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Sectoral Models of the Welfare State

SECTOR MODELS OF THE WELFARE STATE: A CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Past comparative research on the welfare state has focused on the problem of general overall development using a summary indicator of all major programs. This paper tests the applicability of models of welfare state development to five subsets of welfare-state programs: 1) old-age pensions; 2) disability pensions; 3) worker compensation; 4) unemployment compensation; and 5) sick benefits. Analysis of a sample of 18 Western industrial nations shows that no single model of the welfare state fits all five subsectors. The paper concludes that individual programs within the welfare state are a response to particular needs and/or demands and not the result of a uniform set of factors.

Past comparative research on welfare-state¹ development has focused on general overall development using a summary indicator of all major programs (Cutright, 1965; Wilensky, 1975, 1981; Castles and McKinlay, 1979). The use of a single, inclusive indicator of welfare state policy is justified by the assumptions that sector variation is minimal and that programs are interdependent and integrated responses to one of several sets of factors: (1) a response to problems of general economic development; (2) an outcome of working-class demands; or (3) an immediate consequence of state structures.² On the basis of this research, conclusions are made that the welfare state, as a whole, is predominately a result of a single set of factors drawn from one perspective.

Only recently has attention turned to models of individual programs (Pampel and Williamson, 1985; DeViney, 1984; Myles, 1984) and the possibility of program differentiation within the welfare state (Coughlin and Armour, 1983; Schneider, 1982; Shalev, 1983). This growing interest in subsections of the welfare state presents the possibility that individual elements of welfare-state programs need not be the outcome of a single set of factors. Rather, subsets of programs may be a response to different factors that do not necessarily affect other subsets.

Reliance on either an indicator of overall welfare-state development or on a single program area may mask the influence of factors that are specific to particular subsets of the welfare state. The purpose of this paper is to test the competing models of the welfare state in the context of overall expenditures and income replacement indicators for five risk areas: (1) old-age; (2) disability; (3) work injury; (4) unemployment; and (5) illness. The research takes the form of a cross-sectional analysis of eighteen industrial, capitalist nations.³ The use of indicators from more than one program area allows for the determination of influences of factors from competing models on subsets of welfare programs as well as general overall development.

MODELS OF THE WELFARE STATE

Most studies of the modern welfare state have used one of three general models. Each makes the claim that it explains the welfare state as a whole, but each may be related to only a subset of programs covered under the umbrella of the welfare state. The present analysis begins with an overview of each model of the welfare state and explanations for why the models may be related to only discrete sectors and not the welfare state as a whole.

The industrialization model of the welfare state presents social programs as a responses to the needs and problems arising from structural change in the economy. This perspective is rooted in a Durkheimian, structural-functional view of societal development (Flora and Alber, 1981:38) that stresses the causal interrelationship between economic and population growth and social-structural differentiation.

In the course of economic development societies are confronted with problems and, in turn, develop solutions for those problems (Wilensky, 1975). The foremost of these problems is the decline of integration resulting from the disruption and decay of traditional structures in the context of an elaborated division of labor. "The welfare state may be understood as an attempt to create a new kind of solidarity in highly differentiated societies and as an attempt to respond to problems in the division of labor" (Flora and Heidenheimer, 1981:22). The uncertainties created by a market economy and a mobile labor force can no longer be regulated by older, smaller social units. In the place of smaller integrative units, for example the family, public bureaucracies are forced to step in and regulate the division of labor (Wilensky and Lebeaux, 1958; Kerr et al., 1964:67).

Correlated with this underlying "logic of industrialism" (Kerr et al., 1964), is a change in the age composition of the population with a greatly increased proportion of older persons in society (Hauser, 1976:59). The welfare state is to a large degree a welfare state for the aged (Myles, 1984), with a majority of programs having the elderly as their target population. For example, within the set of nations included within this analysis, public old-age pensions account for 52.7 percent of all benefit expenditures for social programs (ILO, 1981). Any increase in the number of elderly would lead to an increase in social expenditures (Wilensky, 1975, 1981; Aaron, 1967). Therefore, the presence of a relatively large number of elderly creates the need for larger expenditures.

The existence of a large elderly population may be interpreted as a political demand for welfare-state programs as well as a need for greater expenditures (Pampel and Williamson, 1985). A large aged population desiring higher benefits becomes a political force supportive of the welfare state. Thus, demographic change congruent with industrialization leads to a political *demand* for welfare-state programs, as well as to a *need* for those programs.

The evidence that this model applies to some but not all welfare-state programs can be found in previous research. Coughlin and Armour (1983), in a factor analysis of OECD nations, report that pension expenditures are the most demographically driven program, responding to changes in the number of elderly. But other program expenditures, for example unemployment, were not associated with indicators of industrialization and its related changes. Flora and Alber (1981) present a sequence pattern in the adoption of a social insurance system, with each program representing a further movement away from classical liberalism and toward greater intervention by the state in the economy. The adoption of each subset of programs covering new areas of risk represents a different stage in the development of the welfare state and may be a response to a different set of demands and needs (Schneider, 1982).

The second model of the welfare state, the social democratic model, takes issue with the apolitical analysis of public policy under the industrialization theses. While industrialization may be associated with structural changes that weaken pre-existing means of social support, the change need not translate directly into public policy and public expenditures without a corresponding, and effective, political pressure. Central to this more political conception of the welfare state are the assumptions that welfare programs are distributional issues (Castles and McKinlay, 1979; Myles, 1984; Shalev, 1983), and that the comprehension of

distribution policy requires an accounting of the relative power of economic classes (Korpi, 1983; Hicks and Swank, 1984).

Shalev (1983:319-320) presents four basic propositions of this model as it pertains to the welfare state in general. First, that the welfare state is a class issue and its principal proponent is the working class. The programs labeled as part of the welfare state transfer income (Castles and McKinlay, 1979) and reduce working-class dependency on the labor market (Espring-Andersen, 1981:2). Second, that policy is defined by the choice of elected government officials in political democracy and is not a reflection of general structural needs. Third, that the most significant political cleavage is between working-class parties and non-working-class parties. When working-class parties, reformist social-democratic and labor parties, are in a dominant position, welfare effort is expanded (Williamson and Weiss, 1979; Korpi, 1983). Inversely, when right-wing parties, representing non-working classes, are in power, social expenditures are restricted (Castles and McKinlay, 1979; Hicks and Swank, 1984). The final element of the model is the dependency of working-class parties on working-class mobilization (labor unions). The electoral success of a working-class party increases with the degree of labor-force unionization.

Several writers (Myles, 1984; Hicks and Swank, 1984) take issue with the last proposition of the social democratic model. Working-class mobilization may play a direct role, independent of its support of political parties, in the development of the welfare state. By increasing labor costs, unions can create an environment that forces the state to assume the cost of deferred wages. The private sector, confronted with higher labor costs, pressures the state to assume these increased costs in the form of deferred wages (social programs). As the bargaining power of unions increases so does the pressure on the state to increase the level of deferred wages, independent of the party composition of the government.

The assumption of this model is that all welfare-state programs are rooted in some form of class-conflict, either electoral or labor-management bargaining, and are supported by the working class and opposed by the non-working class. A case can be built that not all programs invoke conflicting class interests. For example, pension policy may not have met strong opposition from employers (Espring-Andersen, 1981). Nor did workers' compensation represent a radical break in pre-welfare-state policy, but a pooling of individual employers' risk (Flora and Alber, 1981:51). Hence the dynamic described by the model and the set of predictions made may apply to only a subset of welfare state programs and not the welfare state overall.

Recently, social scientists have turned to more state-centered explanations of public policy and social expenditures (Weir and Skocpol, 1983; Hage and Hanneman, 1980; DeViney, 1983). This explanation of the welfare state arises from a rethinking of the state relative to its social and economic surroundings. The state is no longer conceived as completely dependent upon either general social-structural characteristics or the distribution of political power among economic classes. Instead, the state itself is seen as a source of unique interests and resources for achieving those interests (Skocpol, 1979:30).

To fully understand public policy, the state structure in which it is formed should be taken into account (Weir and Skocpol, 1983; Hage and Hanneman, 1980). The state, in this view, may enact social programs when political demands are absent. Also, the state may, if structured in certain ways, resist the demands of politically powerful groups. "Weak state organizations may not be able to organize social welfare effort even if they are predisposed to do so; strong states may use their capacity to implement or to prevent implementation of social welfare programs" (Hage and Hanneman, 1980:48).

A major characteristic of the state presented as related to the welfare state is the degree of state centralization. Cameron (1978) reports a positive link between centralization and expansion of the public sector. He argues that a centralized state is better able to muster resources and resist attempts to limit expansion. A similar case for linkage between centralization and social expenditures has been made by Wilensky (1975, 1981). A centralized state, according to Wilensky, is better able to tax and hence gain the resources to support the welfare state. At the same time the centralized state is better able to resist local pressures that run counter to the interests of the state.

Of course, this assumes that those who hold command positions within centralized state structures favor the welfare state (Lockhart, 1984:343-344). Centralization may take on different connotations in the context of different policies (Heidenheimer, et al., 1983:5). Centralized systems are characterized by patterned negotiations and are able to resist outside demands for change. Health care and public pensions are policy sectors which illustrate that centralization is a factor in limiting programs. Comparisons of expenditures in the United Kingdom and Sweden show that the decentralized, county-based planning system of Sweden was unable to limit costs (Anderson, 1972; Heidenheimer, et al., 1983). Centralized states, however, were found to be able to resist the pressures of a highly unionized

environment to improve public pensions (DeViney, 1984). Hence we should not expect centralization to have the same influence in all policy areas.

MEASURES

The three models of the welfare state will be applied to one indicator of overall social welfare effect and indices of income policy in five risk areas. The indicator of overall social welfare effect is total expenditures on Social Security as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product in 1975 (ILO, 1981). This is an inclusive measure of social welfare programs that incorporates the five risk areas covered by the program indices. The indicator has been widely used in previous research (for example, Wilensky, 1975, 1981; Aaron, 1967; Williamson and Weiss, 1979; DeViney, 1984). It also serves as a baseline to which results can be compared.

The measures of subsectors are Esping-Andersen's (1981) indices of "de-commodification". De-commodification can be defined as the extent to which individuals, or families, can uphold claims to a given standard of living regardless of their position in the labor market" (Esping-Andersen, 1981:2). The indices measure the ability of programs to maintain living standards when workers are forced out of the labor market due to old-age, disability, work-related injury, illness, or unemployment. The indices are the entitlement ratio (the proportion of relevant population covered) multiplied by the earnings-replacement ratio (gross benefits as a proportion of gross average production worker's income). Hence the indices are measures of the extent of population covered and the amount of benefits provided for each risk area. A score of 1 means that 100 percent of the population is covered and the benefits replace 100 percent of income.⁴ It should be noted that these indices are measures of policy and not expenditures. These data are available for eighteen nations.⁵

Two elements of the industrialization model are included in the analysis: the percentage of the labor force employed in non-agricultural sectors as the indicator of economic structure, and percentage of total population age 65 or older as the indicator of program need (OECD, 1982).⁶ The measure of working-class power in the government is the percentage of legislative seats held by parties that are members of the Socialist International (Mackie and Rose, 1983). The indicator is restricted to these parties as a means of providing a limited degree of ideological agreement within the category. The measure of working-class mobilization is organized labor as a percentage of the labor force (Taylor and Jodice, 1983:

Table 2.9). The element of the third model included in the analysis is the degree of government centralization measured by the percentage of total government revenue raised by the central government (OECD, 1979).

ANALYSIS

The analysis proceeds by means of regressions on each of the six policy indices. In this way we can determine the influence of variables from the three models on each subsection of the welfare state as well as on overall level of development. But, first, an overview of the bivariate correlations among the policy indices (Table 1) provides some evidence of diversity among program subsections within the welfare state.

The correlations between expenditures and individual risk policies show a wide range. The strongest correlation with expenditure is with policy covering loss of income due to illness. Much weaker correlations are reported between expenditures and the other four program areas. Hence, overall social expenditures need not serve as an indicator of all program areas subsumed by the term "welfare state". A similar range of relationships is reported for the correlations among subunits of policy indices. This provides limited evidence for the independence of policy intended to alleviate different risks. A nation that has a high level of coverage and income replacement for one risk area may not have a correspondingly high coverage for other risk areas. Welfare-state programs do not develop in a uniform manner and the use of a single indicator may mask program differences.

The regression results are presented in Table 2. The first equation to be reviewed is that predicting level of expenditure. The results are in line with previous research reporting social welfare effort to be a function of need (for example, Wilensky, 1975). The only strong predictor of expenditures is the percentage of the population that is age 65 or older. Variables from the other two perspectives fail to provide an explanation for variable expenditures. From this equation, an argument can be made that overall social expenditure is an apolitical response to societal needs: the greater the number of the aged, the greater the amount allocated to social programs. Neither state structures or working-class political strength exercise an influence on the summary indicator of welfare-state development.

A different and more complex set of relationships between predictors and the welfare state is presented in the equations explaining individual policy elements of the welfare state. No one

TABLE 1
BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS AMONG POLICY INDICES
(N=18)

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1 SOCIAL EXPENDITURE	1.000					
V2 OLD-AGE	.396	1.000				
V3 DISABILITY	.243	.662	1.000			
V4 UNEMPLOYMENT	.309	.447	.468	1.000		
V5 WORK INJURY	.322	.502	.592	.226	1.000	
V6 ILLNESS	.693	.569	.622	.457	.629	1.000

TABLE 2
REGRESSIONS ON POLICY INDICES

	INDEPENDENT VARIABLES					R ²
	PERCENT NON-AGRICULTURAL	PERCENT AGE 65 OR OLDER	PERCENT UNION	SOCIALIST PARTY	GOVERNMENT CENTRALIZATION	
EXPENDITURE	-.134A -.122B	1.831*** .784	-.007 -.023	-.044 -.135	.000 .000	.531
OLD-AGE	-.272 -.067	4.518*** .523	.397* .354	.250 .206	-.518** -.399	.725
DISABILITY	.381 .116	.200 .029	.472** .524	.405** .415	.004 .004	.678
UNEMPLOYMENT	.558 .211	.909 .162	.058 .079	.248 .313	.191 .226	.293
WORK INJURY	1.071* .378	.905 .150	.406** .521	.151 .179	-.048 -.053	.650
ILLNESS	-.307 -.074	5.164*** .586	.387 .339	-.035 -.029	-.137 -.029	.510

A: RAW METRIC
B: STANDARDIZED METRIC
*: P<.10
***: P<.05
***: P<.01

factor explains a dominant amount of variance in all programs; nor does a single variable or set of variables have a consistent relationship with all subsectors. Elements of all three models play a role in explaining public pension (old-age) policy. The strongest predictor is still the percent of population age 65 or older, but the explanatory strength of this variable is reduced. Also the connotation of the variable, in this context, shifts from a measure of need to a possible measure of demand. It should be kept in mind that the dependent variable is not amount expended for old-age pensions but the level of benefits and the proportion of the population covered. An increase in the number of elderly will thus lead to increased expenditures for public pensions at any benefit level; however, an increase in the number of the elderly need not lead to an automatic change in policy (Myles, 1984:18). In this context, the elderly either become a political force (Pampel and Williamson, 1985) or are perceived by policy makers as a political force (Myles, 1984). Hence, a larger number of the elderly results in an increased political pressure for better pension policy.

Added evidence for a political influence on pensions is found in the remaining variables. An organized working class creates an environment that is supportive of higher pension coverage and benefits, but working-class participation in the government is not related to benefits.⁷ A centralized government is able to resist this political pressure and restrict the level of benefits and coverage of pension policy.

Disability policy is a consequence of working-class political pressure. Both the degree of unionization and the strength of working-class parties serve as nearly equal predictors of policy in this risk area. Neither state structure as measured by centralization nor general level of economic development, including population age distribution, has an important effect on disability policy.

None of the three models provide an adequate predictor of unemployment policy. The overall fit of this equation ($R^2=.293$) is poorer than the other policy equations. No independent variable reaches a level of statistical significance or substantive importance. Previous research on unemployment policy reports that this area is the most deviate from the conclusions of traditional social policy analysis (Alber, 1981:178) and least related to other program areas (Coughlin and Armour, 1983:186). Hence, factors outside the framework of the three models included in this analysis should be investigated as sources of unemployment policy.

Workers' compensation policy is largely a response to the environment created by a mobilized working-class. This is also the

only policy for which the distribution of the labor force, our measure of general economic development, has a significant influence. This result is in agreement with Flora and Alber's (1981:51) discussion of the introduction of workers' compensation. Industrial accidents are viewed by employers as an inevitable element of industrial production and employers' desire to replace individual responsibility with a shared liability: the greater the degree of industrialization, the greater the need to shift liability.

The final policy examined is income replacement for those who are sick or ill. This last equation most resembles the first equation predicting overall welfare effort. The single significant predictor of the replacement of income due to loss or illness is the percentage of population age 65 or older. In the context of an income replacement measure, this is a perplexing result. Assuming that the aged are covered by some form of pension program, an illness may result in increased expenditures by the individual, but illness should not result in a loss of income source. Therefore, a relatively large number of elderly should not serve as the basis of a need for this form of policy. The lack of a need on the part of the elderly for this program also limits the interpretation of this linkage as a response to a political demand by, or on behalf of, the elderly. Perhaps improvement in income components of health policy is a result of a general improvement of health policy due to political demands by the elderly. Evidence for a political interpretation of this policy is found in the moderate, but statistically insignificant, relationship with unionization.

CONCLUSIONS

The results provide strong support for the argument that models of the welfare state in general do not apply to all subsectors of welfare-state policy. Factors associated with one subsector need not be associated with other subsectors; nor do factors from one model display a consistent set of relationships across program areas.

The economic development model best explained general level of development as measured by total expenditures as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product. The element of the model that best predicted level of development was the age distribution of the population. On this basis, one could conclude that the welfare state is a response to societal needs, particularly the needs of an aging population. But a different image is presented in the analysis of the subsectors.

The age distribution of the population did show a relationship with policy intended to alleviate the risks of old-age

and illness. Given that the indicators were of policy and not expenditures, these two relationships lend themselves to an interpretation of policy not as a response to needs of the elderly, but the response to the elderly as a political group demanding increased coverage and better benefits. General level of economic development, the other element of the first model, was linked only to workers' compensation policy.

The social democratic model was found to be strongly linked to programs intended to cover the risks of old-age, disability, and work-related injury. The explanatory power of a mobilized working class and participation of working class parties in the government shifted from policy area to policy area. A mobilized working class was related to old-age pensions, disability policy, and workers' compensation, while participation in the government was related to disability policy. Given the correlation between the two elements of the social democratic model, a quantitative approach can not disentangle the relative effects of the two analytical concepts. More detailed analysis of cases would be required to determine if policy in these areas is the result of political pressures from working-class parties or a response to the demands by or the environment created by an organized and mobilized working class.

State centralization was only related to old-age pension policy: a centralized state is able to resist the pressures of the aged and unions to improve public pension policy. State structure failed to explain any other policy area, and all three models failed to explain unemployment.

As a result of this research we should move away from analyses that seek to explain the welfare state as a unified entity. Research using a single measure of welfare-state benefits, policy, or expenditures may mask the dynamics of individual programs. Alternatively, more detailed analysis of individual programs and policies is needed.

FOOTNOTES

1. Welfare state is defined as a system of government programs intended to insure minimum standards of living and income. Programs included in this category are not restricted to non-contributory.
2. These three models are not the only explanations of the welfare state that have been put forth. For a more complete listing of explanations and models, see Lockhart (1984). The study is

restricted to the three models since they have dominated previous comparative research.

3. The nations included in the analysis are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, West Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States.
4. To reduce the number of decimal places in tables, the decommodification scores were multiplied by 100.
5. The restriction of the analysis to only industrialized, capitalist nations does present a conservative test of the economic development model. But the social democratic model is a theory of variation in those nations and is not a theory intended to be applicable to all nations (Myles, 1984). Previous cross-sectional research on the welfare state as a whole, restricted to developed nations, has been supportive of the economic development model (For example, Wilensky, 1975, 1981). Therefore, we should not expect the limited number of cases to present an extreme problem. Small sample studies of comparative public policy have been criticized in the past because of the extreme influence of one or two cases on results (Shalev, 1983). Regression diagnostic techniques (see, Belsley et al., 1980) failed to detect any cases having an undue influence on results.
6. The equations were also estimated with Gross National Product per capita (Taylor and Jodice, 1983) substituted for percentage of the labor force in non-agricultural sectors. This was intended to test the relationship between the ability of a nation to support programs and level of programs. The results (not reported) did not differ significantly from those found in this research.
7. The correlation between unionization and socialist strength is .417; hence, determining the individual influence of the two indicators is difficult.

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