different areas of political behavior: ideological preferences in terms of the universal *left-right* dimension, *welfare attitudes*, and *political trust*. As a common result of the three studies we

expected *selflessness* to affect political cognition in a universal way, enhancing egalitarian beliefs regardless of the specific social context. At the same time *conventionality* was expected to have a context-dependent effect, that is, why this effect can be directly the opposite in the two regions (mainly regarding economic attitudes).

In our **first** study the influence of selflessness and conventionality motivations on the two main dimensions of attitudes towards social equality, *cultural-group-based* and *economic-income equality* was examined, and also how they contribute to our more abstract ideological preferences through the two attitude dimensions mentioned above, and how these relationship patterns differ between the two regions. In an additional complementary study we also examined how the two motivations and need for economic-income equality affect acceptance of *welfare chauvinism* in Western and Eastern Europe.

The **second** study investigated how selflessness and conventionality affect beliefs about welfare services. Specifically we examined through what kind of ideological elements the two motivational variables influence one's *welfare preferences*, and how the former socialist region deviates from the Western European pattern in this regard.

The aim of the **third** study was to confirm the assumption that due to the differences in historical experiences and social-cultural conditions, particular aspects are taken into account with a significantly different weight in the two regions, when citizens judge to what extent they trust the democratic *political-institutional system*. Besides this, it was also examined how selflessness and conventionality affect the use of specific criteria of trust.

Sample

All studies were based on the fourth (2008/2009) round of the *European Social Survey*. An Eastern European (N=11367) and a Western European (N=11546) sample was set up from the original database. The size of the two groups is approximately the same; both regional samples consist of the representative national samples of six-six countries.¹

Study 1.

Motivational and ideological aspects of attitudes towards social equality

As it was mentioned above, in this study the effect of selflessness and conventionality on attitudes towards social equality, and through this on left-right ideological preference were investigated.

The two broader dimensions of equality-attitudes were examined as potential mediators: need for *economic-income* and *cultural-group-based equality*. Relationship between the two dimensions was also checked. The former was seized by two variables: the extent to which respondents want the government to reduce income inequalities and to guarantee certain kinds of welfare services. Need for cultural-group-based equality was operationalized by attitudes towards immigrants, homosexuals and traditional gender roles. The two motivational variables were measured by two indices which were created based on single item-level results from the ESS Schwartz Value Survey.

We applied the method of structural equation modeling to reveal relevant statistical relationships. In case of both samples a pathway model was set up, in which motivational variables were the starting point, need for cultural-group-based and economic-income equality

¹The Eastern European group consists of the national samples of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, while the Western European group consists of the samples of Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

were mediator latent variables, and self-placement on the ideological left-right scale was the ultimate output variable (see *Chart 1*).²

Results of the models reveal that in case of both samples selflessness enhances the acceptance of egalitarian beliefs in terms of both cultural-group-based equality ($b_{W-E}=.15$; $p\leq.001$; $b_{E-E}=.14$; $p\leq.001$) and economic-income equality ($b_{W-E}=.20$; $p\leq.001$; $b_{E-E}=.08$; $p\leq.001$).

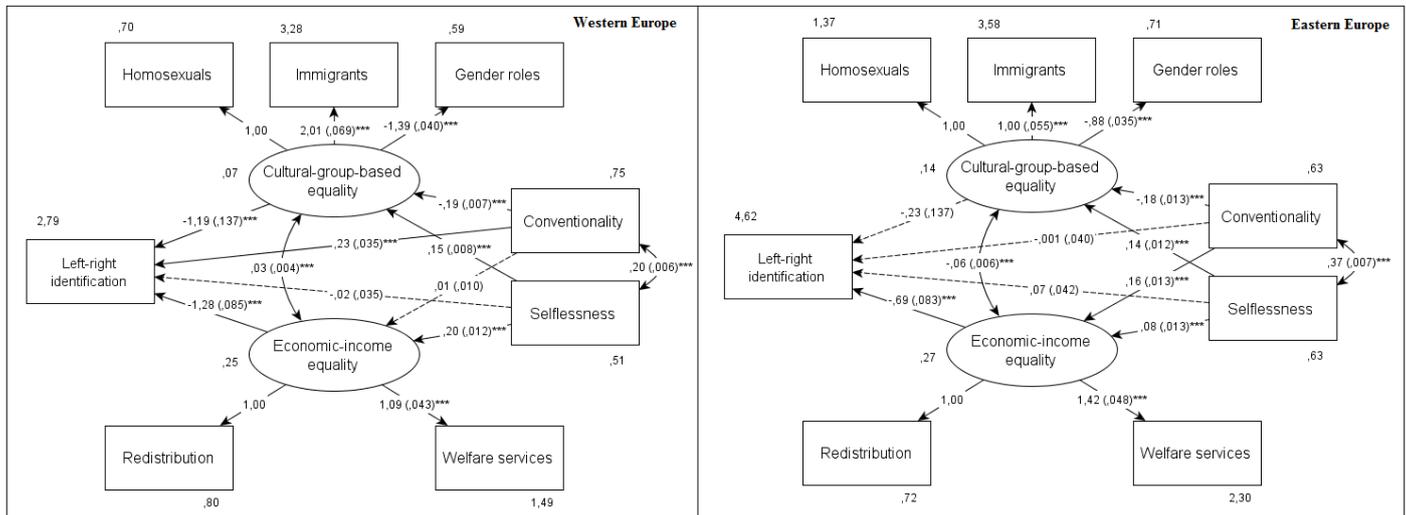


Chart 1: Pathway models explaining left-right ideological preferences. Unstandardized regression weights are followed by standard errors in parentheses. (W-Eu.: $\chi^2=1177,78$; $df=28$; $CFI=.937$; $RMSEA=.060$; E-Eu.: $\chi^2=1183,69$; $df=28$; $CFI=.950$; $RMSEA=.060$; * = $p\leq.05$; ** = $p\leq.01$; *** = $p\leq.001$)

Conventionality motivation influences beliefs about non-conventional groups in the same way too: it amplifies negative attitudes towards them ($b_{W-E}=-.19$; $p\leq.001$; $b_{E-E}=-.18$; $p\leq.001$).

At the same time relationship between conventionality and need for economic-income equality turned out to be essentially different in the two investigated groups ($b_{W-E}=.01$; ns ; $b_{E-E}=.16$; $p\leq.001$). While this relationship is non-significant in the Western European group, conventionality motivation enhances egalitarian economic beliefs in the Eastern European sample. This result confirms on a regional level those former studies, which found that in ex-socialist countries psychological characteristics related to conventionality increase egalitarian and paternalistic expectations towards the government because of the normative power of these views in this region (e.g. Kossowska&Van Hiel 2003; Duriez et al., 2005; Korzeniowski 2006; Todosievic, 2008).

These results support our assumption that selflessness has a rather universal effect on political opinion-formation, since it strenghtens the acceptance of egalitarian beliefs independently of the social context regarding both cultural and economic issues, while the effect of conventionality motivation is heavily context-dependent, primarily depending on dominant social conventions and normative ideological elements.

It is worth to mention how conventionality affected left-right ideological preferences, which was partially mediated by attitudes towards social equality. Corresponding with our advance hypothesis, in the Western European group this motivation was related to right-wing preferences both directly ($b=.23$; $p\leq.001$) and indirectly mediated by cultural-group-based egalitarianism. However, in case of certain country-level samples of the Eastern European group (and by that in the whole group) conventionality motivation affected respondents more

²All statistical models presented here were controlled with the effects of respondents' demographic characteristics (gender, age, education level, income).

abstract ideological preferences through economic-income egalitarianism, but here it enhances left-wing self-placement presenting a sort of *rigidity-of-the-left* by this. These results indicate that conventionality can produce a more complex effect on ideological preferences as it is described by theories propagating the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis, and in this relation normative social conventions play the key role.

It is also an important result that after controlling all other variables, the opposite relationship was directly identified between the need for economic and cultural equality in the two samples. Those who are more egalitarian in their intergroup attitudes in the Western European sample tend to be the same in their economic views as well ($cov=.03$; $p\leq.001$), while more prejudiced Eastern European respondents seem to be more in favor of governmental redistribution ($cov=-.06$; $p\leq.001$). This raises a suspicion that in the belief-system of these respondents' welfare solidarity and egalitarianism is strongly selective; it may be limited exclusively to ingroup members, so a significant amount of citizens from this region may expect institutionalized discriminative governmental measures in economic redistribution. That is why an increased level of *welfare chauvinism* could be anticipated in the Eastern European sample.

This assumption was examined by a complementary study, in which we investigated background variables of welfare chauvinism against *immigrants*. We applied the method of structural pathway modeling in this case as well. In these models motivational variables were input variables, the index created to measure attitudes towards immigrants and need for economic-income equality were potential mediator variables, and welfare chauvinism against immigrants was the ultimate output variable (see Chart 2).³

Results show that economic-income egalitarianism affects welfare chauvinism directly in the opposite direction in the two samples, even after controlling all other variables. Need for economic equality is related to a lower level of welfare chauvinism in the Western European sample ($b=-.18$; $p\leq.001$), but the same variable enhances personal level of welfare chauvinism in the Eastern European sample ($b=.12$; $p\leq.001$). This supports the presumption that citizens of our region tend to think about governmental welfare services and redistribution by somewhat selfish aspects. It seems they restrict welfare-egalitarian governmental intentions to their own group, while excluding non-conventional outgroups from this range of solidarity. On the contrary, in Western Europe economic egalitarianism seems to be rather universal and inclusive.

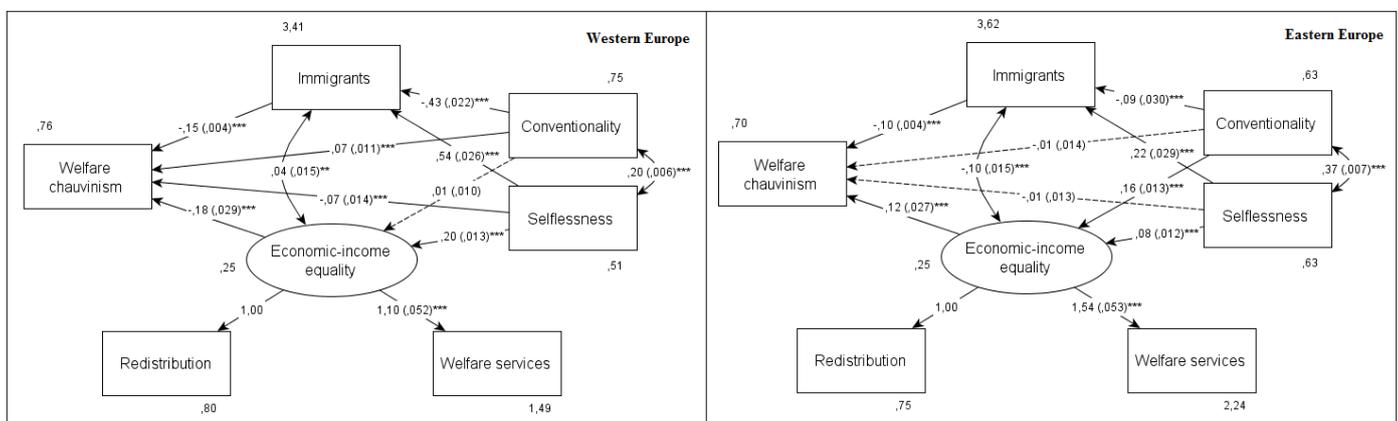


Chart 2: Models explaining welfare chauvinism against immigrants. Unstandardized regression weights are followed by standard errors in parentheses. (W-Eu.: $\chi^2=172,01$; $df=8$; $CFI=.988$; $RMSEA=.042$; E-Eu.: $\chi^2=103,34$; $df=8$; $CFI=.995$; $RMSEA=.032$; * = $p\leq.05$; ** = $p\leq.01$; *** = $p\leq.001$)

³Level of welfare chauvinism was measured by a Guttman-scale item which asks according to how strict criteria respondents would permit immigrants to obtain social benefits and services.

It is worth mentioning the role of conventionality in welfare chauvinism, because by its indirect effects it enhances the latter in both samples. But as it can be seen, this indirect effect is partly different, because in the Western European sample it takes place primarily through prejudism against immigrants, while in the Eastern European sample the stronger part of the indirect effect is mediated by economic-income egalitarianism. Selflessness has a different effect in the two groups as well. In the Western European group it reduces level of welfare chauvinism by both its direct and indirect effects, but in the Eastern European sample it has directly the opposite indirect effect through the two mediator variables: in one hand selflessness reduces welfare chauvinism by more favorable attitudes towards immigrants, but on the other hand it simultaneously enhances welfare chauvinism through the higher need for economic equality – presumably because of the self-interested interpretation of economic equality and solidarity.

On the whole, Study I revealed important differences in motivated political cognition and opinion formation between Eastern and Western Europe. One of these was that although selflessness strengthens the acceptance of more egalitarian beliefs in both cases, but the way these beliefs are related to different aspects of political behavior – e.g. left-right ideological preferences or welfare chauvinism – depend always on particular social and cultural circumstances, and it is not a general pattern or rule.

It is also not obvious how conventionality influences motivated political cognition, because it can be understood only by considering dominant normative beliefs of the given social environment. Thanks to this, in the former socialist CEE region conventionality motivation – and related dispositional characteristics – enhances preferences for governmental redistribution and paternalism, because neither the normative power nor the level of embeddedness in public thinking of these ideological elements have decreased in this part of Europe since the Change of Regime.

This raises the possibility of a kind of *postsocialist economic system nostalgia* mechanism (parallelly with the Western European economic system justification), that makes someone to support governmental redistribution and paternalism even if it is contrary to one's rational self-interest, merely led by a higher level of conventionality motivation. It is supported by the revealed positive correlation between conventionality and economic-income egalitarianism in the CEE sample even after controlling for respondents' social and demographic status variables, and thereby their related material self-interest.

Study 2.

Ideological and motivational bases of need for welfare services

In this study we had a closer look on how *postsocialist economic system nostalgia* is related to another area of political behavior, namely to attitudes towards the *welfare state* and *welfare services*. This seemed to be a highly relevant question, because the majority of former studies examining welfare attitudes have not considered the influence of conventionality motivation (or related psychological characteristics) on political opinion formation. In most cases these studies set respondents' rational self-interest against the acceptance of certain kinds of ideological element, which elements are mainly „primed” by the given social context (e.g. Kangas, 2003; Larsen, 2006; Sabbagh&Vanhuysee, 2006; Arts&Gelissen, 2010). However, they ignore the individual-level motivational background (including conventionality motivation) of the acceptance of these ideological elements.

Based on the motivated social cognition paradigm (Jost et al., 2003) we assumed that different motivations strengthen the acceptance of different ideological elements, which then directly determine one's welfare attitudes. Special attention was paid to conventionality

motivation, about which we supposed that it influences welfare attitudes through different ideological elements in the two samples, that can be linked to the above-mentioned differences between the Eastern and Western European public thinking.

It was our aim to investigate the background determinants of support for both a universally available and a selective group-targeted welfare service, that is why support for *healthcare services* and *unemployment benefits* were chosen.

In case of motivational variables the same *conventionality* and *selflessness* indices were applied as in Study I, and besides this respondents' *rational self-interest* was taken into account as well, which was operationalized in the form of two dummy variables. These dummy variables capture whether or not respondents might benefit from the examined welfare services.

Two important distributional justice principles were examined as mediator variables: *egalitarianism*, according to which equal distribution of economic resources is just in a society, and *meritocracy*, which says that everybody must be rewarded in accordance with one's talent and efforts. In the explanation of support for unemployment benefits it was also taken into account to what extent respondents thought that unemployed people are responsible for their own situation. Former studies confirmed this attributional belief to be an essential determinant of welfare attitudes and preferences (DeSwaan, 1988; Van Oorschot, 2000; Weiner et al., 2010; Petersen et al., 2012).

We also applied the method of structural equation modeling here. In both samples two separate saturated pathway models were set up to explain support for the two welfare services. In these models the three motivational variables were input variables, the above-mentioned ideological element were mediator variables, and support for welfare services were the explained output variables (see *Chart 3*).

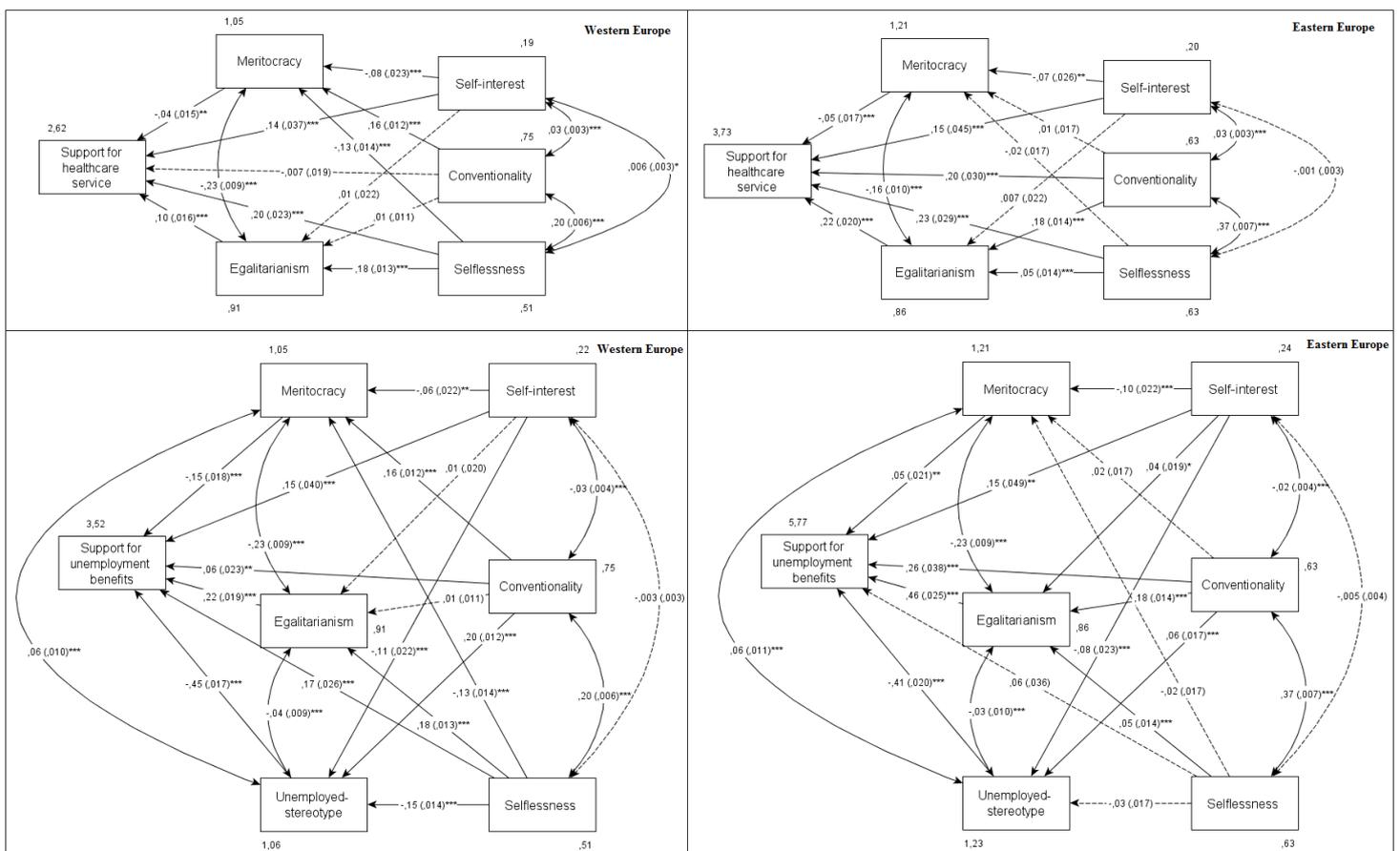


Chart 3: Saturated pathway models explaining support for healthcare services and unemployment benefits.

Results show that egalitarianism has a significantly stronger effect on support for both welfare services in the Eastern European sample than in the Western European one (*unemployment benefits benefits*: $\Delta\chi^2=58,1$; *healthcare services*: $\Delta\chi^2=23,4$; $\Delta df=1$; $p\leq 001$); while in the case of the meritocracy-unemployment benefits relationship the opposite is directly true: meritocracy has a stronger effect in the Western European group. However, there is no difference between the two groups in how strongly meritocracy affects support for healthcare services (*unemployment benefits*: $\Delta\chi^2=57,7$; $\Delta df=1$; $p\leq 001$; *healthcare services*: $\Delta\chi^2=,30$; *ns*; $\Delta df=1$).

It is also worth noting that conventionality had a significant relationship with egalitarianism ($b=,18$; $p\leq 001$) in the Eastern European sample (but not in the other sample), and with meritocracy ($b=,16$; $p\leq 001$) in the Western European group (but not in the other one). This confirms our result from Study 1, which showed that in Eastern Europe psychological characteristics related to conventionality enhance the acceptance of egalitarian economic beliefs. It can serve as a base for the *postsocialist economic system nostalgia mechanism*, because conventionality makes people support the given welfare service (partly through income egalitarianism) even if it is not in one's rational self-interest (see the independent influence of self-interest). The effect of conventionality is directly the opposite in the Western European sample, where it makes citizens to refuse welfare services (through the acceptance of meritocracy). Besides this, the direct effect of conventionality on need for welfare services in the Eastern European sample refers to the governmental paternalist traditions of the former socialist CEE region (*unemployment benefits*: $b=,26$; $p\leq 001$; *healthcare services*: $b=,20$; $p\leq 001$).

The group-specific role of meritocracy and egalitarianism in economic system justification processes was checked also in the following way: we removed the indirect effect of conventionality mediated by meritocracy and (in separate models) egalitarianism from all the previously set up models, then we examined the χ^2 -based fit indices of these new „mutilated” models (see *Table 1*).

Models		χ^2	CMIN/df	CFI	RMSEA	
Meritocracy is not mediating	<i>Unemployment benefits</i>	<i>Western Europe</i>	248,04	124,02	0,982	0,103
		<i>Eastern Europe</i>	8,11	4,05	1,00	0,016
	<i>Healthcare services</i>	<i>Western Europe</i>	184,27	92,13	0,984	0,089
		<i>Eastern Europe</i>	11,40	5,70	1,000	0,020
Egalitarianism is not mediating	<i>Unemployment benefits</i>	<i>Western Europe</i>	140,71	70,35	0,990	0,078
		<i>Eastern Europe</i>	508,56	254,28	0,976	0,149
	<i>Healthcare services</i>	<i>Western Europe</i>	39,43	19,71	0,997	0,040
		<i>Eastern Europe</i>	286,32	144,66	0,986	0,112

Table 1: Fit indices of modified pathway models explaining support for welfare services.

As it can be seen, the models that had lost most of their original perfect fit were those „Eastern European” models in which we eliminated the indirect effect of conventionality mediated by egalitarianism, in other words, the postsocialist economic system nostalgia effect. Besides, the best fit indices were held by those „Eastern European” models from which the mediating role of meritocracy was removed. Fit indices of the „Western European” models fell in the middle, indicating that neither of these ideological elements could be eliminated from the explanation of welfare attitudes in Western Europe. However, meritocracy is not a relevant determinant in the CEE region in contrast with egalitarianism, which plays a highly significant role in the regional public thinking and political behavior.

It is worth mentioning the effect of selflessness in favour of unemployment benefits. In the Western European group this motivational variable enhanced governmental paternalism both directly ($b=.17; p\leq.001$) and indirectly through the more favourable views about unemployed people ($b=-.15; p\leq.001$). These effects were absent from the Eastern European sample, that supports the assumption confirmed in Study 1, namely, that solidarity derived from selflessness is selective in this region and does not apply to non-conventional groups (e.g. to unemployed people in this particular case).

As it was mentioned above, in CEE countries increased level of economic egalitarianism and paternalism can be detected only until citizens of this region are not forced to consider their personal material and other sort of costs and sacrifices for centralized governmental redistribution (e.g. Lelkes, 2009; Molnár&Krekó, 2011). This is not a surprising phenomenon, because unlike in Western Europe, due to the characteristics of the former socialist economic system, social solidarity and necessary sacrifices of different social groups in burden sharing have not become a central topic in the public thinking of our region. In the former system citizens used to experience governmental welfare services and low level of income inequalities as a „natural state”, they did not connect benefits with their costs.

Since people are in favour of governmental paternalism but they do not want to be aware of the costs, we assumed that embeddedness of the ideological element *welfare redistribution*⁴ is much lower in Eastern Europe compared to the Western part.

To check this hypothesis we modified our original pathway models explaining support for welfare services in the following way: distributional justice principles (meritocracy and egalitarianism) were replaced by the ideological element of welfare redistribution, as you can see in *Chart 4*.

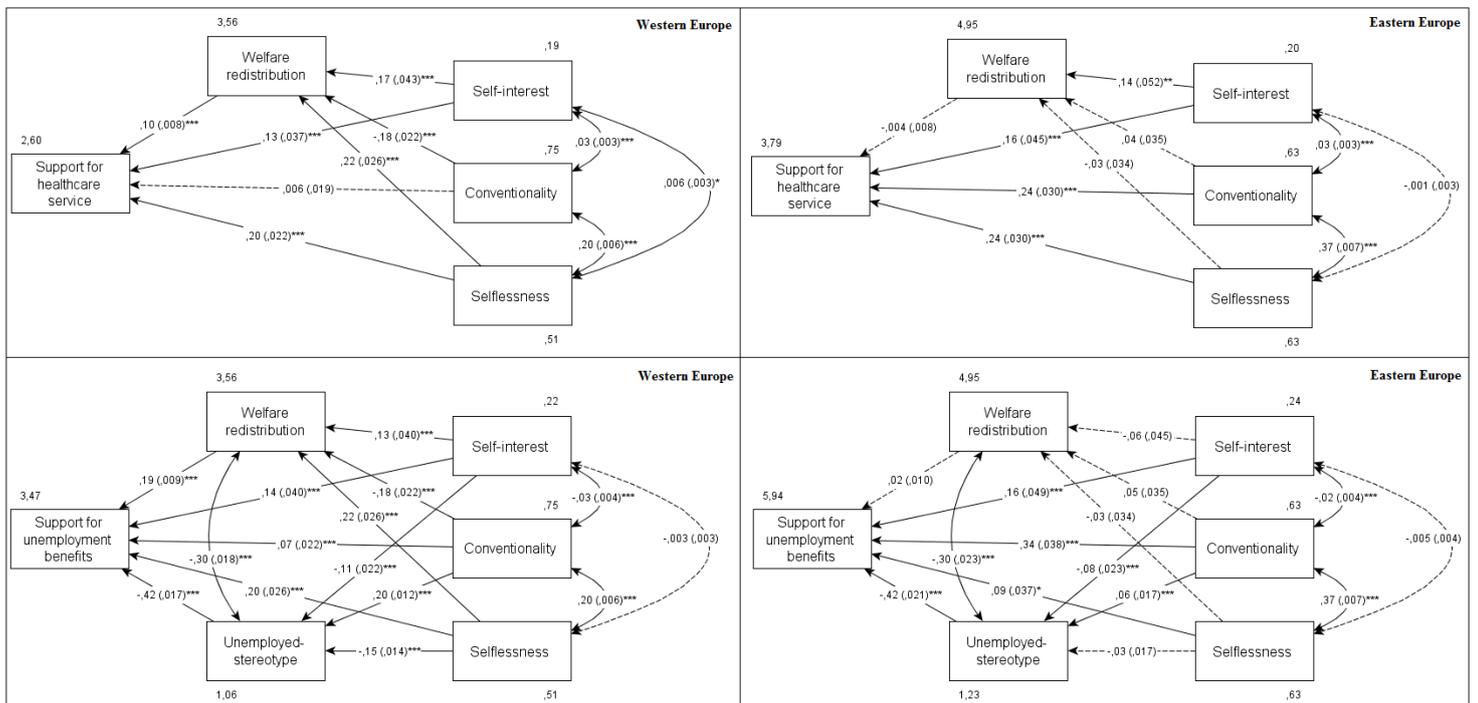


Chart 4: Saturated pathway models explaining support for healthcare services and unemployment benefits with welfare redistribution as mediator variable.

⁴We define welfare redistribution as ones preference for higher tax burdens and a broader scope of the welfare state versus lower tax rates and a smaller range of welfare services.

Results of these new models show that in the Western European sample welfare redistribution is a significant determinant of support for both welfare services and it has a significant relationship with both motivational variables as well. It is important to note that conventionality is related to a lower level of need for welfare redistribution, which refers to the market- and contest-oriented traditions of this region. Welfare redistribution did not show a significant relationship with neither of the welfare service variables in the Eastern European sample, and from the motivational variables only self-interest regarding healthcare enhanced need for welfare redistribution to a significant extent.

These results support our assumption which says that in postsocialist countries embeddedness of the ideological element of welfare redistribution is negligible, because citizens of our region have not got used to take notice of their personal costs of egalitarian economic goals (income equality and social security), when they express their opinions about the desirability of these goals.

Our results of Study II supported our assumptions about *postsocialist economic system nostalgia* in many regards. Since income egalitarianism and welfare paternalism are important elements of the Eastern European public thinking, respondents with a higher level of conventionality motivation are more in favour of these ideological elements in this region regardless of their rational self-interest. Contrarily, in the Western European sample psychological conservatism enhanced the acceptance of meritocracy (one of the legitimizing myths of existing income inequalities), and the opposition to welfare services by this. These results confirm that conventionality (and related psychological characteristics) plays a significant role in the motivational background of our welfare attitudes, which role was underestimated by former sociological studies. Conventionality is an important individual-level base for the acceptance (or rejection) of different ideological elements that are highly relevant for the explanation of personal welfare preferences.

It is also worth emphasizing that personal and societal cost and sacrifices for creation of economic-income equality have not been components of the social discourse in the postsocialist region. Due to this, people have not got used to take into account these costs when they express their welfare preferences. That is why need for welfare redistribution does not affect support for any of the examined welfare services, and neither motivational variables influence need for welfare redistribution, if costs and sacrifices are also included in the question. But it seems that this kind of cost-benefit analysis is a relevant and deeply embedded part of the Western European public thinking.

Study 3.

The effect of motivated political cognition on political-institutional trust

In Study 2 several evidences were revealed to support the existence of a specific kind of Eastern European *postsocialist economic system nostalgia*. The essence of this mechanism is that psychological conservatism makes people accept distributional principles of the old socialist regime, even if it is in contrast with the motivational power of ones own rational self-interest. It is important to underline that in this case system justification process is shifted in time, since by „system” we mean resource allocation principles of the former socialist regime.

In Study 3 it was examined how the mechanism of postsocialist economic system nostalgia influences current level of political system justification (or system criticism). Level of political system justification was operationalized through the extent of *trust in the democratic institutional system* established after the Change of Regime.

The change of the political-institutional system in the CEE region was not accompanied by the change of economic preferences in the public thinking. Therefore we

assumed that the new system could gain legitimacy as much as it was able to meet the essential norms of the old system, income egalitarianism and welfare paternalism. As we could see in the studies summarized above, in our region these aspects are particularly important for those with a higher level of conventionality motivation (and selflessness motivation in both regions). That is why we also suspected that in Eastern Europe both selflessness and conventionality influence how strongly respondents emphasize the quality of public welfare services and the extent of actual income inequalities, when they express their level of trust in the democratic institutional system.

We set up a linear regression model for both samples to check our assumptions. These models were to explain the individual level of trust in the democratic institutional system. The latter was operationalized in the form of a trust-index created based on three ESS items.⁵ Main independent variables were the extent of *income inequalities* in the given society (expressed in *Gini-indeces*), and the *perceived quality of public welfare services*.

Besides several additional variables were included, which has been proved to be important determinants of institutional trust according to former studies. These were: *opinions about the current state of national economy* (Lipset&Schneider, 1983; Mishler&Rose, 2001); *procedural justice* of the institutional system (Leventhal, 1980; Tyler, 2006); and personal level of *generalized trust* (Almond&Verba, 1963; Putnam 2000; Rothstein&Stolle, 2008). Like in our former studies, respondents' demographic characteristics were also included. In our analysis we checked the intergroup equivalency of each predictive variable. To check the effect of the two motivational variables, we created two additional models with four interaction terms, which revealed the joint effect of selflessness and conventionality with the main determinant variables; Gini-index and perceived welfare efficacy (see *Table 2*).

Results show that though perceived welfare efficacy enhanced institutional trust in both samples, this effect was significantly stronger in the Eastern European sample ($\Delta\chi^2=19,1$; $\Delta df=1$; $p\leq 001$), as the extent of income inequalities influenced expressed level of trust also with a significantly different weight in the two groups ($\Delta\chi^2=192,4$; $\Delta df=1$; $p\leq 001$). Furthermore, the latter variable had the opposite relationship with the dependent variable in the two samples, since it enhanced institutional trust in the Western European sample ($b=,06$; $p\leq 001$), while reduced it in the Eastern European one ($b=-,10$; $p\leq 001$). It indicates that high-quality public welfare services are very important system legitimizing criteria for residents of both regions, but Eastern Europeans underline this aspect more, when they express their confidence in public institutions. Moreover it seems that in the postsocialist region the more the institutional system of a given country could restrain growing income differences after the Change of Regime, the higher level of trust and legitimacy it was able to gain from its citizens. But in Western Europe several „legitimizing myths” are available to justify actual income inequalities, that is why the more it is perceived that the state tries to modify the seemingly just social hierarchy by artificial means, the more trust can be revoked from the democratic institutional system.

Results of the models investigating motivational effects show that interaction between income inequality and conventionality was significant in both groups ($F_{W-Eu}=4,737$; $df=1$; $p\leq 05$; $F_{E-Eu}=12,534$; $df=1$; $p\leq 001$), but the nature of the interaction was different. Level of income inequalities had directly the opposite effect in the two regions on respondents with a higher level of conventionality because in Western Europe it enhanced though in Eastern Europe it reduced trust-level to a greater extent than in the case of respondents with a lower level of the same motivation.

⁵These items asked how much trust respondents have in the parliament, police, and legal system.

	<i>Western Europe</i>		<i>Eastern Europe</i>	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
<i>Variables</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>
Constant	-2,176 (,327)***	-,313 (1,450)	4,925 (,522)***	6,732 (,999)***
GINI	,061 (,006)***	,006 (,044)	-,104 (,009)***	-,140 (,025)***
GDP	1,474E-005 (5,00E-06)**	1,514E-05 (5,00E-06)**	-1,300E-04 (1,10E-05)***	-1,270E-04 (1,10E-05)***
Gender	,018 (,028)	,018 (,028)	,121 (,034)***	,120 (,034)***
Age	-,004 (,001)***	-,004 (,001)***	,002 (,001)*	,002 (,001)*
Education	,036 (,004)***	,036 (,004)***	,009 (,006)	,009 (,006)
Subjective income	-,054 (,021)**	-,051 (,021)*	-,035 (,027)	-,034 (,027)
Objective income	,019 (,007)**	,020 (,007)***	-,007 (,011)	-,007 (,011)
Satisfaction – Economy	,198 (,007)***	,198 (,007)***	,242 (,009)***	,244 (,009)***
Procedural justica	,113 (,007)***	,112 (,007)***	,112 (,008)***	,111 (,008)***
Generalized trust	,228 (,009)***	,228 (,009)***	,121 (,009)***	,122 (,009)***
Welfare efficacy	,301 (,011)***	,259 (,066)***	,377 (,012)***	,187 (,057)**
Conventionality	,048 (,017)**	-,441 (,238)	,169 (,028)***	-,675 (,197)***
Selflessness	,057 (,021)**	,092 (,282)	-,023 (,027)	,396 (,194)*
GINI X Conventionality		,016 (,007)*		,019 (,005)***
Welfare efficacy X Conventionality		,000 (,011)		,066 (,015)***
GINI X Selflessness		-,003 (,009)		-,011 (,005)*
Welfare Efficacy X Selflessness		,009 (,013)		-,024 (,015)
R²	0,359	0,360	0,354	0,355

Table 2: Regression models created to explain the level of institutional trust

Besides this, interaction between conventionality and welfare efficacy became significant in the Eastern European sample ($F=19,042$; $df=1$; $p\leq 001$), indicating that among those with a higher level of conventionality motivation institutional trust gets even stronger, if they perceive that the quality of welfare services is adequately high. In addition, interaction between income differences and selflessness became also significant in this group ($F=4,001$; $df=1$; $p\leq 05$), suggesting that income inequalities influence institutional trust of more selfless citizens to a greater extent than in the case of less emphatic ones.

These results refer to important differences of motivated political cognition between the two groups. It seems that in postsocialist countries conventionality motivation makes the aspects of egalitarianism and paternalism even more stressful, when we express our trust in public institutions. Thus, in this region those, for whom it is important to stick to social conventions, put their confidence into the institutional system if it is able to enforce the egalitarian economic priorities of the previous system, which have not lost their significant role in regional public thinking (and are kept alive mainly by the dissatisfaction with the new democratic system). But in Western Europe conventionality seems to make the acceptance of such legitimizing myths more likely, that justify existing inequalities. That is why people with a higher level of this motivation might take into account, whether the political-institutional system tries to influence the seemingly just social hierarchy more seriously.

In Study 3 we could identify the connection between economic and political system justification both in the Western and in the Eastern European region. The more the democratic institutional system is able to guarantee the enforcement of the socially most dominant

economic norms (which is income egalitarianism and paternalism in the CEE region, and meritocracy in the Western European region), the more trust it can gain from its citizens. Besides this basic tendency, we could also observe that corresponding to the principles of motivated political cognition, our motivations derived from personal dispositional characteristics have a strong influence on according to what kind of criteria we put our trust into the political-institutional system regulating the everyday life of our society. Conventionality derived from need for security and certainty makes people make this legitimizing decision based primarily on norms and values of the given society, that is why timely shifted economic system justification in our region (*postsocialist economic system nostalgia*) influences judgments about the actual democratic institutional system (political system justification).

Summary

On the whole, our three studies reveal highly significant differences in the field of motivated political cognition between Eastern and Western Europe. Results confirm that the way one's basic motivations affect his political beliefs and behavior depends heavily on the peculiarities of the given country's public thinking. Motivations derived from personality and dispositional characteristics, such as conventionality and selflessness, seem to affect political preferences mainly through the normative ideological elements of the given society. As these normative ideological elements are essentially different in the postsocialist CEE region compared to Western Europe, the same motive can affect distinct areas of political behavior directly the opposite way here.

One example of this phenomenon is the Eastern European *postsocialist economic system nostalgia*. The essence of this mechanism is that conventionality derived from threat- and uncertainty-avoidance strengthens the need for income equality and governmental paternalism (propagated by the previous regime), even if it is not congruent with one's rational self-interest. That is the reason why conventionality motivation has an effect on several areas of political behavior, which is very different from the pattern revealed by former studies in Western European countries and the United States.

In the case of left-right ideological preferences, conventionality might cause the emergence of a kind of 'rigidity of the left' instead of the Western 'rigidity of the right', mainly because this motivation is related to the acceptance of traditional left-winger economic attitudes in our region. At the same time, these egalitarian economic attitudes are selective, they do not apply to culturally non-conventional groups (in contrast to the Western European inclusive social solidarity), so conventionality makes the chance of welfare chauvinism more probable there (see Study 1). In addition, besides the fact that conventionality enhances paternalist expectations, it does so by the acceptance of legitimizing myths, which are very different from those in Western Europe, since in that region conventionality reduces governmental welfare expectations through the acceptance of meritocracy and the rejection of welfare redistribution. In contrast, in our region the same motivation enhances paternalist expectations through strengthening the distributional principle of egalitarianism (see Study 2). Postsocialist economic system nostalgia has also the following consequence: residents of postsocialist countries emphasize the fulfillment of egalitarian economic norms to a greater extent, when they express their trust in the democratic institutional system, and high level of conventionality strengthens this mechanism even more (see Study 3). This connection between economic and political system justification is important, because in our region bases of institutional system-legitimacy are derived from the dominant norms of the previous regime, and the new institutional system is able to meet these norms only to a very limited extent. This can lead to societal uncertainty, which might enhance conventionality motivation - and hereby adherence to the old conventions - even more. As a result, a 'negative trust

spiral' might emerge causing a bigger and bigger discrepancy between institutional performance and social expectations.

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