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A Study of its Conceptualization, Causes, Correlates and Consequences

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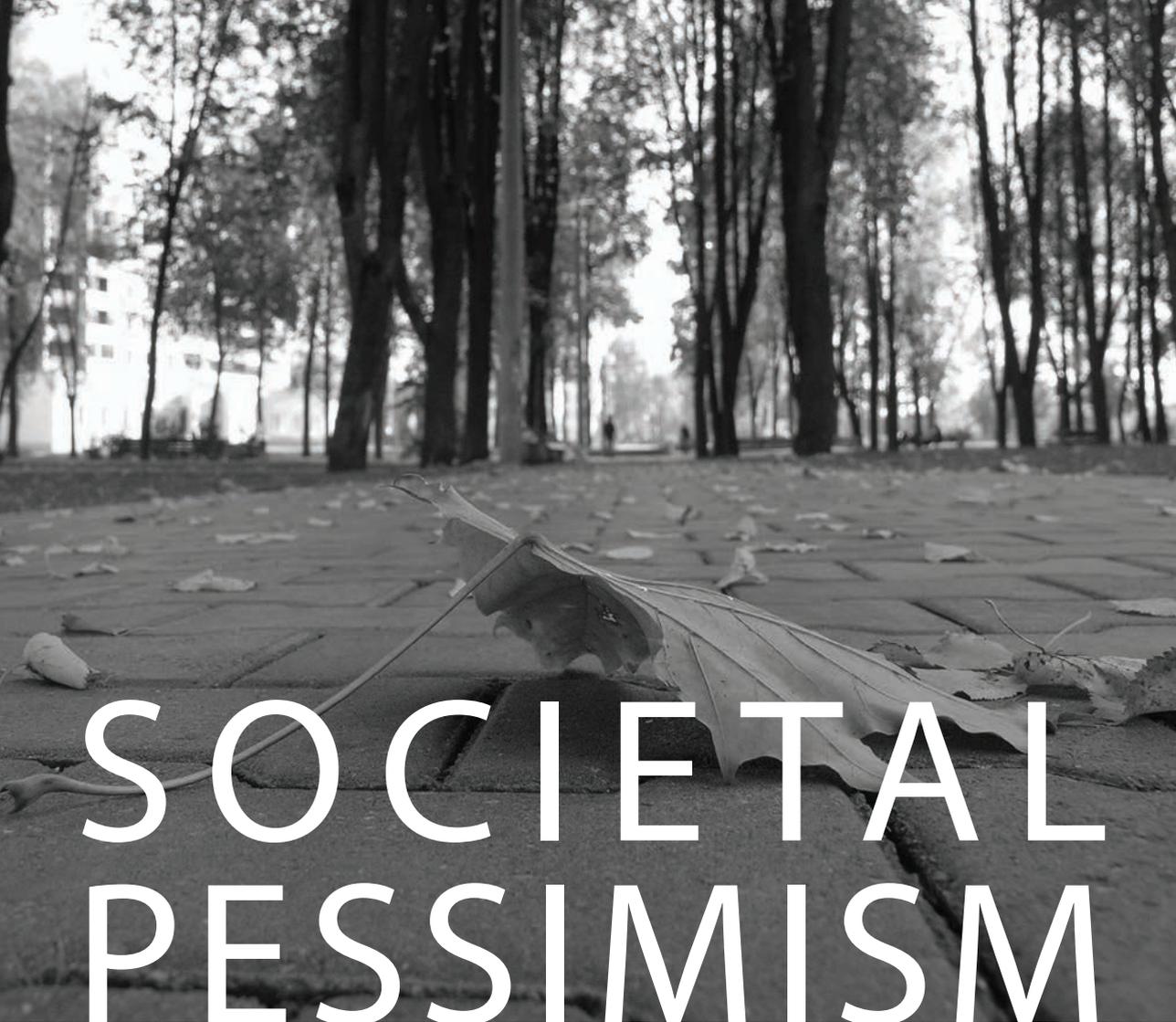
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SOCIETAL PESSIMISM

A STUDY OF ITS
**CONCEPTUALIZATION,
CAUSES, CORRELATES
AND CONSEQUENCES**

Eefje Steenvoorden

Societal Pessimism

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Societal Pessimism:

A Study of its Conceptualization, Causes, Correlates and Consequences

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

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aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom

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*To my parents,
Ellen and Hans*

“The general sense was that we were heading for something nasty but hard to foresee, impossible to avoid. There was a suspicion that the ‘social fabric’ was about to unravel, though no one really knew what this would entail”

Ian McEwan in *Sweet Tooth* (2012: 189)

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Amstelveen, March 2016

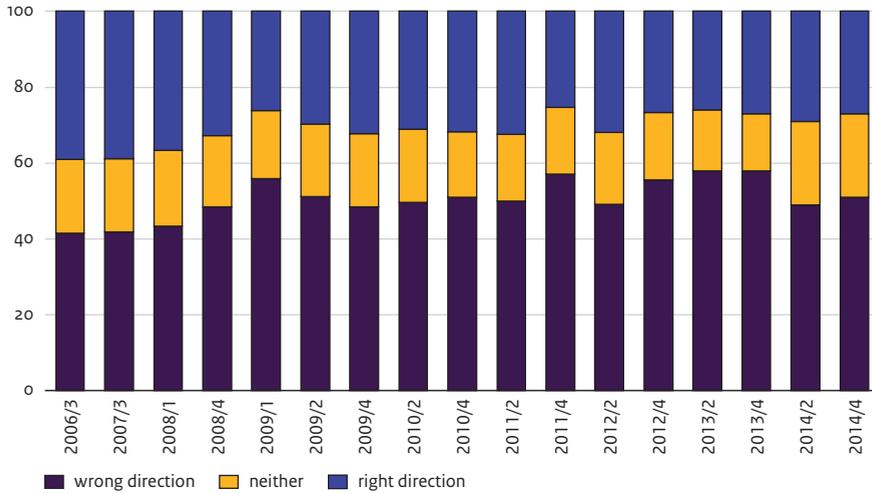
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 A study of a neglected phenomenon

There seems to be a consensus in many Western countries that things are changing for the worse. In intellectual debates, the West is called “the continent of fear” (Moïsi, 2009) or “pessimism” (Mahbubani, 2008). Moïsi describes the West, by which he means the USA and Europe, as feeling out of control of its own destiny (2009). Similarly, Mahbubani notes that “When many Western eyes peer into the twenty-first century, they see only dark images, not a new dawn in the history of human civilization” (2008: 3). Such concerns about the state of society may not be new. Ian McEwan’s novel *Sweet Tooth* addresses the negative expectations about the future of society that predominated in the UK in the 1970s. To prevent Communism from gaining a foothold, the MI5 secretly sponsors authors to write novels that could upbeat the public and inspire optimism. In McEwan’s novel, the sentiment that the best is not yet to come but is already in the past, and that the country is a lonely ship on a wild ocean, is enough to make the British authorities eager to arrange propaganda, in order to change that public opinion.

The existence of a concern about the state of society among citizens is not just the product of intellectual analysis or artistic imagination, but is very real and current. Pessimism about society is prevalent among citizens in both the USA (Gallup, 2014) and Europe. Figure 1.1 uses Eurobarometer data from 2006 to 2014 to show that a substantial portion of EU-citizens believe that their country is heading in the wrong direction. In the Western European media, concerns about problematic societal developments are characterized using local terms to describe the same phenomenon, like ‘malaise’ in France, ‘unease’ in the UK, ‘Unbehagen’ in Germany and ‘maatschappelijk onbehagen’ in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Figure 1.1 Perception of Europeans on the direction their country is heading (%)

Moreover, both in the public and in the intellectual debate, the negative consequences of this attitude are discussed. French President François Hollande warned that the French should not be devoured by pessimism and fear, because that climate poses a threat to the country (The Times, 2015). The Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte called upon the Dutch to be less pessimistic, to stop being people who see the glass as half empty because the economy needs optimistic citizens who spend their money (RTL Nieuws, 2013). In his 2014 address of the European Parliament, Pope Francis urged Europe to leave its tired pessimism behind and regain its previous vigor to prevent societal, cultural, political and economic stagnation or even deterioration (Vatican Network, 2014). Technology investor Peter Thiel points to a pervasive pessimism in Europe that hampers innovative thinking (Fleisher & Barker, 2014).

In the intellectual debate, the effects of such pessimism are also pointed out by Moïsi, who predicts that Europe will become an irrelevant museum in disarray if it continues to follow the path of fear (2009). Mahhubani warns about a ‘Retreat into fortresses’ in which European countries protect their own, short-term self-interest, harming both the world and themselves (2008). Furedi warns that lower levels of innovation (Furedi, 2002 [1997]) result when we allow ourselves to be led by fear. At the individual level, pessimism about society has been related to rising levels of depression (Bennett, 2001) or a lack of faith in governmental and non-governmental institutions (Mazarr, 1998; Whitman, 1998). Many scholars theorize – but do not test – that societal developments negatively affect our society and result in anxiety or insecurity, from

risks resulting from technological advancement, the liquidity of social structures or the individualization of collective risks (e.g. Taylor, 1991; Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000).

However, the nature of this phenomenon remains unclear, both theoretically and empirically. Its very existence, nature and dissemination are shrouded in mystery. Although entire bookshelves have been written about societal changes in recent decades, most accounts study very specific attitudes and do not make claims about the general societal outlook. Political scientists are troubled by decreasing levels of political trust and engagement (e.g. Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Dalton, 2004) and the rise of populism and Populist Radical Right parties (Mudde, 2007). Sociologists investigate the supposed loss of social capital (Etzioni, 1993; Putnam, 2000), xenophobia and the multicultural society (Tillie, 2008), whereas criminologists focus on the perception of ever-increasing levels of criminality (Boutellier, 2002). Some studies do offer a comprehensive, overarching perspective on troubling societal developments; those studies include *The Risk Society* (Beck, 1992), *The Malaise of Modernity* (Taylor, 1991), *Liquid Modernity* (Bauman, 2000), and *Culture of Fear* (Furedi, 2002 [1997]). These influential contributions are insightful diagnoses that identify detrimental processes in society that lead to various problems for either individuals or society overall. However, those studies do not discuss how those processes affect concerns about society, who hold those concerns, or which processes are particularly distressing. In other words, they make no concrete arguments how these processes affect individual wellbeing, public opinion or individual behavior.

Various authors explicitly call for scientific attention to public pessimism (Eckersley, 2000; Eckersley, 2013; Kroll & Delhey, 2013). In studying perceived quality of life, these authors point to the discrepancy between high levels of personal wellbeing and low levels of social (i.e., societal) wellbeing. They argue that more research on that low satisfaction with society is needed, along with a measure that captures that concern.

1.2 The individual concern about the state of society: three main questions

The point of departure here is the notion that in Western countries there is an apparently widespread concern about problematic developments in society, despite those countries' relatively high standards of living. To examine this phenomenon, we first need to understand what it is. Is the phenomenon a characteristic of a nation, of groups, or of individual people? Is it an attitude or should we focus on certain types of behavior or problems, such as levels of depression, 'new disorders' such as ADHD, or anxiety about new risks such as resistant bacteria or nuclear power plants?

There is no structured stream of literature on this phenomenon. Research relating to discontent, pessimism, or anxiety about society is at best highly fragmented, lacking a shared object (what is the discontent about), subject (where can the discontent be found), definition and measurement. Taking a broad view of the literature that touches on this subject, I suggest to distinguish four approaches to studying (a concern about) the state of society.

A first set of authors theorizes about societal developments themselves that are problematic or at least disturbing on a macro level, a micro level or both. Bauman (1997; 2000; 2007) speaks of the 'liquidity' of our times, which deprives us, among other things, of anchors on which to hold, and of the 'individualization of risks' that once were collective in nature, which means that in all areas of life, the individual exists in a place of uncertainty. Similarly, Taylor (1991) discusses the malaise of modernity that results from a loss of moral standards, increased instrumentality and a loss of freedom. Beck (1992) introduces the term 'risk society,' in which there is a prevalence of new types of risks that result from technological advances and are not geographically bounded (e.g. risks accompanying nuclear power plants). Moreover, the political system is not equipped to address these risks, according to Beck. These risks create a common ground of anxiety and fear, but Beck stresses that it remains unclear whether this anxiety leads to solidarity, and how people will react more generally to these risks. Contemporary fears of these types of risks, which create more anxiety than much more dangerous but less exotic risks, such as traffic accidents, are also argued to be typical of our era (Glassner, 1999; Furedi, 2002 [1997]). In summary, this category of authors offers great insight into societal processes that might affect how we view society, but they do not explicitly discuss such views. Nor do they offer clear expectations about the consequences of such negative views, with the exception of Furedi, who states that the culture of fear prohibits exploration and experimentalism in all spheres, from interpersonal relations to politics.

A second set of studies points to specific, individual problems as typical of our current, allegedly problematic, era. Han (2012) states that our society is centered on achievement and causes the following neural conditions: depression, ADHD, borderline personality syndrome and burnout syndrome. These conditions are caused, he argues, by an overload of impressions. In a similar vein, Ehrenberg (2010) sees psychological conditions as a consequence and a measure of the state of contemporary French society, which he sees as a 'society of discontent'. Wilkinson investigates anxiety in contemporary Western society, namely, "the extent to which 'neurotic' symptoms or excessive states of anxiety may be explained in terms of a social and cultural determination" (2001: 17). He argues that this anxiety does not reflect personality but should instead be seen as a

sociological phenomenon, created by social predicaments and cultural contradictions. Here too, the problems themselves – not the perceptions of those problems – are the object of study.

A third category of studies argues that pessimism about the state of society is inflated, due to the media (McKenzie, 1997; Mazarr, 1998; Whitman, 1998). This literature does not discuss the nature of such pessimism but instead focuses on (the causes of) the gap between private contentment and public pessimism. In *The Paradox of Progress*, pessimism about society's future is argued to be unjustified and based on overly negative media reports (McKenzie, 1997). According to Whitman, people are not only too negative about society but also (and simultaneously) too positive about their own situations. This discrepancy is described by Whitman in *The Optimism Gap. The I'm OK – They're Not Syndrome and the Myth of American Decline* (1998). This book studies the paradox that “people are feeling better about their own lives but feel that “other” Americans in society at large are doing poorly” (ibid: 10). This gap is explained by both a psychological mechanism and a media effect, i.e., the general tendency in human nature to expect better things for oneself than average, and the media's large influence on evaluations of the state of society but not one's personal situation.¹

A fourth and smaller group of authors pays attention to the individual concern about the state of society. However, there is no such thing as a literature stream on individuals' perceptions of the state of society. Instead, these are sporadic, isolated studies that look at this phenomenon in a specific and different way. Bennett introduces the term cultural pessimism to describe theoretically the pessimistic narratives that dominate current society, which can be summarized as “a feeling of a generalized negative certainty” (Bennett, 2001: 181). He argues that such pessimism and feelings of powerlessness have been accompanied by high levels of depression and anxiety since the second half of the twentieth century and posits that cultural pessimism not only is produced by our current society but is also itself a form of minor depression. Elchardus and Smits refer to individuals' lack of well-being [about being part of] society among individuals

1 Both causes have been investigated in the literature. The first is called ‘unrealistic optimism’ or ‘optimistic bias’: a tendency to think that one's own risk of any type of danger is lower than average (Weinstein, 1980). From health-related risks to expectations about one's personal future, if one is mentally healthy, they are likely to be overly optimistic about their personal vulnerability and chances for happiness and success (for an overview see Taylor & Brown, 1988; Chapin, 2000). The media effect is called the ‘impersonal impact hypothesis’ or ‘media malaise’. These theories state that personal and societal risk judgments are two separate things and that mass media primarily affect one's perception of societal problems, whereas personal experiences determine the perception of one's personal situation (Tyler & Cook, 1984; Culbertson & Stempel, 1985). Some studies confirm this media effect (Tyler, 1980; Mutz, 1992), but others do not (Park, Scherer, & Glynn, 2001; Shrum & Bischak, 2001).

(2007: 104) and study the empirical interrelatedness among various attitudes on issues about aspects of Flemish society (Elchardus & Smits, 2002; 2007), as do Dekker et al. (2013) for the Netherlands. These contributions on the individual perception of the state of society provide insight into discontent about society. However, they lack either empirical testing (Bennett, 2001) or a theoretical embedding (Elchardus & Smits, 2002; 2007; Dekker, Van Noije, & Den Ridder, 2013). Another concept, social actualization, the sense that society has potential, is one of five dimensions of social wellbeing and is introduced by Keyes (Keyes, 1998; Keyes & Shapiro, 2004). This is also a small stream of research (Keyes, 1998; Keyes & Shapiro, 2004; Gallagher, Lopez, & Preacher, 2009; Huppert et al., 2009), and therefore, little is known about the cross-national distribution, causes or consequences of social actualization. This concept, i.e., societal optimism, can be considered the opposite of what is studied here.

This dissertation builds primarily on the fourth category of studies. It conceptualizes the phenomenon of unease, malaise, Unbehagen or maatschappelijk onbehagen as an *attitude about the state of society among individuals*. Hereby, my approach differs from the first three categories in that I focus on how individuals perceive society; that is, public opinion. In contrast, the other three categories of studies describe the causes of a pessimistic outlook on society: the first category theorizes about problematic developments that are typical of our era; the second discusses the individual problems and psychological conditions of our time; and the third studies the gap between public pessimism, private optimism and the causes thereof, but it does not investigate the nature of public pessimism, the consequences of public pessimism, what public pessimism is about, or who is particularly pessimistic. My research also deviates from that of scholars who aim to show that public pessimism is unwarranted by providing numbers that indicate social or economic prosperity (McKenzie, 1997; Whitman, 1998). Instead, I adopt the Thomas Theorem, “If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”, as point of departure. It is important to understand individuals’ concern about the state of society, even if this concern is unsupported by factual data.

The investigation of this concern about the state of society evolves around *three overarching questions*: what is this concern, what causes it, and what are its correlates and consequences? Chapter 2 sets out the conceptual and theoretical foundation of the book. It disentangles the concern about the state of society into two concepts that are well suited for further theoretical and empirical elaboration: societal pessimism and societal unease. *Societal pessimism* is a universal concept that can exist at all times and in all parts of the world. *Societal unease* is a specification of societal pessimism, namely, the conceptualization of the negative view of society in contemporary, economically developed, liberal democracies, which are predominantly Western

countries. This means that societal unease is the embodiment of societal pessimism in such countries.

These two concepts, societal pessimism and societal unease, are the subjects of this book. Part I addresses the first research question and consists of three chapters in which societal pessimism and societal unease are defined, conceptualized, measured, and explored. Because the data on societal unease are very limited, in Parts II and III of the book, I focus on societal pessimism. Part II addresses the second research question and consists of one chapter, which focuses on the political and economic causes of societal pessimism. Part III consists of three chapters, which study correlates and consequences of societal pessimism that are central to the functioning of democracy: voting behavior, political and civic participation and identification with political-geographical groups. The three main research questions and the specified sub-questions are as follows (with related chapters between brackets):

- 1: How can the concern about the state of society be defined, conceptualized and measured?
 - 1.1 What is societal unease and how can it be conceptualized and measured? (2,3)
 - 1.2 What is societal pessimism and how can it be measured? (2,3)
 - 1.3 How are societal unease and societal pessimism expressed? (4)

- 2: What are the causes of the concern about the state of society?
 - 2.1 To what extent do the political and economic contexts affect societal pessimism? (5)

- 3: What are the correlates and consequences of the concern about the state of society?
 - 3.1 To what extent does societal pessimism stimulate voting for Populist Radical Right parties? (6)
 - 3.2 How do societal pessimism, political trust and social trust differentiate between types of voluntary civic engagement? (7)
 - 3.3 To what extent do societal pessimism and other types of sociotropic uncertainty mitigate multiple identification with the city, the nation and the EU? (8)

1.3 Scientific and societal relevance

As discussed above, research into the concern about the state of society is very scarce to non-existent. However, for several reasons, it seems very relevant to study this attitude. From a societal perspective, such research offers a mirror to citizens, opinion leaders,

and society at large. Accordingly, it provides a scientific answer to the public debate in which notions or even allegations of pessimism thrive but are neither specified nor based on thorough analyses. Furthermore, if there is a concern about the state of society, a study of its nature, causes, correlates and consequences provides knowledge to address this concern for actors both in politics and policymaking.

From a scientific perspective, three reasons for this research predominate. First, theoretical contributions about a decline, a deterioration or otherwise negative developments in specific domains of society at large have received a great deal of scholarly attention (e.g. Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000). Many studies have investigated how specific terrains, such as the allegedly critical state of politics or the economy, are perceived by individual citizens. However, if there are indeed troublesome societal processes taking place, it seems very important to determine whether such processes also lead to a concern about society among the public. But to date, research has paid little attention to this phenomenon. Second, in public opinion research, we have measures for the relationship between individual citizens and all aspects of their lives, both personally (from happiness and satisfaction with life in general to social contacts, job satisfaction, financial situation, neighborhood, and fear of crime) and socially (from measures of social trust, political trust, and satisfaction with democracy, to national identification and economic expectations), to name just a few. All of an individual's dyads or relationships with other people or societal institutions or domains are considered by scholars in specific research fields. The perception of society at large however, is not an established subject of public opinion research. This is strange because, third, a concern about society is supposed to affect various other attitudes and behaviors according to the range of political and economic arguments discussed above. Therefore, we need a clear definition, conceptualization and measure of this attitude.

This dissertation aims to take some first steps toward filling this gap. It is the first comprehensive theoretical and empirical study of citizens' concern about the state of society. It contributes to the literature in multiple ways. First, it offers an interdisciplinary overview of the literature on societal processes that distress citizens. Second, it offers new definitions and a conceptual model of this phenomenon by distinguishing two concepts, namely, societal pessimism and societal unease. These concepts are embedded in the literature and are disentangled from other attitudes such as anomie, anomia, alienation, fear, resentment and insecurity of status (a concept also proposed in Chapter 2). Third, I empirically test the conceptualization of societal unease and its validity and provide a scale of societal unease and a operationalization of societal pessimism. Fourth, this is the first study to examine the causes, correlates and consequences of societal pessimism.

1.4 Methods, data and cases

Because research on the concern about the state of society is very scarce, the literature does not provide theories to employ or hypotheses to test. This book's theoretical chapter (Chapter 2) addresses this gap in the literature by adopting an inductive strategy. I integrate a large range of interdisciplinary studies, which argue that for some reason, society is in decline. This yields a conceptual model of the concern about society in developed liberal democracies of today.

Next, I choose a deductive strategy for most of the empirical chapters. It is easy to think of an attitude about the state of society as vague and broad. For this reason, I allow theoretical expectations to guide the analyses to avoid either creating a concept that is the sum of everything, or telling a tautological story in which there is common ground in what people are most concerned about. Because societal unease and societal pessimism are not established concepts with a clear scientific or social meaning, I do not conceptualize these concepts by a qualitative study that asks respondents what those concepts are or what they think about them. Instead, I use survey data in Chapter 3 to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis that examines the presence of a theoretically grounded latent attitude. The use of international survey data in Chapters 5-8 enables me to increase the external validity of my research, and Chapter 5 also offers a comparative perspective from which I examine the causes of societal pessimism. Chapter 5 uses multinomial multilevel regression, and in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, either multinomial regression, logistic regression, or both are used, with country dummies (and wave dummies in Chapter 8) employed to eliminate cross-national variation. The exception to this deductive design is found in Chapter 4, in which I explore how people express their concerns about society in their own words to obtain more insight into the nature of those concerns. To this end, I perform a partly deductive and partly inductive content analysis of open-ended survey questions.

I conceptualize societal unease as a characteristic of contemporary, economically developed, liberal democracies (see Chapter 2), which are the primary focus of (the empirical analyses in) this book. Although I define societal pessimism as universal and context-free, I do not study the similarities and differences in societal pessimism beyond the current Western context. The extent to which societal unease and societal pessimism can be found in contemporary, less economically developed liberal democracies, in other types of regimes, or in previous times is beyond the scope of this study. The focus on liberal democracies (rather than the more generic term 'countries') is relevant because conceptually speaking, the functioning of national politics and political actors in the democratic system are an inherent part of societal unease.

Although the aim is to study developed liberal democracies in general, because of data limitations, my empirical focus is on a sample of those democracies. Surprisingly, only a few data sources include societal pessimism, and cross-national measures of societal unease are absent.

The empirical analyses in Part I of this book therefore focus on the Netherlands. Because Chapter 3 examines the validity of the proposed conceptualization of societal unease, very specific and extended data are required. I use a Dutch survey from 2012 (Citizens' Outlooks Barometer), which includes questions designed for this purpose. This survey includes an open-ended question about Dutch society, which is explored in Chapter 4 to offer more insight into expressions of societal unease and societal pessimism.

For various reasons, the Netherlands is an interesting case for this purpose. The concern about the state of society has received attention both in the public and in academic debates (Beker, 2003; Verbrugge, 2004; Dekker et al., 2009; Dekker & Den Ridder, 2011; Koenis, 2012; Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2013), illustrated by the characterization of the Dutch mood as “Met mij gaat het goed, met ons gaat het slecht”, “I am doing fine, we are doing bad” (Schnabel, 2004: 49). This suggests concern about the state of society to be present here. Furthermore, societal pessimism is relatively low from an international perspective (European Commission, 2013b), and objectively, the country is doing well: it is 9th in the IMF ranking of GDP per capita² and 7th on the Human Development Index of the UN³; it is 14th on the world database of happiness⁴; and public opinion research shows the Dutch are very content with their private lives, e.g., their health, neighborhood, job and financial situation (Steenvoorden, 2009). Therefore, the Netherlands can be seen as a least-likely case: if a general negative attitude on the state of society is revealed in the Netherlands, it is likely to be present in other Western countries as well. Moreover, the Netherlands' high levels of happiness enable me to distinguish between contentment with personal life and public pessimism.

The empirical analyses in Parts II and III of this book are based on a broader selection of cases, covering a substantial number of European countries. In Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, respondents from 23, 9, 19 and 25 European countries, respectively, are included. The specific survey data in these chapters are from the Eurobarometer (13 waves from

2 World Economic Outlook database URL: www.imf.org

3 This ranking is based on life expectancy, literacy rate, educational level and standard of living. URL: hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/

4 URL: worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/index.html

2006-2012 in Chapter 5 and both 2007 and 2012 in Chapter 8) and the European Social Survey (from either 2006 (Chapter 7) or 2012 (Chapter 6)).

In Parts II and III, the theoretical framework more explicitly addresses causal directions. In Part II, ‘Causes’ (Chapter 5), I examine macro-level causes of societal pessimism. In Part III, ‘Consequences and Correlates’, I study three types of behavior and attitudes that I expect are related to societal pessimism or a consequence thereof: Populist Radical Right voting, political and civic participation, and multiple identification with geographical groups.

Table 1.1 Overview of chapter, data, cases, and methods per research question

Research Question	Sub-question	Chapter	Data and Cases	Method
What is it?	1.1 and 1.2 What are societal unease and societal pessimism and how can they be conceptualized and measured?	2,3	Citizens’ Outlooks Barometer 2012/1 (The Netherlands)	Confirmatory factor analysis, OLS regression analysis
	1.3 How are societal unease and societal pessimism expressed?	4		Content analysis
What causes it?	2.1. To what extent do the political and economic contexts affect societal pessimism?	5	13 Eurobarometer waves 2006-2012 (23 European countries)	Multinomial multilevel regression analysis
What are its correlates and consequences?	3.1 How does societal pessimism affect voting for Radical Right parties?	6	European Social Survey 2012 (9 European countries)	Multinomial regression analysis
	3.2 How does societal pessimism relate to types of civic engagement?	7	European Social Survey 2006 (19 European countries)	Logistic regression analysis
	3.3 How does societal pessimism affect patterns of identification?	8	Eurobarometer 2007 and 2012 (25 European countries)	Multinomial regression analysis

1.5 Overview of the book

Part I focuses on the *conceptualization* of the concern about the state of society. Chapter 2 offers a framework to study this concern, defining it with two concepts, societal unease and societal pessimism, and offering an elaborate conceptualization of societal unease that consists of five elements: distrust in human capability, loss of ideology, decline of political power, decline of community and socioeconomic vulnerability. Furthermore,

Chapter 2 differentiates societal unease and societal pessimism from two concepts about perceptions of one's personal position in society: resentment and insecurity of status (the latter being a new concept as well). At the end of Chapter 2, I present a theoretical model that shows all of the studied concepts and their interrelatedness. Finally, I reflect on the similarities and differences between societal unease and societal pessimism versus the following established social concepts: anomie, anomia, alienation and fear.

In Chapter 3, I test the theoretical assumptions of Chapter 2 with Dutch survey data. It examines the conceptual model of societal unease by empirically testing whether the five theorized elements comprise this concept empirically. Therefore, I analyze whether the five elements of societal unease contribute to one latent attitude and form one factor, and check whether attitudes about issues other than the five theorized elements fit into this factor. To validate the measures of societal unease and societal pessimism, I review the relationship between these two concepts, their relationship with anomia and happiness, and whether the conceptual model of unease holds among educational subgroups. Finally, I explore the demographic, attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of the societally uneasy citizens.

In Chapter 4, I explore the nature of the concern about society by analyzing open-ended survey questions posed to Dutch respondents. Through partly deductive and partly inductive content analysis, I explore how the concern about society takes shapes in citizens' expressions. I investigate the issues that respondents raise when asked to argue why they think their country is heading in the wrong direction, and how they make that argument. I compare societal pessimists, who believe that their country is heading in the wrong direction, with a subgroup of those pessimists, the most societally uneasy (based on the scale of societal unease produced in Chapter 3), to examine how their greater concern is expressed. Third, I deductively analyze how and the extent to which the five elements of societal unease are present in the reasoning about why the country is heading in the wrong direction. Are these elements top-of-mind, salient issues, or are they relatively latent? My fourth aim is to examine the arguments of societal optimists. Why do they think things are heading the right way, and do they use inverse or merely different arguments in comparison to those of the societal pessimists? Finally, I reflect on what the results tell us about the nature of social pessimism and societal unease.

Part II (Chapter 5) focuses on the *causes* of societal pessimism. Focusing on two sets of explanations, I examine the influence of political and economic conditions on societal pessimism. In terms of political factors, I focus on the degree of Europeanization, degree of political stability, and degree of corruption. On the economic side, I explore

the effect of welfare-state retrenchment and economic development (namely, economic growth, unemployment and inflation). I analyze the influence of the political and economic factors in 23 countries not only cross-nationally but also within these countries over time, comparing 13 points in time between 2006 and 2012.

In Part III, the *correlates and consequences* of societal pessimism are investigated. Chapter 6 examines the extent to which societal pessimism offers a new explanation of Populist Radical Right (PRR) voting, next to established theories. PRR ideology is characterized in the literature as nostalgic, and I argue that societal pessimism among voters is congruent with this nostalgia. To study the effect of societal pessimism on PRR support, I compare voters of PRR parties to those of Radical Left, Mainstream Left and Mainstream Right parties, while controlling for established factors (such as socioeconomic characteristics, satisfaction with democracy, opposition to immigration, European integration and authoritarianism).

Chapter 7 aims to distinguish types of participants in voluntary civic engagement from each other in terms of three attitudes: societal pessimism, political trust, and social trust. Many studies investigate why people participate, but the extent to which participants differ from each other is less clear. This chapter proposes that people are likely to join others who share their societal outlook, in line with the matching hypothesis. It suggests that to differentiate among people engaged in institutional political, non-institutional political and civic participation, we should consider their societal outlook. Societal pessimism, political trust, and social trust should enable the differentiation of these participants, because they indicate whether it is possible to achieve change through formal participation versus protest participation (societal pessimism) or within or outside the political domain (indicated by political and societal trust). By controlling for the established factors in participation studies such as resources, political efficacy, and political interest, I examine the societal outlook of those three types of participants.

In Chapter 8, I investigate whether societal pessimism and other types of sociotropic uncertainty, namely, political distrust and negative economic expectations, mitigate multiple identification with political-geographical collective groups. Chapter 8 theorizes that these types of uncertainty encourage selectivity in the number of political-geographical group identities, because a simple identity offers security in the form of clear direction and meaning. So far, the uncertainty-identify and need-for-closure literature have focused on the relationship between personal uncertainty and identification, but this has not yet been broadened to sociotropic uncertainty or applied to multiple identification. I examine identity complexity with respect to three political-geographical groups – the city, the country and the EU – in 25 EU countries.

With these identification measures, I construct four groups (i.e., low, single, dual and multiple identifiers) and examine whether sociotropic uncertainty mitigates multiple identification.

Chapter 9 concludes this book by summarizing its results, offering overall conclusions, pointing to this study's limitations and discussing the implications in terms of contributions to the literature, future research and social policy.

Part I

Conceptualization

CHAPTER 2

A theoretical disentangling of the concern about society¹

2.1 Introduction

Although bookshelves have been written about the presumed deterioration of (parts of) society, attention for a concern about the state of society has been remarkably scarce. It has only rarely been treated as a concept on itself, (Elchardus & Smits, 2002; 2007; Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2013; Dekker, Van Noije, & Den Ridder, 2013), and its conceptualization has not yet been conducted in a satisfactory manner. Therefore, this chapter aims to conceptualize this attitude. To this end, I distinguish two concepts: societal unease and societal pessimism. Societal unease reflects the concern about society in contemporary developed liberal democracies, whereas societal pessimism is not bounded to a place or time. After describing the literature study that preceded the theoretical propositions of this chapter, I define societal unease and societal pessimism and reflect on similar definitions in the literature. The main part of this chapter presents a conceptual framework of societal unease, composed of five elements, which I describe at length in section 2.4. In section 2.5, I differentiate societal unease and societal pessimism from attitudes about one's personal situation, such as resentment and insecurity of status. In 2.6, I present a theoretical model, which shows my theoretical expectations about this book's most important concepts. Finally, I discuss the similarities and differences between societal unease and societal pessimism on the one hand and established social concepts such as anomie, anomia, alienation and fear on the other.

1 A summary of both this Chapter and Chapter 3 has been published in the following article: Steenvoorden, E.H. (2015) A General Discontent Disentangled: A Conceptual and Empirical Framework for Societal Unease. *Social Indicators Research*, 124(1): 85-110.

2.2 Literature study

This section clarifies how I developed the definitions, conceptualizations and theoretical model presented in this chapter. At the start of this study, there was not a clear idea of what societal unease or societal pessimism was, nor a stream of literature to build on. I started by reading a large number of (mainly) theoretical contributions on problematic developments in contemporary society. The only condition for studies to be included in this literature study was that they discussed negative developments. After all, I was looking for literature that could shed light on why people are concerned about society. After reading a large number of studies, I came to a point at which I noticed that I did not encounter new arguments. At this point, I wrote all of the central claims I had read and conclusions or propositions that I deemed important on small cards. Of some authors I included multiple claims, of others only one. Next, I tried to sort all of the claims into meaningful and coherent categories. This resulted in a conceptual model in which societal unease is composed of several processes in society, all of which are unmanageable and add to a sense of collective powerlessness. Another commonality of claims included in the model of societal unease is that they all indicate relatively abstract processes, not concrete problems. In section 2.3, I devote additional attention to the demarcation of societal unease. Various claims did not fit in the model of societal unease, because they reflect the state of individuals or how individuals view themselves or their social position. Nevertheless, I thought it was important to address those claims because they seemed related to a negative societal view. For that reason, I summarized these personal issues in the concepts of resentment and insecurity of status.

Since that first conceptual model of societal unease, I have reviewed both the model and the definitions in this chapter many times and have discussed and presented them to other scholars on many occasions. These conversations and the feedback that I received have resulted in both adjustments and the inclusion of other literature in later stages, leading to the definitions and conceptual model that I present here. Together with the development of societal unease, the idea of a more universally applicable concept resulted in the definition of societal pessimism.

2.3 Defining societal unease and societal pessimism

Definition of societal unease

I propose to define societal unease as following:

A latent concern among citizens about the precarious state of society, which is composed of the perceived unmanageable deterioration of five fundamental aspects of society: distrust in human capability, loss of ideology, decline of political power, decline of community and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability

Societal unease is thus explicitly defined as a complex of concerns about specific processes in society. To clarify the implications and demarcations of this definition, I discuss it in detail below. The five aspects of societal unease in the definition are discussed at length in section 2.4.

First, the term *unease* captures the vagueness and lack of direction of the sentiment that it identifies, along with the low intensity of that sentiment (Scherer, 2005). Unlike fear, unease does not reflect distress. Uneasy people are expected to be concerned about but not deeply troubled by the state of society. The terms *unease* and *latent* indicate the lack of a clear object. There is no particular social problem or process that evokes unease, but rather a range of issues.

Second, societal unease consists of *concerns*, which implies that the accuracy of those concerns is beyond the scope of the conceptualization of societal unease. Consistent with the famous Thomas Theorem “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”, societal unease is composed of perceptions whose accuracy is not considered here. Instead, the extent to which societal unease is rooted in real developments is a standalone question, which I study in Chapter 5. The term *concerns* also differentiates societal unease from the public mood as proposed by Rahn et al., who point to the emotions – i.e., the “diffuse affective state” (1996: 29) – that people have toward their political community, not their attitudes.

The addition of the phrase “*among citizens*” indicates that only societal unease among individuals is meant here, not possible signs of societal unease in, e.g., the political or public debate. This differentiation is summarized in Table 2.1, which lists the possible objects and subjects of concerns: what are the concerns about (individuals’ or society’s problems) and who is experiencing these problems (individuals or society). Theoretically, societal unease can be found in cells B and D of Table 2.1. Cell B reflects concerns experienced by individuals (subject) about their society (object), whereas cell D represents aggregate trends in public opinion, such as what Stimson described as the

public mood, namely, aggregate trends in individuals' policy preferences (1991). Cell D also includes media and political debates about societal issues. Although such debates are likely to be both related to and have an influence on individual citizens, those processes are beyond the scope of this study. Here, only cell B is considered.

Table 2.1 Object and subject of concerns (examples in brackets)

Object of concerns (what is the concern about)	
Subject of concerns (who is concerned)	A Individual <i>Individual</i> (row with partner)
	B Individual <i>Society</i> (integration of immigrants)
	C Society <i>Individual</i> (serial killer)
	D Society <i>Society</i> (polarization of debate)

The focus on citizens' perceptions distinguishes this study from literature that focuses on analyzing the object only (i.e., problems in and of society) and not the subject (i.e., the perception thereof). An example of such literature is the *Malaise of Modernity* (Taylor, 1991), which addresses "three features of our contemporary society that people experience as a loss or decline" (1991:1). Although two of those features overlap with elements of societal unease, namely, individualization (decline of community) and the primacy of instrumental reason (distrust of human capability), the manner in which these features of society shape citizens' attitudes toward that society is not discussed. Similarly, Bauman describes the liquidity of our ties and context in current society that results from changing conditions (Bauman, 2000). Notwithstanding their contributions, these studies do not discuss individuals' perceptions of these processes.

Fourth, societal unease is restricted to individual concerns about *aspects of society* that we can call 'sociotropic' concerns (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1979)² and does not reflect personal problems (egotropic concerns). This restriction distinguishes cell B from cell A in Table 2.1. Although it is easy to identify egotropic concerns, sociotropic concerns are less clear. Here, I am informed by the work of Mills, who differentiates among "the personal troubles of milieu", personal problems, and "public issues of social structure" (Mills, 1971 [1959]: 8), which denote individuals' problems that result from macro developments in society. Individuals can experience all kinds of problems, but when those problems stem from the social structure, they should be seen as a public issue. For example, unemployment and divorce are individual matters, but high levels of unemployment or divorce rates are public issues. What does this mean for societal

² Kinder and Kiewiet (1979) use the term 'sociotropic' to refer to voting motivations inspired by the collectivity, in contrast to 'pocketbook' voting, which is based on one's personal (financial) situation.

unease? Public issues are seen as aspects of society and thus are eligible to consider as elements of societal unease, whereas personal issues are not.

However, the term public issues used here deviates from Mills' work in two fundamental ways. First, public issues can only be part of societal unease to the extent that they identify societal developments. For instance, unemployment is a public issue, but worries about one's own (possible) unemployment are not, because the focus is oneself, not society. This is different from Mills' conceptualization, because he pushes for the contrary, namely, for individuals to recognize the social structure as a cause of their personal situation (he calls this capability 'sociological imagination') (Mills, 1971 [1959]). Naturally, being unemployed is likely to make one more worried about unemployment in society, but the point I want to make here is that we should conceptually differentiate concerns about social problems (sociotropic concerns) from concerns about personal problems (egotropic concerns). Second, the category of public issues is more broadly defined here than in Mills' work because it also includes problematic developments in society that are not (often) experienced by individuals but can certainly be a source of concern, such as climate change, the functioning of politics or the risks of nuclear power plants. Thus, both societal trends in individual problems and problems at the societal level are qualified as constituents of societal unease.

The restriction to *aspects of society* also means that societal unease is an attitude, not an individual psychological state. This demarcation implies that personal experiences such as anomia (which I discuss in paragraph 2.7) and individual problems (such as depression, burnout and ADHD), that some authors see as the outcome or consequence of social developments typical of our era, are not defined as part of societal unease. This distinguishes societal unease from other studies, in which individual psychological problems are investigated as manifestations of something similar to societal unease (Wilkinson, 2001; Ehrenberg, 2010). Concerns about the presence of such problems could theoretically be part of societal unease but not the presence of these conditions as such.

Fifth, in addition to the demarcation of public issues, societal unease relates to the *unmanageable deterioration of five fundamental aspects* of society. That means that societal unease is not a catch-all term related to all public issues; instead, it involves five fundamental public issues that seem unmanageable and contribute to a collective powerlessness.

Finally, and relatedly, these five aspects of society, which I discuss in section 2.4, are characteristic of contemporary developed liberal democracies. They relate to issues such as technological advancement, the sovereignty and political power of the nation state, and the retrenchment of advanced welfare-state arrangements; all of these issues

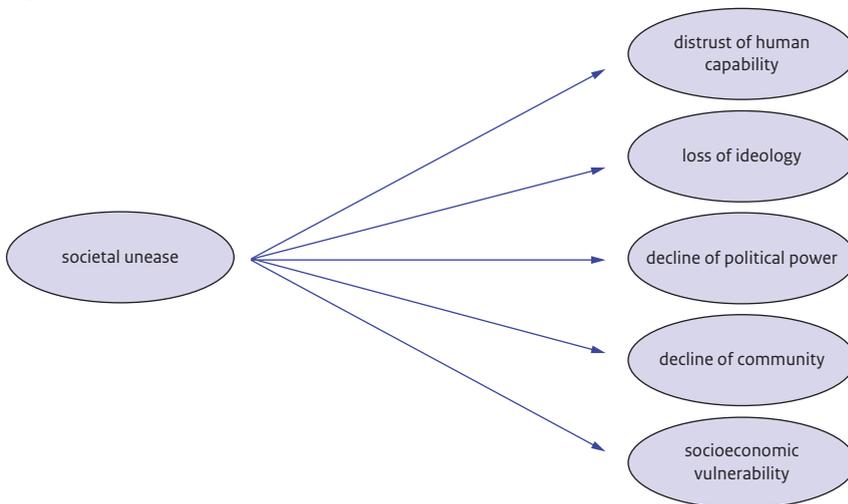
are typical of contemporary, economically developed, liberal democracies. In practice, this means that the definition of societal unease predominantly applies to Western countries, such as European countries, the us, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This is not surprising, because my aim was to conceptualize the concern about society in current Western countries. This is not to say that societal unease does not exist in other countries; instead, it means that I am agonistic about whether societal unease travels beyond contemporary developed liberal democracies.

Conceptual model of societal unease

The definition of societal unease refers to an unmanageable deterioration of five aspects of society; the conceptual model that follows from this definition is shown in Figure 2.1. Section 2.4 describes these elements at length.

One may wonder why certain societal problems are not part of this model. The sense of unmanageability and collective powerlessness is a requisite, but also do all elements of societal unease relate to *fundamental* aspects of society instead of to isolated, concrete problems. They can be characterized as undirected concerns instead of concrete discontents. Dissatisfaction with politicians, irritation with immigrants, and feeling unsafe in one's neighborhood are all examples of more directed discontent. Societal unease is seen here as not only more vague but also more fundamental. Various concrete attitudes and types of behavior may follow from societal unease. Several scholars suggest that xenophobia, feelings of a lack of safety and distrust in politics are projections of our deeper anxieties (Boutellier, 2002; Bauman, 2006).

Figure 2.1 Conceptual model of societal unease



Definition of societal pessimism

The definition of societal unease refers to five concerns about the state that are predominantly found in contemporary developed liberal democracies, that is, in Western countries. However, it is possible that people have been concerned about their society other places or times, e.g., in developing countries or in previous historical periods. Indeed, authors from previous eras do express concern about where society is heading. Examples are concern about a loss of social norms (Ibn Khaldūn, Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed, 1967 [1377]) or a range of concurrent transitions in society in which “everything that is solid melts into air” (Marx & Engels, 1987 [1848]). Therefore, a concern about society can also be defined without specifying what that concern is about. Societal pessimism as I propose it here merely refers to the gut feeling that society is in decline. The definition of societal pessimism is as follows:

A concern among citizens that their society is in decline

Societal pessimism differs from general or personal pessimism, which has received attention as a trait that has both psychological and physical disadvantages. Pessimism in that sense points to an inclination to expect not only the worst in general but also not to succeed in what one attempts to accomplish, in contrast to optimists, who see the glass as half full (e.g. Beck et al., 1974; Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Forgeard & Seligman, 2012).

Societal pessimism differs from societal unease: societal pessimism is an undirected expectation about the future of society, which theoretically can be found in all types of societies in all phases in history, whereas societal unease consists of concerns about five specific aspects of contemporary developed liberal democracies. Conceptually, therefore, societal unease is an expression of current-day societal pessimism. However, the descriptions of collective powerlessness and unmanageable deterioration that I used for societal unease also describe societal pessimism. It is this perception of decline of (aspects of) society for which no clear solutions can be found that is at the heart of societal pessimism, just as in the case of societal unease.

Similar definitions of unease or malaise

A limited number of studies have a subject similar to societal unease or societal pessimism. This section discusses the similarities and differences between the definitions proposed here and those of other scholars.

First, two authors point to malaise or discontent as a feature of society and thus differ from the definitions of societal unease and societal pessimism because they do not conceptualize this malaise or discontent as an individual attitude. In *The Malaise*

of *Modernity*, Taylor discusses “three features of our contemporary society that people experience as a loss or decline” (1991:1). These three features are a loss of meaning (i.e., moral standards), a primacy of instrumental reason, and a loss of freedom. The first and the third features overlap with the decline of community and distrust of human capability, respectively, which are described later in this chapter. However, Taylor’s book focuses on the theorization of these processes in society and not citizens’ perception of them.

Ehrenberg (2010) speaks of a ‘Society of Discontent’, which stems mainly from individualism. Similar to Bauman (2007), the shift of responsibilities from the collectivity to the individual is Ehrenberg’s main concern. Social bonds are weakening and the individual is becoming overburdened with responsibilities and challenges. In contrast to societal unease and societal pessimism as defined here, Ehrenberg presents individual psychological problems as evidence of malaise but does not refer to this malaise as an individual attitude.

A second group of authors does describe an individual attitude about society. Mills uses the term *uneasiness* (1971 [1959]) to refer to “the beat feeling that all is somehow not right” (ibid: 11). He describes *uneasiness* as one of four individual states that are defined by values and threats. ‘Well-being’ is the situation in which people cherish some values and do not feel any threat to them, ‘crisis’ occurs when cherished values are threatened, ‘indifference’ occurs when people are neither aware of any values nor threats and ‘uneasiness’ is an unawareness of cherished values combined with an awareness of threat. Although Mills’ definition is not very specific, it has a similarity to societal unease and societal pessimism, which also refer to a latent, vague concern. However, a sense of threat seems to point more to anxiety than my definitions of societal unease and societal pessimism.

Bennett proposes the concept *cultural pessimism*, which is “the conviction that the culture of a nation, a civilization or of humanity itself is in an irreversible process of decline” (Bennett, 2001). He posits four narratives of decline that add up to a narrative of decline about our ‘whole way of life’, which is the reason for the term *cultural pessimism*. The four narratives are called environmental, moral (the persistence of war, genocide, torture), intellectual (science and art) and political (social and political consequences of the new capitalism). The first and the fourth show an overlap with the elements of societal unease proposed here (because they relate to risks of technology and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability). The second and third seem like intellectual concerns and are less likely to be a concern of the general public.

The work of Elchardus and Smits shows a great deal of similarity to societal unease as defined here because they also argue that multiple processes in society comprise a general concern about society. They do not discuss societal unease so much theoretically; instead, they conduct an empirical study in Flanders of the interrelatedness of various

social attitudes and define societal unease as a lack of well-being [about being part of] society (2007: 104) or a negative feeling about one's own society or the course of events in one's own society (Elchardus, 2008: 12). They use different measures of societal unease, i.e., either a combination of personal pessimism and feelings of unsafety (2002), or (on the basis of interviews) a lack of safety, threats to social security in a globalizing world, a change from a homogenous to a multicultural society, and a loss of interpersonal relationships and agreement about shared values constitute societal unease (Elchardus & Smits, 2007). This is similar to the conceptualization of societal unease employed here, namely, especially to the elements of decline of community and socioeconomic vulnerability. Elchardus & Smits' definition is also employed in the study of Dekker et al. (2013), with the addition of a sense of powerlessness and fatalism or defeatism. This resembles the unmanageability that dominates the definitions proposed here; however, Dekker et al. (2013) seem to point to individual powerlessness, while here collective powerlessness is meant.

Furthermore, societal pessimism is very similar to both optimism as used by Uslaner (2002) and social actualization as proposed by (Keyes, 1998). Uslaner argues that generalized social trust – i.e., trust in other people – is shaped by feelings of optimism and control. He views optimism as a multifaceted phenomenon, namely, “a view that the future will be better than the past and the belief that we can control our environment so as to make it better. The other elements of optimism are a sense of personal well-being and a supportive community” (Uslaner, 2002: 81). This concept clearly overlaps with societal pessimism, which is exactly the opposite, namely, the view that society will not be better, but worse, and that we cannot control this process. However, the personal wellbeing and social trust aspects that Uslaner includes in optimism are different from societal pessimism. Another difference between the use of optimism by Uslaner and societal pessimism, is that he does not distinguish between the personal and societal aspects of it.

Social actualization is one of the five dimensions of social well-being proposed by Keyes (Keyes, 1998; Keyes & Shapiro, 2004) and studied by others (Gallagher, Lopez, & Preacher, 2009; Huppert et al., 2009). Social well-being reflects “the appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in society” (Keyes, 1998: 122).³ Social actualization is the “evaluation of the potential and trajectory of society. This is the belief in the evolution of society and the sense that society has potential which is being realized through its institutions and citizens” (Keyes, 1998: 122). It can be interpreted as the opposite of societal pessimism, as societal optimism.

3 Its dimensions reflect evaluations of one's relationships, contribution to and understanding of society (social integration, social contribution, social coherence) and the perceptions of human nature and societal progress (i.e., social acceptance and social actualization).

2.4 Elements of societal unease

Distrust of human capability

The first element of societal unease points to concerns about the limitations of policies and technological innovations with respect to making improvements. Both the growing awareness of the downsides of technological progress, and our inability to oversee and overcome all types of dangers, result in a notion of limited human capability. This contributes to a sense of collective powerlessness and takes shape in irritations about human failure. Below, two perspectives related to this notion of limited human capability are discussed.

The first perspective argues that the idea of progress, present since the Enlightenment, is eroding. The belief that characterized the 1950s and 1960s, i.e., “we could completely control our economic, social and political surroundings” (Samuelson, 1995: xvi), has faded away. We have become disillusioned because we had expected today’s problems to be solved by now. The promise of improvement has been replaced by the awareness that fear cannot be defeated permanently and that dangers will continue to threaten us (Bauman, 2006). This awareness is accompanied by a negative attitude toward human capability: “Deeds that were once described as great achievements are today dismissed as destructive. This mood is very much linked to the end-of-the-twentieth-century culture, which regards human creation as at best a mixed blessing and at worst wholly dangerous” (Furedi, 2002 [1997]: 28). This is apparent in our heightened sensitivity to human failure. When a tsunami strikes, there is anger about the failure of the warning system, in case of flood the government failed in water management. Freud already stated that compared to dangers that result from the superiority of nature and the feebleness of our own bodies, dangers that result from human failure are the most difficult to overcome (Freud, 1961 [1929]).

A second perspective on the loss of trust in human capability can be found in the literature on the ‘world risk society’, a term derived from Beck’s influential work, *The Risk Society* (1992). This book states that we have entered a new phase in history, from industrial modernity to reflexive modernity. This era can be characterized by the production of a new type of risk that adds to the intolerance of human failure. The new risks are the (latent) side effects of industrial and scientific innovations: “hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (Beck, 1992: 21). The new risks have three characteristics: 1) delocalization, causes and consequences that are omnipresent, not geographically limited; 2) incalculableness, i.e., with consequences that are both hypothetical and incalculable; and 3) non-compensable, i.e., dangers that are irreversible (Beck, 2006). Examples of new risks include nuclear waste, climate

change, terrorist attacks and global financial crises. These new risks are typically invisible, which is why they stimulate speculation. Beck states that these risks cause anxiety and fear among citizens, but does not indicate how these fears take shape.

A critical question that is often raised is whether the hazards that we currently face are indeed more threatening than they used to be, or whether we are just more sensitive to their presence (Taylor-Gooby & Zinn, 2006; Zinn, 2008). Some authors claim that we are preoccupied by very unlikely risks while we neglect real dangers (Glassner, 1999; Furedi, 2002 [1997]). It is not rare bacteria, but car accidents that should worry us. However, in this study I am interested in citizens' perceptions of risks, not the accuracy of those perceptions.

Loss of ideology

The second element of societal unease is the loss of ideology, which deprives us of both a sense of direction about where we are heading, and a perspective on a better society. This lack of direction contributes to a sense of unmanageability. Following Heywood's definition, ideology is seen as threefold and includes an account of the existing order, a vision of what a good society or a desired future would look like and a way to achieve that (Heywood, 2003). Several scholars signal the absence of ideology, or utopia, pointing to the loss of a perspective on a better world (Samuelson, 1995; Jacoby, 1999; Heywood, 2003; Bauman, 2007; Judt, 2010). Ideology and utopia as mentioned here can be seen as secular alternatives to generate perspectives and goals for both individuals and collectivities. Often a comparison is drawn between current times and the 1950s to 1970s (Samuelson, 1995; Jacoby, 1999; Judt, 2010), or between postmodern and modern times (Bauman, 2007), to argue that we currently lack the ideals of previous historical periods.

Because ideas about what a profoundly better society would look like and how we are planning to get there become outdated, we are deprived of the promise of improvement. The future will only be a replica of today or worse. With the welfare state becoming the dominant model, both left and right are solely concerned with pragmatic politics; they lack distinct ideologies. There-is-no-alternative (TINA) is the new consensus (Furedi, 2002 [1997]: 181).

An alternative view is to consider a lack of ideology as itself an ideology. Heywood states that any claim about the end of ideology is itself ideological, because it is an attempt to portray one set of ideas as superior. The 'end of ideology' declared by Daniel Bell in 1960 and the 'End of History' declared by Fukuyama in 1989 both rendered ideology redundant by pointing to the emergence of a broad ideological consensus (Heywood, 2003). Additionally, postmodernism claims grand scale theories are outdated while

globalism, which promotes a capitalist economy and liberal democratic values, also undermines (other) political ideologies (ibid). According to this line of reasoning, a loss of ideology would only underline the dominance of one particular ideology: that of TINA, which unlike other ideologies, makes no promise of improvement.

Decline of political power

The third element of societal unease points to the diminishing possibility of changing things for the better because our tool to do that, the national government, has less of an ability to do so. This perception creates a sense of collective powerlessness and unmanageability, because our representatives are not in the driver's seat. The literature shows several reasons for decreased political power: 1) depoliticization; 2) a transfer of political power from the national to supranational level; and 3) globalization of the economy and the growing power of multinationals.

Depoliticization refers to the process of decreasing responsibility and accountability of political actors in decision-making with respect to public issues (Burnham, 2001; Buller & Flinders, 2005; Hay, 2007). Depoliticization essentially declares issues as non-political, either because they are seen as technical issues that should be left in the hands of experts, or because the market is the best place to guarantee efficiency, in which case privatization and liberalization are the chosen paths. Depending on the issue, the new decision-making body is either a public body, for example, a central bank or an installed commission (in the case of monetary policy), or the market (e.g., public transportation). Either way, depoliticization implies that the power to address those public issues is increasingly found outside the political realm. Therefore, it is argued that through depoliticization, national governments make themselves redundant (Hay, 2007; Bauman, 2007; Judt, 2010). "Politics has gone into early retirement" (Furedi, 2002 [1997]: 181) by labeling problems as beyond (political) control. In many instances, this attitude also implies that public issues are left to consumers, that is, individual citizens, to solve (Hay, 2007). Bauman calls this the individualization of responsibility (Bauman, 2007). From the quality of food to healthcare insurance, individuals are left to find solutions to collective problems.

A second factor of importance in the loss of political power is the EU. European countries increasingly transfer their national power to the supranational level, resulting in less sovereignty and power at the national level (Wallace, 1999), a situation that citizens often evaluate critically (Hooghe & Marks, 2005). A final cause of the loss of political power is globalization (Hay, 2007). This process increases the power of non-democratic organizations such as multinationals (Barber, 2003), and increases interdependency between nation states, giving rise to problems that transcend national boundaries (Scharpf, 2000).

Decline of community

The fourth aspect of societal unease in Figure 2.1 is the decline of community, which points to the perceived decline of shared norms, values and solidarity within a nation. This process takes place outside the political realm and therefore, it is difficult to control or influence.

Many authors discuss the issue of advancing individualization, which is argued to result in a loss of community, or solidarity (e.g. Etzioni, 1993; Putnam, 2000). The decline of community also fits into the literature on social cohesion; the internal connectedness of a social system (e.g. Chan, To, & Chan, 2006). However, instead of social cohesion, which is often conceptualized as a condition of society, not individual perceptions (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990), decline of community points to a perceived decline of social cohesion. Connections with fellow citizens and common norms, values and goals are not self-evident but seem in need of maintenance. Examples are concerns about a lack of decency and aggressiveness in daily interpersonal contact with unknown fellow citizens (Steenvoorden, 2009; Steenvoorden, Schyns, & Van der Meer, 2009; Van Stokkum, 2010).

A central feature of the decline of community is ‘moral aloneness’. Moral aloneness, introduced by Fromm, is not loneliness but a “lack of relatedness to values, symbols, patterns” (Fromm, 1960 [1942]: 15). One needs a sense of relatedness, of belonging to a community, either through religion, ideology or nationalism, for meaning, guidance and direction in life. Conversely, individualization deprives us of that connection. Moral aloneness or loss of community deprives the individual of not only a higher goal in life than oneself, which induces narcissistic motives and attitudes, but also of direction or guidance for which route to follow.

This line of reasoning is also found in other contributions. Verbrugge (2004) stresses that without religion, we have only our own interest to consider, not the common interest. Personal freedom and experiences are becoming more important than the collectivity. Furthermore, it is becoming more difficult to identify people with whom we share our moral values, as in the case of a religious community (ibid). Similarly, Taylor speaks of the ‘malaise of modernity’, which among other things deprives us of “something worth dying for” (Taylor, 1991: 4).

This is exactly what De Tocqueville feared would happen. To him, political equality without religion is a trap. Equality, despite its benefits, has the dangerous propensity to isolate people from one another. It concentrates “every man’s attention upon himself; and it lays open the soul to an inordinate love of material gratification” (Tocqueville, 1998 [1840]: 183). Religion inspires the opposite principles, because it places the object of man’s desires both above and beyond the self. Therefore, it is vital for men to preserve religion as conditions become increasingly equal (ibid).

One of the consequences of a lack of community is concern about incivility and aggressiveness in interpersonal contact with unknown fellow citizens (Kearns & Forrest, 2000). There is less of a need to consider the norms of the community when we doubt whether a random fellow citizen is part of our community or when the rules of that community are no longer clear.

The lack of a normative structure in society can eventually result in anomie (Durkheim, 1951 [1897]). The perception of a decline of community does not tell us whether this is actually taking place, but it can be seen as part of a process that can ultimately lead to anomie, a point at which not only the sense of community but also a consensus on legal versus illegal is gone. I reflect on the difference between societal unease and anomie in section 2.7.

Increasing socioeconomic vulnerability

By socioeconomic vulnerability, I mean the perceived increasing instability of citizens' socioeconomic position. This does not refer to an individual's own vulnerability but instead to a societal development. First, the promise of upward socioeconomic mobility, which became a dominant political goal after World War II, has faded, along with the expectation that our children will rise in socioeconomic terms. Instead, parents who climbed the social ladder now face uncertainty about their own future and that of their children. The acquired socioeconomic position is no longer guaranteed, and socioeconomic guarantees are becoming less evident (Samuelson, 1995). Ehrenreich calls this sentiment the 'fear of falling' (1989). She describes this fear as typical for the middle class, which did not accumulate capital and depends on its knowledge and skills to protect its socioeconomic position. In contrast to capital, these assets can neither be put into savings nor passed to the next generation, thus rendering the middle class position vulnerable.

Globalization is another source of increasing socioeconomic vulnerability. Here a different social group is thought to be at risk: the 'losers of globalization' (Kriesi et al., 2006), also referred to as the 'losers of modernity' (Betz, 1998), who are the low-educated, working-class employees who are most vulnerable to the globalization of the economy and the changing labor market.

A third cause of rising socioeconomic vulnerability is the retrenchment of social services. Since the 1980s and 1990s, reforming the welfare state has been one of the most important political goals (Pierson, 1998; Korpi, 2003). Increasingly, individuals have to manage setbacks and disabilities on their own. Bauman describes this as a shift from security to safety, from social services to surveillance cameras, from collective to individual responsibility to addressing life's adversities. Governments tend to focus

on issues of safety because it is no longer possible to provide extensive social security (Bauman, 2006; 2007). Ehrenberg points to the same trend, namely, a shift from equality of protection to equality of opportunity: no minimal result is guaranteed, only a minimal chance (2010).

2.5 Personal insecurities

The elements of societal unease describe societal processes or aspects that constitute a concern about society. However, the literature discussing these problematic aspects of contemporary society often also points to more individually oriented concerns. Although personal problems or concerns do not fit into societal unease, these personal concerns are very much related to the elements of unease. Therefore, I discuss two concepts to summarize and understand these egotropic concerns: resentment and insecurity of status. These concepts reflect concerns about one's own societal position or status, not that of society itself. These concerns can be placed in cell A of Table 2.1. It is useful to discuss them here for several reasons. First, this discussion adds to the literature overview on the societal changes currently taking place and my attempt to conceptualize the resulting perceptions among citizens that accompany these changes. Second, it further clarifies what I explicitly reject to be part of societal unease. Third, I expect these two perceptions of one's own position to be related to societal unease. To examine that relationship, we need a conceptualization of both resentment and insecurity of status, to which I turn now.

Resentment

The perception of not getting what you deserve, or unjustly having less than others, is what I call resentment. Because it refers to one's own position in society, it is not an element of societal unease. This attitude has received scholarly attention under a range of labels. Blaming society for one's perceived failure to succeed is a central element of both relative deprivation and resentment as defined in the literature. Relative deprivation "is the result of a social comparison which implies that the person making the comparison is not receiving valued resources to which he or she feels entitled" (Grant & Brown, 1995: 195-196). It implies both a perception that an expectation has been violated (the cognitive component) and feelings of injustice, discontent or even outrage about this violation (the affective component). The social comparison can either be made between oneself and other individuals, or between one's own social group and other groups. The former is known as individual or egoistic relative deprivation, the

latter as collective relative deprivation (Grant & Brown, 1995; Van der Bos, Loseman, & Doosje, 2009).

Resentment is similar to relative deprivation, but it seems to be more of a state of mind; it is possible that the affective component is even more important than in the case of relative deprivation. Barbalet (2001) describes resentment as an emotion, namely, the feeling that others gained an unfair advantage. It also relates to a perception of injustice (Meltzer & Musolf, 2002; Webber, 2007). Rawls takes this one step further and thinks of resentment as a consequence of unequal abilities to obtain political power (Rawls, 1971). Meltzer and Musolf provide a good overview of studies on resentment and ressentiment and discuss the differences between these concepts (Meltzer & Musolf, 2002). They argue that resentment is a reaction to affronts or assaults upon one's self. When resentment becomes a prolonged state and is accompanied by a sense of powerlessness to act on the situation, they speak of ressentiment. In their view, both Nietzsche and Scheler describe ressentiment as a characteristic of social groups (i.e., the ordinary people or the bourgeoisie), which stems from discontent with their resources. Both resentment and ressentiment share "a sense of being denied what we believe is our just due" (Meltzer & Musolf, 2002: 245).

Resentment seems to be a likely sentiment among the so-called losers of globalization, who witness employment and upward mobilization evaporating through a displacement of employment and a retrenchment of the welfare state (Betz, 1998; Kriesi et al., 2008). Resentment is also a likely sentiment resulting from the 'entitlements' as described by Samuelson, namely, the entitlement to or guarantee of certain things, such as "secure jobs, rising living standards, enlightened corporations, generous government, high-quality health care, racial harmony, a clean environment, safe cities, satisfying work and personal fulfillment" (Samuelson, 1995: 4). Samuelson argues this entitlement to be the general expectation of Americans, and it comes close to the description of the American dream, or rather, the American fantasy. When these entitlements are not delivered, they create resentment. Finally, it should be noted that resentment is connected with all elements of societal unease except for decline of community. The loss of the promise of progress and the lack of a vision which includes resentful citizens, the lack of political power to deliver entitlements and rising socioeconomic vulnerability, all are connected to resentment.

Insecurity of status

Insecurity of status reflects insecurities about one's identity and social position. These are the consequences of individualization for the individual. To my knowledge, it has not been explicitly proposed in previous studies as such. Because people are increasingly

able to choose among identities and create their own combinations of identification in a search for recognition and respect, this can also increase insecurity. A lack of certainty about one's own social position in times during which 'anything is possible' enhances insecurity of social position. From this, it follows that insecurity of status is related to the decline of community and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability.

Many authors claim there is increasing pressure on the individual to develop their own identities. Different terms are used to describe a similar process, such as reflexive identity (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992), liquid identity (Bauman, 2000) and insecurity of identity (Boutellier, 2002). All of these terms refer to the decreasing importance of social structures and the resulting decreasing influence of those structures on our identity. This necessitates individuals to create their own identity: the questions 'who am I', 'what is important to me', and 'what is my goal in life', constitute a burden typical of our era.

The need to do things oneself, to make the choices and create an identity, results in a narcissistic attitude, an 'every man for himself' culture. This is not to be confused with egoism because it is a necessary focus on the self, not the neglect of others because we do not care (Fromm, 1960 [1942]; Boutellier, 2002; Van Stokkum, 2010). However, this 'identity in the making' does need others for recognition. Taylor states that the search for authenticity and 'self-realization' and the call for recognition of our identity are typical of our times (1991). This need for recognition, which we can also call respect, is not self-evident. The need for respect is thought to be the reason for both short-temperedness and increasing indecency between people (Boutellier 2002; Van Stokkum 2010).

Bauman argues that the overload of freedom typical of our era gives rise to insecurity (1997). He argues that we have exchanged security for freedom, and he contrasts our postmodern society with that of Freud, with flourishing security but a lack of freedom. In *Civilization and its discontents* (Freud, 1961 [1929]), Freud describes discontent that stems from a culture that allows too little freedom, thus restraining individuals' instincts. Strong cultural norms offer clarity in terms of identity and expectations but bind individuals in terms of their wishes and conduct. Currently, we have exchanged our security for freedom, resulting in insecurity (Bauman, 1997). Boutellier agrees with Bauman and argues this insecurity is the main cause for 'het algemene onbehagen', or general unease (Boutellier, 2002). In this study, however, insecurity is seen as reflecting one's personal identity and social context, and therefore, it is not an aspect of societal unease.

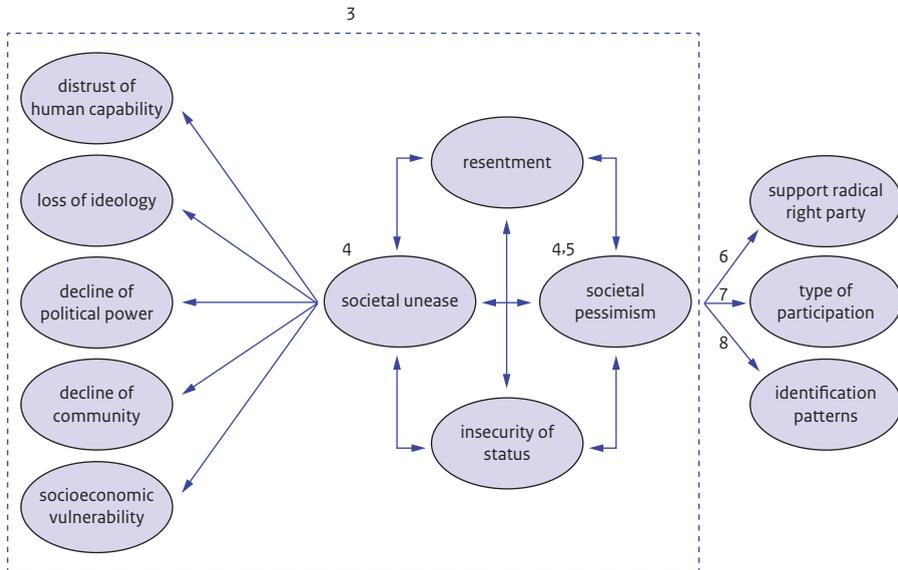
As highlighted above, insecurity of status also reflects insecurity about one's social position. This includes not only one's position in terms of identity and belonging to

social networks or social group but also one's socioeconomic position. Increased social mobility creates not only opportunities but also the possibility of social degradation. The fear of falling (Ehrenreich, 1989), already touched upon in section 2.4, is one of the concerns that exemplify this insecurity. It is different from resentment about one's position because in the former case, the insecurity results from greater social (identifying and socioeconomic) mobility, not the relatively (low) position held. In addition to degradation, ample possibilities for social mobility mean that both success and failure are individualized, thus implying that failure is a person's own fault (Bauman, 2008). Thus, we are not only more likely than before to be concerned about our position, but possible degradation is also harder to swallow because the individual is to blame. In Freud's society, one could not climb the ladder, but that also prevents falling from it.

2.6 Theoretical model

Many concepts have been proposed in this chapter. Figure 2.2 clarifies their interrelationships. Societal unease is composed, as in Figure 2.1, of five elements. Because I theorize that societal pessimism is content free, it is not related to the elements of societal unease. I expect societal unease, societal pessimism, resentment and insecurity of status to all be related. Furthermore, I view them as equals in terms of causality: none of them is a cause or a consequence of the others. On the right side of Figure 2.2, I have included what I theorize and examine in later chapters to be consequences or correlates of societal pessimism: support for Populist Radical Right parties, types of participation and identification patterns. The bold numbers refer to the chapters in which I do so.

This figure is not a reflection of all possible theoretical relationships but only shows those that I examine in this book. Because of data limitations, I examine societal pessimism in Chapters 5-8; however, I expect the same relationships to exist with respect to societal unease. Moreover, more attitudes or types of behavior can be expected to relate to societal unease and societal pessimism. In line with several scholars who state that xenophobia, feelings of a lack of safety and distrust in politics are projections of our deeper anxiety (e.g. Boutellier, 2002; Elchardus & Smits, 2002; Bauman, 2006; Elchardus, 2008), I expect that societal unease and societal pessimism are likely to be projected onto such concrete concerns or discontents.

Figure 2.2 This book's theoretical model

2.7 Comparison of societal unease and similar concepts

Some concepts are similar to societal unease and societal pessimism. Therefore, I will discuss the similarities and differences between societal unease and societal pessimism, versus anomie, anomia, alienation and fear.

Anomie, anomia and alienation

A large literature focuses on three concepts that are similar to societal unease and societal pessimism – namely, anomie, anomia (anomie among individuals), and alienation – that are also related to negative societal changes. However, societal unease and societal pessimism are conceptually different from these concepts. The differences are briefly discussed here, although this does imply making general statements about a comprehensive literature.

Anomie refers to a society's social structure, with two classic authors describing it in somewhat different ways. Durkheim points to a lack of regulation in society caused by rapid social changes, resulting in unlimited expectations and normlessness about what is possible to reach and what is just, leading to suicide in extreme cases (Durkheim, 1951 [1897]). Merton's anomie results from inequality of opportunities in society (1938). Although clear cultural norms exist about which goals to strive for, legitimate means to those goals are not available to everybody, which causes people

to engage in deviant, illegitimate behavior to reach these culturally defined goals. Because the social structure is difficult to measure, anomie is often operationalized by the hypothesized outcomes, such as suicide or homicide rates (Messner & Rosenfeld, 1997; Savolainen, 2000; Pridemore & Kim, 2006). Anomie is different from societal unease and societal pessimism because it is a characteristic of society, not an evaluation of society by its citizens.

Anomia describes the mental state of individuals in an anomic society, but the precise conceptualization of this mental state differs in the literature. DeGrazia argues that Durkheim describes an anomic state of individuals as “a painful uneasiness or anxiety, a feeling of separation from group standards, a feeling of pointlessness or that no certain goals exist” (Dean, 1961: 754), whereas Lukes describes anomic individuals as disillusioned, agitated, and disgusted with life, possibly leading to suicide or homicide (Lukes, 1967). Interpreting Merton’s view, anomie induces five possible reactions among individuals, three of which “tend to manifest in aberrant or criminal behavior” (Smith & Bohm, 2008: 3)⁴. A definition of anomia that combines the Durkheimian and Mertonian concepts is “a loss of cognitive orientation and confidence to act” (Legge, Davidov, & Schmidt, 2008: 252).

In line with the variation in meaning, anomia’s operationalization is also diverse. Most of the time, some type of uncertainty, confusion or anxiety is measured, such as uncertainty about oneself, confusion about which types of behavior are illegal, or an inability to understand the world. Srole’s scale of anomia has been very influential (Srole, 1956) and inspired many similar scales (see Seeman’s overview (1991)). These scales, which measure psychological well-being, tend to be very broad and contain a mix of questions about locus of control, general unhappiness and efficacy. Most contemporary research on anomia measures either the inclination to question the rule of law and confusion about which types of behavior are judged as illegal (Burkatzki, 2008; Zhao & Cao, 2010), or a general uncertainty or inability to understand the world (Thorlindsson & Bernburg, 2004; Legge, Davidov, & Schmidt, 2008; Bjarnason, 2009). Some operationalizations of anomia are more similar to societal unease than others, such as when they take shape in attitudes toward the lack of consensus about right and wrong in society or complexity of the world.

Despite these variations, anomia conceptually always relates to one’s personal state. This distinguishes anomia from societal unease and societal pessimism, which reflect people’s perceptions of the state of society. The concepts of resentment and insecurity

4 The other two reactions are to continue to adhere to culturally prescribed means, with or without adhering to culturally prescribed goals.

of status bear much more similarity to anomia because they are about personal insecurities, not a person's attitude towards society. However, those two concepts focus on personal social and socioeconomic status and feelings of resentment, in contrast to confusion about right and wrong or lack of comprehensibility.

Alienation is similar to anomia and differs in the same ways from societal unease and societal pessimism, resentment and insecurity of status. Introduced by Marx, alienation was originally primarily related to circumstances of labor. The production process and product alienate the worker from himself and restrain him from becoming his full self (Lukes, 1967).⁵ More generally, alienation is the consequence of certain social and historic structures, such as capitalism in the works of Marx and Fromm or bureaucracy in the works of Weber. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the concept received a great deal of attention, and many interpretations of alienation have emerged in both sociology and psychology. Since then, the concept seems to have become unfashionable (Yuill, 2011). Seeman, one of the leading scholars on alienation in its heyday, proposed a typology in which he distinguishes five (1959), and in his later work, six, types of alienation (1975; 1983). Political alienation or powerlessness is the most frequently used and elaborated type of alienation. The other types are meaninglessness, normlessness, self-estrangement, social isolation and cultural estrangement. In general, alienation differs from societal unease and societal pessimism in the same way as anomia, as it focuses on individual experiences that result from the social structure. Political alienation is most similar, but reflects individual powerlessness, whereas societal unease and societal pessimism reflect collective powerlessness. Meaninglessness, social isolation and normlessness are very similar to the measures of anomia; indeed, they could be seen as three types of anomia. They differ from resentment and insecurity of status in the same way as anomia does.

Fear

The sentiment of fear can be described as powerlessness “caused by incapacity to deal with danger or threat” (Barbalet, 2001: 149). In many studies, the label fear is applied to characterize the general sentiment of contemporary society. The sentiments described using the label fear all reflect a feeling of lack of control, indicating that this type of fear is very similar to societal unease and societal pessimism, although I argue the latter

5 Lukes (1967) describes Marx's four types of alienated labor: 1) the relationship between the worker and the product of his labor, which dominates him and distances him from his inner life; 2) the relationship between the worker and the act of production, which is not part of his nature, does not fulfill him and induces a feeling of misery; 3) alienation of man from his own body, mental and human life; and 4) the alienation of man from other men.

two reflect *collective* powerlessness. Accounts of societal changes and fear are integrated in the conceptual model of societal unease, which also underlines the similarity of these concepts. For the sake of completeness, I briefly discuss the literature on fear in contemporary society, and the differences to societal unease and societal pessimism.

Moïsi (2009) calls the West – i.e., Europe and the USA – the continent of fear, whereas Asia is the continent of hope, and the Middle East is dominated by a culture of humiliation. This Western fear is “a reaction to the events and feelings taking place elsewhere” (2009: 90). It is a defensive reflex, inspired by developments such as growing economies elsewhere, economic stagnation in the West, and a lack of control over the future and especially, one’s own destiny. The West is no longer in power, so to speak. Similarly, in his book *Liquid Fear* (2006), Bauman describes the greater sensitivity to threats of unmanageable dangers such as natural or environmental disasters or terrorist attacks. These fears are the result of the discrepancy between the high expectations about human capability and the disappointing progress made in preventing disasters.

A slightly different view of fear is proposed by Glassner (1999) and Furedi (2002 [1997]). Both use the title *Culture of Fear* for their books, both of which discuss a growing fear of unlikely events and a preoccupation with diminishing risks among people in Western countries. Compared to Moïsi and Bauman, who focus on dangers and developments on the national scale, Glassner’s work focuses more on individual fears, such as fear of strangers, of illnesses, rare bacteria or abuse, whereas Furedi seems to combine national and individual fears. Furedi goes one step further when he characterizes the current culture with the ‘precautionary principle’: “the evaluation of everything from the perspective of safety” (2002 [1997]: 4). “The perception of being at risk expresses a pervasive mood in society; one that influences action in general.” (2002 [1997]: 20).

Thus, fear is very similar to societal unease and societal pessimism; it differs mainly with respect to the nature of the sentiment. First, fear suggests a higher level of anxiety than unease or pessimism. Therefore, unease and pessimism differ from fear in the theorized emotional state of the people to whom they apply. Second, fear is generally more directed in nature, with a clear object that we are fearing (Wilkinson, 1999), whereas societal unease and societal pessimism are more diffuse and vague as to what the pessimism or unease is about. On the one hand, some of the dangers discussed in the fear literature clearly differ from processes that are theorized here to constitute societal unease, such as the preoccupation with disorders, resistant bacteria, or nuclear waste. On the other hand, the term fear is sometimes used interchangeably with insecurity, disorientation and fragility, e.g., by Moïsi (2009) and Bauman (2006).

In those cases, societal unease or societal pessimism actually seem to be better labels for the sentiment at hand.

2.8 Summary

In this chapter, I proposed societal unease and societal pessimism as two conceptualizations of the concern about society. Societal unease reflects the concern about the state of society in contemporary developed liberal democracies, whereas societal pessimism is a concern about the decline of society, which is not conceptually specified either in its object or in its time or place of occurrence. Thus, conceptually, societal unease is a specification of current-day societal pessimism. I have proposed a definition of societal unease as a latent concern, which consists of the perceived deterioration of five fundamental aspects of society: distrust in human capability, loss of ideology, decline of political power, decline of community and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability. These five elements form the conceptual model of societal unease, which I designed based on a literature study.

I also discussed two types of concepts that I expect to be related to a concern about the state of society, namely, resentment (the perception of not getting what you deserve, or unjustly having less than others) and insecurity of status (insecurities about identity and a lack of certainty about one's own social position). Furthermore, I presented a theoretical model that shows not only the interrelatedness of societal unease, societal pessimism, resentment and insecurity of status but also the expectation that societal pessimism is related to Populist Radical Right voting, the type of participation in which people engage in and multiple identification. More generally, I expect societal unease and societal pessimism to be projected onto concerns or discontents that are more concrete, such as xenophobia or feelings of unsafety.

Furthermore, I discussed the similarities and differences between societal unease and societal pessimism on the one hand, and the established concepts of anomie, anomia, alienation and fear on the other. Societal unease and societal pessimism, which are individual perceptions of the state of society, differ from anomie because the latter is a characteristic of the structure of society; they differ from anomia and alienation because the latter two concepts relate to the individual (mental) state; and they differ from fear because that is a more aggravated state, although the use of this term in the literature is actually very similar to societal unease and societal pessimism.

In the following chapters, I will continue by conducting an empirical examination of the nature of societal unease and societal pessimism. In Chapter 3, I test the theoretical assumptions of this chapter, most importantly the empirical validity of societal unease and societal pessimism, and their relation to other concepts and characteristics.

In Chapter 4, I further explore the nature of societal pessimism and societal unease by performing a content analysis of an open-ended Dutch survey question about why people think their country is heading in the wrong direction.

CHAPTER 3

The empirical validity of societal unease and societal pessimism¹

3.1 Theoretical considerations put to the test

In the previous chapter, I proposed definitions of societal unease and societal pessimism, a conceptual model of societal unease, and a theoretical model that shows the relationships among societal unease, societal pessimism, resentment, and a third proposed concept, insecurity of status. In this chapter, I will seek to validate these theoretical propositions. First, I examine the empirical validity of the conceptual model of societal unease. Is it indeed the case that concerns about the distrust of human capability, the loss of ideology, the decline of political power, the decline of community, and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability contribute to a latent attitude that can be labeled societal unease? And is it the case that concerns about other aspects of society not fit into this scale?

Second, it is important to examine the measurement validity of societal unease and societal pessimism (Adcock, 2001). As a first step, I investigate whether the theoretical model of Figure 2.2 holds empirically, that is, whether we can distinguish societal unease and societal pessimism from resentment and insecurity of status. And to what extent are these concepts interrelated? Societal unease and societal pessimism should show a high association, because they are two conceptual variants of the same phenomenon. This would result in convergent validity. Resentment and insecurity of status are also likely to be considerably correlated, because they are individually oriented sentiments that relate to the same problematic processes in contemporary Western society.

Next, I examine how societal unease and societal pessimism are related to happiness and anomia. Research suggests that concerns about the state of society are empirically different from happiness or life satisfaction (Eckersley, 2000; Elchardus & Smits, 2002;

¹ A summary of this chapter and Chapter 2 has been published in the following article: Steenvoorden, E.H. (2015) A General Discontent Disentangled: A Conceptual and Empirical Framework for Societal Unease, *Social Indicators Research*, 124(1): 85-110.

Elchardus & Smits, 2007; Steenvoorden, 2009; Eckersley, 2013). Therefore, I expect a weak relationship between both societal unease and societal pessimism, and happiness, which would establish discriminant validity. Furthermore, in section 2.6, I theorized that societal unease and societal pessimism are conceptually different from anomia. However, these are similar concepts, and I therefore expect them to be related. Given that Keyes (1998) found a moderate correlation (.50) between anomia and societal actualization (which can be described as the opposite of societal pessimism, see section 2.2), societal unease and societal pessimism also should be moderately related to anomia.

Fourth, as another check of measurement validity, I examine whether there is empirical support for the operationalization of societal unease in subgroups of society. To this end, I focus on educational groups. Education has a considerable effect on a wide range of attitudes (e.g. Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Catterberg & Moreno, 2006; Dekker & Van der Meer, 2009); moreover, some even argue that educational level has become a central cleavage in Western countries (Stubager, 2010; Bovens & Wille, 2011). Therefore, to compose the same scale of societal unease with a good fit in different educational groups, can be seen as a least likely case.

Finally, I seek to answer the question of who is uneasy about society by examining demographic, attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of societally uneasy citizens. To this end, I present regression analyses to reveal which characteristics are related to societal unease.

Below, I start by describing the data and operationalizations of the concepts of Chapter 2, after which I discuss the method used. The first result section, Results I, presents the analyses that examine the measurement validity of societal unease and societal pessimism. Results II shows the characteristics that relate to societal unease, followed by a concluding section.

3.2 Data and operationalizations

Data

To test all of the concepts and their interrelations, along with their relations to other established concepts, I need a very rich data set. All international surveys tend to focus on specific themes, and as far as I know, none of them include attitudes related to all aspects of social unease – let alone the other concepts – in a satisfactory manner. Therefore, several items were developed and added to the Citizens' Outlooks Barometer (COB), a Dutch survey covering a wide range of social and political attitudes. In addition, items on all other concepts of relevance here are included in this survey, which has been conducted on a quarterly basis in the Netherlands since 2008 among

a sample of a representative panel generated by random-digit dialing. Respondents do not receive payment for filling in the questionnaire nor for being on the panel. Each quarter, a random sample of panel members is telephoned and invited to participate, resulting in approximately 1,000 respondents for each survey (people who stay in the panel can be approached again only after two years). Potential respondents can choose between an Internet and a postal questionnaire. The new questions were added to the January 2012 COB survey, which was completed by 1,137 respondents.

Operationalizations

The operationalizations of the five elements of societal unease and all of the other central concepts are shown in Table 3.1. For societal unease, five of the eight items are new and developed specifically for its measurement. *Distrust in human capability*, which is conceptualized as declining confidence in the human ability to improve our conditions, is measured with two items: one on the human ability to solve problems and one on the risks of technological innovation. *Loss of ideology*, which refers to the loss of a perspective on a world significantly better than the current one and a way to reach that different world, is operationalized as an absence of vision among political parties. *Decline of political power*, or the national government's diminishing ability to change things for the better, is measured by asking whether Dutch politicians have handed over too much power to Europe and whether Dutch politicians have leverage in matters important to citizens. *Decline of community*, or the perceived decline of cohesion and shared norms and values within the nation, is measured using two existing items. One item measures solidarity, namely, to what extent it is 'every man for himself'. A second indicator reflects the perception of interpersonal respect. *Increasing socioeconomic vulnerability*, the instability of people's socioeconomic position, is operationalized with one existing item about attention to people who are less affluent. This is mainly a measure of the consequential idea that society should protect those in a weak socioeconomic position, instead of an increasing likelihood of people ending up in that position. However, this element relates to one of the central reasons for increasing vulnerability, namely, the retrenchment of the welfare state. Therefore, it is considered a useful operationalization.

From the operationalization of the five elements of societal unease follows that only three are measured with two items, whereas two are measured with one item. The correlations of these sets of items on distrust in human capability, decline of political power and decline of community, are .134, .595 and .586, respectively.² This means that

2 All of the correlations mentioned in this section are polychoric correlations, because the items are scaled from 1 to 3.

the two items on distrust in human capability do not measure one concept and will therefore be included in the analyses as separate items. The other correlations between the eight items on societal unease range from .179 (item 2 and 8) to .385 (item 6 and 8).

Societal pessimism is operationalized with three items: one about the direction in which the country is heading, one about the future of the world, and one about whether for most people, life is getting worse instead of better. The first two items are more general in nature, whereas the third primarily relates to the fifth item of societal unease: the socioeconomic vulnerability of the general population. The last item is very similar to measures used by scholars who study concepts which I labeled societal optimism in Chapter 2 (section 2.3). Uslaner measures (a lack of) optimism with an item 'the lot of the average person is getting worse' (Uslaner, 2002; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). Keyes measures social actualization with items such as 'the world is becoming a better place for everyone' (Keyes, 1998; Keyes & Shapiro, 2004). The correlations between these items are .664 (items 9 and 10), .514 (items 9 and 11), and .544 (items 10 and 11).

Resentment is measured with items about not getting from the government what you deserve and thinking that other groups get more than they should at your expense (new item) ($r=.530$). *Insecurity of status* is constituted by the extent to which people feel they should be careful to be respected (new item) and the perception of not having a grip on one's own future ($r=.528$). *Happiness* is measured with an item on how happy people consider themselves. *Anomia* is operationalized with an item about how insecure people are about what is right and what is wrong.

All indicators used are Likert-scale statements with which respondents can agree on a scale from 1 (fully disagree) to 5 (fully agree). Although the option 'I don't know' is available, such answers are treated as missing values. In this chapter, all of the analyses are performed with listwise deletion. Except for happiness and anomia and item 11, all of the items have been coded in the same direction and on a 1-3 scale, where 1 reflects a low and 3 reflects a high level of discontent or concern.³ There are many other variables considered in the explorative analyses, of which the exact item wordings and scales can be found in Table A1 of Appendix A. Items are recoded to 1-3 as described above when examining the fit of alternative attitudes in the societal unease scale in Table 3.4. All of the items in the regression analyses are recoded in dummy variables (Table 3.10).

3 This scale reduction is important because the 1 category represents only a very small percentage of the respondents in most items and cannot be analyzed as such. Merging categories 1 and 2 is therefore necessary. To secure symmetry, categories 4 and 5 are also merged.

Table 3.1 Variables in the analyses by concept^a

Concept	Operationalization (with variable no.)	Missing	Mean	SD
Societal unease				
Distrust in human capability	1 As a society we are improving our ability to solve big problems (rev.)	69	2.16	0.72
	2 The risks of technological innovation are underestimated	87	2.28	0.76
Loss of ideology	3 Dutch politics lacks a vision of where the country should be heading	62	2.47	0.70
Decline of political power	4 Dutch politicians have given too much power to Europe	86	2.29	0.77
	5 Dutch politicians have a decreasing say in matters important to citizens	114	2.11	0.79
Decline of community	6 The respect with which people in our country treat each other is decreasing	14	2.67	0.60
	7 The 'every man for himself' mentality is growing	22	2.77	0.52
Increased socioeconomic vulnerability	8 In our country there is not enough attention to people who are less affluent	23	2.39	0.79
Societal pessimism	9 Considering the state of things, it is difficult to be hopeful about the future of the world	27	2.31	0.79
	10 For most people in the Netherlands, life is getting worse rather than better	24	2.59	0.67
	11 Do you consider the Netherlands to be heading in the wrong or in the right direction? (rev.) ^b	138	2.95	0.68
Resentment	12 The government does not do enough for people like me	39	2.12	0.76
	13 I feel some groups are favored at the expense of people like me	47	1.99	0.85
Insecurity of status	14 I feel I have little grip on my own future	19	1.90	0.84
	15 I feel I have to be careful to receive the respect I deserve	22	1.61	0.77
Anomia	17 There are so many opinions on right and wrong that sometimes one does not know where one stands ^c	44	2.37	0.77
Happiness	16 To what extent do you consider yourself a happy person? ^c	13	3.82	0.71

Source: Citizens' Outlooks Barometer (COB) 2012-1.

a Items are recoded to 1-3 scale

b This item is measured on a 1-4 scale from clearly the wrong direction to clearly the right direction, without a middle position. Therefore, this item is used with its original scale.

c Item is measured on a 1-5 scale

3.3 Method and measurement model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) can be used to examine whether the selected indicators measure a single latent concept, which is a suitable method to examine the presence of societal unease. It is also the best method to establish whether the theoretical model holds empirically, because one can prescribe items to load on certain factors and not on others. The analyses are performed using Mplus 7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). Unlike principal component analysis (PCA) and EFA (exploratory factor analysis), with CFA, the indicators do not necessarily load on all indicators, resulting in more parsimonious and deductive modeling (Brown, 2006). Furthermore, with CFA, one can distinguish between first- and second-order dimensions. Alternative types of analysis are unsuitable for various reasons. Reliability analysis is sensitive to the number of items included, and both reliability analysis and PCA assume items are parallel, i.e., that they have the same frequency distribution and variances (Van Schuur 2003), which is not the case here. Mokken analysis is unsuitable because it assumes a theoretical hierarchy between the attitudes. The CFA analyses are performed with the WLSMV estimator, which is developed for CFA with categorical data and a special feature of Mplus. All of the presented models (Figure 3.1 to Figure 3.3 and Table 3.5) are overidentified and assume that measurement errors are unrelated. In the presentation, standardized loadings are shown (when unstandardized loadings are significant at $p < 0.001$).

Because the modeling of societal unease is more complex than the other models, I take some room here to describe the procedure followed. A latent factor underlying the items on the five elements of societal unease can take shape in two ways empirically. If the 8 items that correspond to the five elements of societal unease all load on a single factor, this would indicate that to some extent, all of the items measure the same concept. If instead, the items of the five elements relate to five different factors, but these factors load on a single factor, societal unease is a latent factor shared by the five elements. In the former scenario, there would be a first-order model of societal unease, in the second scenario, there would be a second-order model. These two scenarios result in the two possible measurement models shown in Figure 3.1a and 3.1b.

To measure societal unease as a second-order factor, I would ideally measure all of the elements of societal unease as factors (latent concepts) and measure societal unease as a second-order factor underlying them. This turns out to be possible for only two elements, decline of political power and decline of community, for which we have two items each with sufficiently high correlations as discussed above. Because the correlation between the two items on distrust in human capability is only .134, these

items are included in the model as two single indicators (Figure 3.1b). The elements that are measured with only one item are not modeled as latent concepts, which leaves us with two elements of societal unease measured as latents. This means that the resulting measurement model is a partly second-order model.

Figure 3.1a 1st order measurement model of societal unease

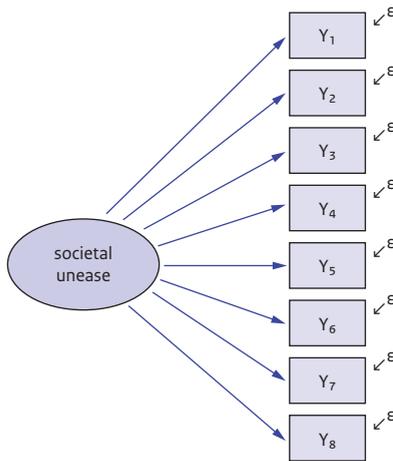
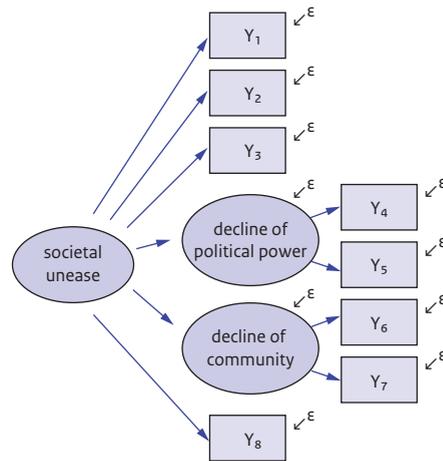


Figure 3.1b 2nd order measurement model of societal unease



3.4 Results I

Testing the theoretical model of societal unease

Figure 3.2 presents the results of the first-order CFA model. The fit of a CFA model is primarily examined by the χ^2 -test, which should not achieve significance when the data closely fit the model. However, because this is a very strict test, the literature advises that one first considers goodness-of-fit indices such as the RMSEA, CFI and TLI, which all weight both model fit and parsimony in their own way. Generally, a RMSEA of < 0.05 is regarded a good fit and < 0.08 as a mediocre fit, whereas both the CFI and TLI should reach 0.95 (Brown, 2006; Kline, 2010; Byrne, 2012). If we look at Figure 3.2, we see that the first-order model of societal unease shows a poor fit, because the RMSEA is 0.101 and the CFI and TLI are far below the critical 0.95. It can be concluded that the first-order model of societal unease does not fit the data and indicates that there is no first-order factor of societal unease.

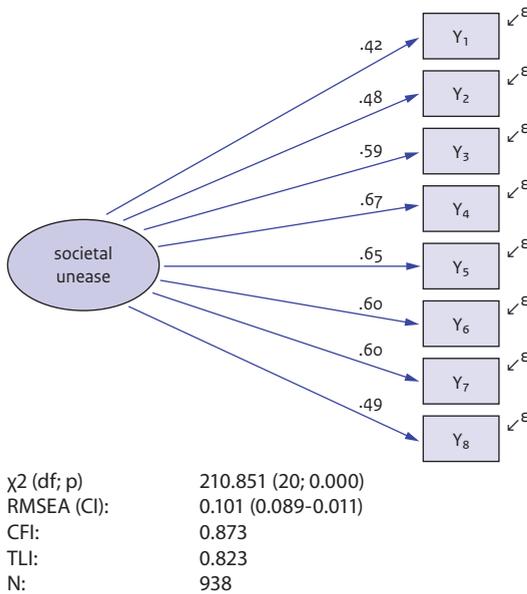
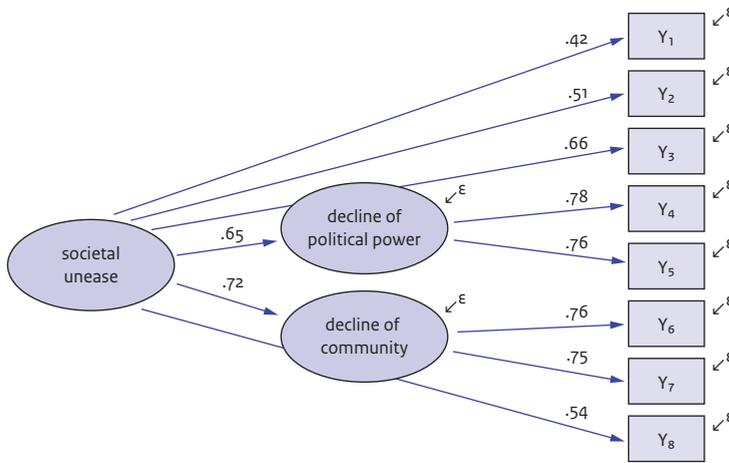
Figure 3.2 First-order CFA model of societal unease

Figure 3.3 presents the results of the second-order CFA, which performs well in contrast to the first-order model. The RMSEA is below 0.05 and the CFI and TLI also pass the cutoff value of 0.95.⁴ Both factors, i.e., decline of political power and decline of community, along with indicators 1, 2, 3 and 8, prove to have reasonable loadings that range from .45 to .72. Therefore, the second-order model supports the conceptualization of societal unease. We can say that attitudes on all five elements that I proposed in Chapter 2 to constitute societal unease indeed load on a single factor, which can be labeled societal unease. The only loading below 0.5 belongs to item 1 (society's ability to solve problems). Without this item, the model further improves to an RMSEA of 0.033 and a CFI and TLI of 0.991 and 0.984, respectively. However, because omitting item 1 means a violation of the theoretical model, and considering that the second-order model of Figure 3.3 works well, retaining the item is preferable.

4 There are two modification indices above 10, namely 10.5 and 11.4, but because they are both theoretically meaningless and low (Byrne, 2012: 87), this also indicates a good model.

Figure 3.3 Second-order CFA model of societal unease

χ^2 (df; p)	56.847 (18; 0.000)
RMSEA (CI):	0.048 (0.034-0.062)
CFI:	0.974
TLI:	0.960
N:	938

I assume societal unease to be a latent attitude about five fundamental aspects of society, which all share a sense of unmanageable deterioration and collective powerlessness. Furthermore, I argue that other, more concrete attitudes do not fit into this concept. This assumption should be rejected if indicators about other public issues fit into the scale of societal unease. Therefore, the second-order model (from Figure 3.2) has been extended with various items consecutively, covering a diverse range of attitudes: anomia, immigration, sentences, government responsibilities, income differences, EU membership and the character of the country. The results are presented in Table 3.2. The RMSEA increases compared to the one in Figure 3.3 (0.048) to a minimum 0.069 and a maximum of 0.096. This means that all of the indicators weaken the model of societal unease from a good fit (below 0.05) to a weak (0.05 - 0.08) or a bad fit (>0.08). This strengthens the conceptualization of societal unease because it proves not to be a general view about society, incorporating all aspects of society, but a latent attitude consisting of the five theorized aspects of society.

Table 3.2 Possible model extensions of societal unease^a

Indicator	RSMEA
There are so many opinions on right and wrong that sometimes one does not know where one stands (anomia)	0.069
People in our country should show more responsibility and rely less on social security	0.070
The difference between the poor and the rich in the Netherlands has become too big	0.075 ^b
Sentences in the Netherlands are generally too lenient	0.079
The Netherlands would be a more appealing country if it had fewer immigrants	0.087
The replacement of the gulden by the euro is a bad thing	0.088
The Netherlands is losing too much of its character through immigration and open borders	0.094
Dutch membership in the EU is a good thing (rev.)	0.096

a All items have the same original scale (1-5) as the societal unease items and are rescaled here to 1-3.

b Including this item in the model in a factor with item 8 lowers the RMSEA to 0.050, i.e., a well-functioning model. However, the meaning of the latent increasing socioeconomic vulnerability would change to growing increasing socioeconomic inequality, and this operationalization does not fit the conceptual model.

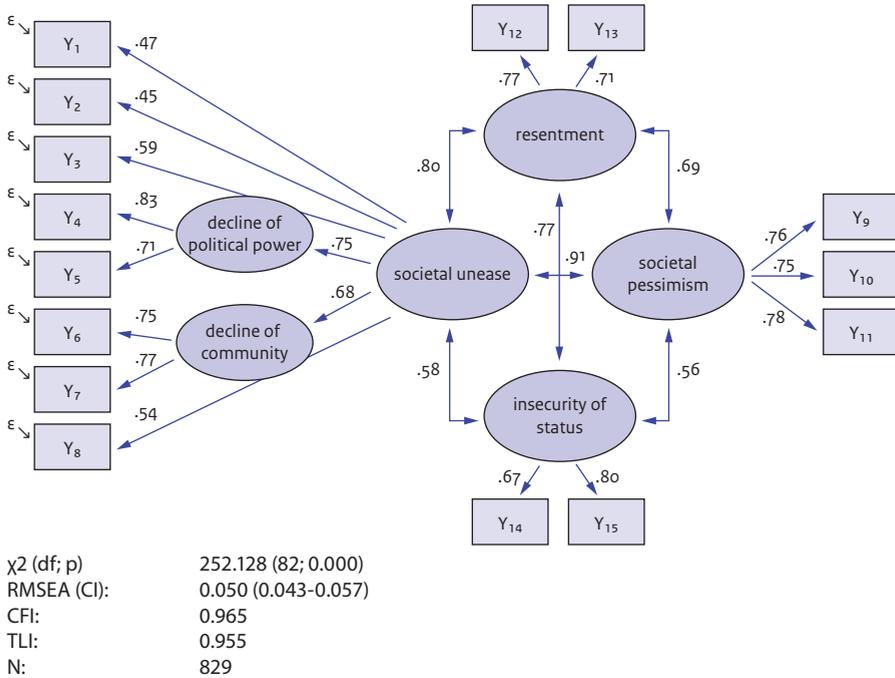
Model fit theoretical model

Chapter 2 also proposes societal pessimism and argues that resentment and insecurity of status are attitudes about one's personal situation that result from the same social issues as societal unease and social pessimism. Thus, I argue that these four are related but different concepts. To conduct a CFA analysis, one needs at least 4 items to reach an overidentified model, which is needed to examine model fit. Because I only have three (societal pessimism) or two items (resentment and insecurity of status), I cannot test the empirical validity of these concepts as I did for societal unease. Instead, I tested CFA models with resentment, insecurity of status and societal pessimism in sets of 2. In all variants, this yields well-working models, with RSMEAs of 0.027 (insecurity of status and societal pessimism), 0.045 (insecurity of status and resentment) and 0.050 (resentment and societal pessimism). As mentioned above, the items of these three factors also correlate with $r > .5$, which supports the operationalization of these concepts.

To assess the theoretical model of Chapter 2, societal unease, societal pessimism, resentment and insecurity of status are all included in a CFA model, which is shown in Figure 3.4. It shows good fit, with an RMSEA of 0.050 and a CFI and TLI above 0.95. This validates the theoretical model and means that similar sentiments can be separated in the four concepts as suggested. There are fourteen modification indices (M.I.'s) above 10 (ranging from 10.122 to 32.782) that present alternative BY statements, i.e., not modeled factor loadings. This is not surprising because these are all theoretically

related concepts and therefore, it can be expected that operationalizations of one factor have an association with another factor. Many of these M.I.'s involve items of societal unease which also relate to societal pessimism and vice versa.

Figure 3.4 CFA of theoretical model



In addition to the model fit, Figure 3.4 shows the correlations between factors. First, the correlation between societal unease and societal pessimism is very high ($r=.91$). I presented them in Chapter 2 as a Western and a universal conceptualization of the concern about society. One would expect two variants of the same phenomenon to be closely related, which indeed is supported by this correlation. It can be concluded that to a very large extent, these two factors measure the same phenomenon. This validates both concepts.

Table 3.3 Correlations between societal unease and operationalizations of societal pessimism (chapters)

Societal pessimism	<i>r</i>
1) 3 items (3): Hard to be hopeful about the future of the world For most people life is getting worse Society heading in right or wrong direction	.91
2) 2 items (7,8): Hard to be hopeful about the future of the world For most people life is getting worse	.79
3) 1 item (5,6): Society is heading in right or wrong direction	.77
4) 2 items (-) Hard to be hopeful about the future of the world Society heading in right or wrong direction	.99

Because subsequent chapters use various operationalizations of societal pessimism, it is useful to examine how these various operationalizations differ from one another. Table 3.3 shows the correlation between societal unease and societal pessimism for various operationalizations of the latter. The chapters that use these operationalizations are placed in brackets. Each operationalization of societal pessimism correlates strongly with societal unease. Operationalization no. 1 (with three items) correlates with .91, as we already know from Figure 3.3. If 2 items are used, ‘hard to be hopeful about the future of the world’ and ‘for most people life is getting worse’, the correlation is lower but still high, at .79. Taking only one item, on the direction the country is heading, still leaves us with a correlation of .78. Finally, operationalization no. 4, with ‘hard to be hopeful about the future of the world’ and ‘wrong direction’, yields a stunning correlation with societal unease of .99. This means that leaving out the item ‘for most people life is getting worse’ increases the correlation, which is not surprising because that item is clearly socioeconomically driven and therefore is less broad than the other two. Apparently, societal pessimism measured as such is empirically the *same* as societal unease. This is remarkable, because societal unease is a multifaceted attitude, measured with eight quite distinct items, whereas the operationalization of societal pessimism consists of two very general items about the direction of society and the world. This indicates that the five aspects that constitute societal unease also constitute societal pessimism measured as a broad concern about society, and that there are no other important aspects of society that contribute to societal pessimism beyond those five, at least, in the Netherlands in January 2012. It is safe to conclude that notwithstanding the differences between these operationalizations of societal pessimism, they are all

(very) highly correlated to societal unease. This justifies the use of these different operationalizations of societal pessimism as good proxies for the same phenomenon.

Moving to the other correlations in Figure 3.4, insecurity of status shows a high (.58) and resentment a very high (.80) correlation with societal unease. This pattern also holds for societal pessimism, although the gap between insecurity of status (.56) and resentment (.69) is smaller here. This latter finding indicates that the societal unease scale is more distinctive than the societal pessimism one, which is not surprising, because the former is measured with more items. The high correlations between the four concepts, combined with the good model fit, underline the theoretical assumptions of Chapter 2. The manner in which one views society is highly related to resentment and insecurity of status, which reflect evaluations of one's own position in society. However, it is theoretically useful and empirically valid to treat these concepts separately.

Correlations with happiness and anomia

To examine the relationship of societal unease and societal pessimism with happiness and anomia, I calculated bivariate correlations, as shown in Table 3.4. For reasons of completeness, insecurity of status and resentment are included. The correlations show small deviances from those in Figure 3.4 because of differences in N. The correlation between happiness and societal unease is $-.23$, and the correlation between societal pessimism and happiness is similar at $-.33$. This weak and negative correlation is in line with earlier studies. Indeed, concern about society is not strongly related to happiness. This underlines the fact that private and public contentment are two distinct phenomena.

Table 3.4 Correlations between concepts^a

	societal unease	societal pessimism	insecurity of status	resentment	happiness
societal pessimism	.90				
insecurity of status	.58	.58			
resentment	.80	.68	.72		
happiness	-.23	-.31	-.47	-.29	
anomia	.54	.41	.37	.41	-.11

a Polychoric correlations with happiness and anomia

Anomia shows a correlation of .54 and .41 with societal unease and societal pessimism respectively, which is both considerable and similar to the finding of Keyes (1998) who looked at social actualization. This implies that societal unease and anomia share

a common ground, people who are uneasy about society are also more likely to be anomic. However, this finding also shows a clear empirical difference between those two concepts, which underlines the theoretical assumptions made.

Happiness correlates highest with insecurity of status, namely, $-.47$. This seems logical because the latter seems the closest to personal well-being. Interestingly, resentment shows only weak correlation with happiness ($.29$), which underlines that resentment is quite publicly oriented and should not be equalized to personality or personal well-being. Anomia is related to resentment and insecurity of status, with $r = .41$ and $r = .37$. Interestingly, happiness and anomia have the lowest correlation of all: $-.11$. This is striking, because anomia conceptually refers to the individual mental state, and I would have expected anomia and happiness to show more of an association.

Societal unease and societal pessimism in separate educational groups

To further validate the conceptualization of societal unease, I investigate whether the factor of societal unease also exists among subgroups in society, namely, educational groups (as mentioned above, because societal pessimism is operationalized with only 3 items, model fit can neither be measured nor compared between groups). To this end, the second-order CFA model of Figure 3.3 is performed for low-, medium- and high-educated groups separately. If the models per group show similar model fit and loading patterns, this indicates that the same scale of societal unease can be found in the attitudes of the three educational groups. This is the first step in examining invariance of measurement models (Brown 2006; Byrne 2011).

From Table 3.5 it follows that although there is model fit in all groups, it ranges from weak among the low educated to high among the medium and high educated. The RMSEA is similar for the high (0.041) and the medium educated (0.049), but is considerably lower in the low-educated group (0.075). The CFI and TLI do not cross the cut off value of 0.95 in the low-educated group, whereas they do in the other two groups. Moreover, the χ^2 -test is not significant in the high-educated group (which only rarely happens in CFA and indicates a very good model fit), and its p-value is relatively high ($p = 0.0255$) in the medium-educated group. However, the model of the low-educated group shows a χ^2 -test significant at $p < 0.0001$. All of these results indicate that the model of societal unease fits the attitudes of the medium and high educated better than those of the low educated; the commonality between the five aspects of societal unease is present to a larger extent among the higher educated.

However, two aspects of the models contradict this conclusion. First, the factor loadings are not lower in the low-educated group, in many cases, they are even a bit higher. Generally, higher factor loadings are accompanied by better fit indices. An explanation for this contradictory finding can be that the variances of the items used are considerably smaller in the low-educated group. Small variances leave less

possibility for modeling the patterns of the variances, which is what CFA does. Second, the correlations between items are higher among the low educated. There are warnings in the literature that all things being equal, higher correlations give higher power to reject a model (Sarlis, Satorra, & Van der Veld, William M., 2009). Overall, definitive conclusions about differences in model fit cannot be drawn. The model of societal unease shows good fit among the medium and high educated. For the low educated this seems less likely to be the case, but the results are ambiguous.

Table 3.5 CFA model of societal unease for educational groups

	Educational level		
	low	medium	high
χ^2 (df)	51.478 (18)	31.453 (18)	27.065 (18)
P	0.0000	0.0255	0.0778
RMSEA	0.075	0.049	0.041
CI RMSEA	0.051-0.100	0.017-0.078	0.000-0.071
CFI	0.935	0.974	0.971
TLI	0.899	0.959	0.955
Loadings ^b			
Decline of political power			
4 (Power to EU)	0.808	0.790	0.618
5 (No power over important matters)	0.684	0.708	0.902
Decline of community			
6 (Decreasing respect)	0.828	0.715	0.705
7 (Every man for himself)	0.731	0.826	0.720
Societal unease			
1 (Society can solve problems)	0.408	0.522	0.514
2 (Risks of technology)	0.523	0.584	0.345
3 (Vision of political parties)	0.589	0.740	0.679
Decline of political power	0.907	0.580	0.691
Decline of community	0.734	0.731	0.407
8 (Support for disadvantaged)	0.593	0.463	0.487
N	330	306	302

If we look at the factor loadings, they are in all groups at least .3 (which is seen as the minimum for factor loadings (Kline, 2010; Liu, Chua, & Stahl, 2010)) and therefore, all of the items fit into a scale of societal unease in all groups, which means that the same items form a (partly) second-order factor of societal unease in all groups. However,

clear differences do appear when we compare the factor-loadings patterns between the groups. The indicator of political power to the EU (item 4) is more important than the other indicator of the decline of political power (indicator 5 on the extent to which politicians have a say in important matters) among the low educated, whereas in the high-educated group it is the other way around. Indicator 1 (society's ability to solve problems) is less important for the scale of societal unease in the low-educated group (.408) than in the other two groups, whereas the opposite is true for indicator 2 (risks of technological innovations are underestimated), which loads relatively low in the high-educated group. These differences in factor loading patterns mean that the factor of societal unease differs between educational groups in terms of which aspects have the most influence. This means that the factor of societal unease has a different meaning across groups.

The differences in model fit, factor loading size and patterns among educational groups contraindicate further invariance evaluation (Brown 2006).⁵ However, a clear conclusion about whether societal unease can be validated among educational groups cannot easily be drawn, because the findings leave an ambiguous picture. The differences in the factor loading patterns show a difference in the meaning of the factor across groups. However, if we consider the large differences among educational groups in social attitudes, it is remarkable not only that the scale works in all groups, albeit with some ambiguous model fit results in the low-educated group, but also that all of the items have reasonable loadings. Another question is whether the level of societal unease is different across educational groups, and other types of groups, for that matter. It is to this question that I now turn.

3.5 Results II

Having established a scale of societal unease enables me to explore which citizens are most likely to be societally uneasy. With OLS regression analyses on the factor of societal unease (of Figure 3.2), in Table 3.6 I investigate which characteristics describe societally uneasy citizens. These regressions are solely explorative and do not make any causal assumptions because obviously many characteristics, such as attitudes, media usage, and voting, cannot be seen as (exogenous) causes of societal unease. To simplify

5 To be sure, configural invariance was tested by comparing a model with all parameters freely estimated and a model with factor loadings constraint equal. This test is performed with freely estimated thresholds across groups and scale and factor means constraint to 1 respectively 0, as demanded for testing configural invariance with ordinal data. The difference test between the model with no constraints and the model with loadings assumed to be equal shows a χ^2 difference of 28.105 (df=12), significant at 0.01, which proves that factor loadings are significantly different across groups.

comparisons between independent variables, all of the variables are dichotomized, and only significant coefficients are presented. Appendix Table A1 shows the item wordings and their original scales.

Model 1 includes the standard demographic characteristics: educational level, gender, age and income level. It shows that educational level has a negative effect on societal unease: the low educated are significantly more likely, and the higher education are less likely, than the medium group to be uneasy. Young people (aged 18-34) are less likely to be uneasy than older groups and people with a low income level have a higher chance on uneasiness about society, while the opposite goes for the high income group. There is no significant difference between men and women. In model 2, three items on personal situation are included, namely, satisfaction with financial situation, health, and daily activity, along with three items on Table 3.6: Multiple OLS regression analyses of societal unease with demographic, attitudinal and behavioral characteristics^a psychological well-being (happiness, self-esteem and external locus of control). Only satisfaction with financial situation and an external locus of control, i.e., thinking you have little control over what happens to you, are significant, with similar coefficient sizes (-0.34 and 0.29). Model 3 shows that those who volunteer are significantly less likely to be societally uneasy, whereas supporting people outside your household is not related to societal unease. Model 4 focuses on media usage and shows that whereas Internet use is not related to societal unease, reading tabloids is positively and a quality newspaper is negatively related to being uneasy about society.

Model 5 includes insecurity of status, resentment, anomia, and seven items on policy issues. The coefficients of resentment and differences between poor and rich being too large are twice the size of the other attitudes (on welfare, the euro, the character of the country and the EU). Insecurity of status is not significant when controlling for the other variables. Further analysis (not presented) shows that the effect of insecurity of status already fails to reach significance when it is modeled with resentment only. Apparently, all of the shared variance of insecurity of status and societal unease overlaps with resentment. The other attitudes in model 5 are all significant except for the attitudes on immigrants and the one on sentences. Further analyses show that these two attitudes are significant and of equal size when resentment, the introduction of the euro or the changing character of the country are omitted from the regression. Theoretically, it is likely that mediation is taking place between resentment and attitudes of nostalgia (longing back to pre-euro and pre immigration times, when 'our country was still our country'), and attitudes on immigration and sentences. Chapter 6, which studies the effect of societal pessimism on Populist Radical Right voting, further disentangles this mediation.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8		
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)	
Social attitudes																	
insecurity of status																	
resentment									0.42	(.12)					0.53	(.14)	
anomia									0.19	(.05)					0.18	(.05)	
people should rely less on welfare									-0.14	(.04)							
difference between rich and poor									0.39	(.06)					0.34	(.07)	
sentences too lenient																	
less immigrants would be appealing																	
introducing the euro a bad thing									0.26	(.06)					0.22	(.06)	
country is losing its character									0.22	(.06)					0.27	(.06)	
membership EU good thing									-0.21	(.05)					-0.14	(.06)	
Political and economic attitudes																	
satisfaction with national economy															-0.13	(.06)	
trust in parliament															-0.25	(.06)	
politics too complicated for me																	
people like me have no influence																	
Vote intention																	
SP (ref= vote PvdA)															0.17	(.09)	
D66/GL															-0.21	(.09)	
CU/SGP																	
CDA															-0.45	(.12)	
VVD															-0.30	(.09)	
PVV															0.28	(.11)	
don't know																	
not vote																	
adjusted R ² (N)			0.14 (938)		0.27 (907)		0.15 (938)		0.17 (902)		0.67 (852)		0.46 (908)		0.25 (938)		0.72 (853)

a All presented unstandardized regression coefficients are significant at minimal $p < 0.05$ (two sided), ns means 'not significant'.

b Telegraaf

c NRC Handelsblad, de Volkskrant, Trouw

Model 6 shows a significant relationship between societal unease and both political trust and external political efficacy (no influence on politics), whereas internal political efficacy (politics too complicated to understand) is not significant. Satisfaction with the national economy is also significantly related to societal unease. In model 7, groups of voters are included, with the PvdA voters as a reference category because they are closest to the mean score of all voters. SP and PVV voters are significantly more likely to be uneasy, whereas the opposite is true for CDA, D66/GL and VVD voters. Apparently, societal unease does not fit into the political left-right dimension, with a higher likelihood of unease on both the far left and the far right of the political spectrum. This is consistent with the political mobilization axis of Azmanova (2011), who posits risks-oriented, Radical voters, in opposition to the opportunity-oriented voters of Liberal and Green parties. I elaborate on this pattern in Chapter 6.

In model 8, including all significant variables of models 1 to 7, many indicators remain significant, such as not having control over one's life, most social attitudes, of which resentment and differences between rich and poor have the largest effects, showing low confidence in the economy and trust in parliament, and a low level of external political efficacy, along with voting CDA and VDD.

3.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, I tested the empirical validity of the theoretical propositions of Chapter 2. The results support these propositions and point to many interesting findings that ask for further inquiry.

First, the conceptual model of societal unease is supported by CFA analyses. As proposed in Chapter 2, concerns about five aspects of society (distrust of human capability, loss of ideology, decline of political power, decline of community, and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability) share a commonality that we can label societal unease. Furthermore, societal unease is not an umbrella concept that covers all societal concerns. Consecutive analyses with a broad range of items show that no social attitudes except for those on the five elements theorized in Chapter 2 fit into the societal unease factor.

Second, societal unease is indeed the embodiment of societal pessimism, at least in the Netherlands in 2012. There is a high correlation of .91, which further increases to .99 if the two most general items are used instead of three for societal pessimism (dropping the socioeconomic item). This means that societal unease and societal pessimism are empirically the same, which validates both measures: the societal pessimism scale measures pessimistic concerns about society and not a personal pessimism (glass half

empty-sentiments), and the factor of societal unease (i.e., the latent concern behind the five elements proposed) measures a general concern about the state of society, or as I typified in Chapter 2, a concern about unmanageable deterioration of society. The various operationalizations of societal pessimism all correlate highly with societal unease, which justifies the use of these different measures later in this book to measure the concern about society.

The theoretical model of Chapter 2 is also supported by the data, which confirms that we can indeed distinguish the sociotropic and egotropic sentiments that relate to the same problematic societal processes. The relationship of societal unease and societal pessimism with both anomia and happiness is in line with what could be expected based on previous studies (Keyes, 1998; Eckersley, 2000; Elchardus & Smits, 2002; Elchardus & Smits, 2007; Steenvoorden, 2009; Eckersley, 2013). This also validates the measurements of societal unease and societal pessimism. The low correlation with happiness underlines that personal well-being and public concern are two distinct phenomena. A further validation is sought through the separate CFA's of societal unease for educational groups. This yields ambiguous results, which does not confirm that the same scale of societal unease exists in the attitudes of the educated groups; however, the results require more research before this proposition is rejected altogether.

There are several points that should be made about the operationalizations and external validity of the analyses in this chapter. First, societal unease is operationalized with only eight items. In future research, it would be a substantial improvement to test whether a similar scale exists using more items and a full second-order model. Moreover, future research is needed to test whether this chapter's findings can be generalized to other contemporary developed liberal democracies, as I assume to be the case. In addition, the relationship between societal unease and societal pessimism should be investigated in other countries and other points in time to determine whether these results can be repeated.

With the developed scale of societal unease, I explored who are uneasy about society. The results show that uneasiness increases with age and decreases with educational level and income. Concern about one's financial situation relates to societal unease, as does an external locus of control. Many social and political attitudes are related to societal unease, most importantly, resentment and thinking that the differences between poor and rich are too large. However, attitudes on welfare, the EU, the euro and the country's character are also significant, along with trust in the national parliament, external political efficacy and satisfaction with the national economy. Several types of behavior are related to societal unease: people who volunteer are significantly less likely to be uneasy, as are those who read quality newspapers and those who vote VDD, GL/D66 or

CDA. Reading a tabloid newspaper and voting SP or PVV increase societal unease. In later chapters of this book, some of these results are explored further. The influence of societal pessimism on Populist Radical Right voting is examined in Chapter 6. Societal unease and other social attitudes are used to differentiate among groups of volunteers, namely, political and civic participants, in Chapter 7.

This chapter provides tests of the conceptualizations of Chapter 2 and shows that the proposed definitions of societal unease and societal pessimism are empirically valid and useful tools that relate to many demographic, social and political characteristics. However, such highly quantitative analyses do not offer insight into how societal unease and societal pessimism take shape in the reflections and expressions of citizens, neither whether they are salient, top-of-mind issues. For those purposes, I explore qualitative data in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Expressions of societal unease and societal pessimism

4.1 The negative sentiment about society in people's own words

In the previous chapters, I presented conceptualizations of societal unease and societal pessimism, which found support in quantitative analyses. What remains unclear from the use of quantitative data is how such attitudes take shape in people's reflections. Especially since societal unease and societal pessimism are not established concepts, it is important to pay attention to how these concepts take shape. This increases our understanding of the nature of these concepts. To this end, I let respondents take the floor in this Chapter and analyze qualitative data on what they have to say about how their country is doing.

Previous qualitative research in the Netherlands about views on society has revealed not only that people are indeed negative and pessimistic about society, but also that there is considerable consistency in the themes that are raised. Studies of The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) and FORUM show that citizens are the most worried about issues such as how citizens treat each other, politics, the government and the EU, (polarization about) immigration and integration, the economy, increasing costs and income inequality, health care and education, environment and energy, criminality and low sentences (Steenvoorden, 2009; De Gruijter et al., 2010; Van Houwelingen, 2011; Dekker, Den Ridder, & Van Houwelingen, 2013).

Continuing this line of research, I use the same open-ended survey question as the SCP studies about why people in the Netherlands believe that their country is heading in the wrong direction. The new and specific focus here is on what these open answers tell us about the nature of societal pessimism and societal unease. I use societal unease and societal pessimism interchangeably here, not only because Chapter 2 argues that societal unease is how societal pessimism takes shape in contemporary developed liberal democracies such as the Netherlands, but also because Chapter 3 shows that societal unease and societal pessimism are extremely highly correlated. First, I explore which issues people mention in 2012 and pay attention not only to how they mention

those issues but also the emotions that they reveal. Next, I examine whether there are differences in the views of the country between people who are societally pessimistic and a subgroup of those people, namely, the group with the highest score on the scale of societal unease from the previous chapter. Third, I investigate how and to what extent the five elements of societal unease (distrust of human capability, loss of ideology, decline of political power, decline of community and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability) are mentioned as people reflect on Dutch society. Fourth, I explore the reverse group, namely, societal optimists, to examine their reasons for optimism. Do they use inverse or merely different arguments than the societal pessimists? Finally, I conclude by reflecting on what the results tell us about the nature of societal unease and societal pessimism.

This chapter is not a test of the theoretical model in Chapter 2; instead, it is an exploration of the issues raised and how people raise them. To measure the extent to which issues are part of one dimension, this type of qualitative analysis is unsuitable because one cannot examine this by coding answers. Furthermore, I do not think that everything that respondents mention as a reason that their country is heading in the wrong direction is theoretically societal pessimism or societal unease, not only because there needs to be a certain overlap in issues, but also because it is likely that sentiments related to societal pessimism are also mentioned. Moreover, to the extent that societal unease and societal pessimism are latent attitudes, people do not necessarily contemplate them in a concrete manner, let alone elaborate on them explicitly. In contrast, issues that are part of societal unease and societal pessimism could very well not be mentioned because they are not salient or more abstract, even though expressed arguments may nevertheless be based on them.

4.2 Data and Method

Data: explanations of why the country is heading in the wrong direction

In the quarterly Dutch survey called the Citizens Outlooks Barometer (COB), the one but final question is whether people think the Netherlands is heading in the right or the wrong direction (used in the previous chapter as an indicator of societal pessimism). This is followed by an open-ended question that asks for an explanation of the previous answer. In this chapter, I use the answers to that open-ended question of the COB survey of January 2012, which is the same survey that I used to construct a scale of societal unease in the previous chapter. This enables me to directly compare the level of unease to the explanations given on the societal pessimism item. The COB questionnaires can be completed either online or in writing, although about 75% usually choose the online

version. For this open-ended question, the response is not limited in space: if they wish, people can give very long answers; up to 2500 characters (which is about 500 words). In this chapter, I refer to people who think the country is heading in the wrong direction as societal pessimists, and those who choose the right direction as societal optimists.

The use of this explanation of a question on societal pessimism is preferable to the use of an explanation about societal unease, even if such an explanation did exist. Because I proposed societal pessimism as a universal conceptualization of the negative sentiment about society, unbounded in time or place, asking people to elaborate on a societally pessimistic stance avoids delimiting the issues that they can introduce. A second reason to use such a broad explanation of societal pessimism is that a direct question about societal unease is not possible, because it is theorized to reflect a variety of issues that could never be combined into one question. In addition, to ask people about their level of societal unease directly would not work, because there is no scientific or social consensus about the definition of that concept.

Table 4.1 shows the percentage of people who think their country is heading in either the right or the wrong direction. A majority (67%) is societally pessimistic and chooses the wrong direction, of which a quarter (17%) is very negative, choosing 'clearly the wrong direction'. Only 19% think that the country is heading in the right direction, and just 1% clearly think that the country is heading in the right direction, whereas 12% answer 'I don't know'.¹ Table 4.1 also indicates that societal pessimists more often respond to the open-ended question, (73% and 71% versus 58% and 46% among the optimists) and give longer answers. This could indicate that people feel either that a negative standpoint requires more explanation or that it is easier to argue why things are going wrong. The patterns in Table 4.1 are typical of this open-ended question and are described in studies of the SCP that use this open-ended question (e.g. Dekker & Steenvoorden, 2008; Dekker, Van der Meer, & Steenvoorden, 2008; Steenvoorden, 2009; Dekker, Den Ridder, & De Goede, 2010; Van Houwelingen, 2011).

1 This is a considerable percentage. Offering a neutral answer option reduces the size of this group; moreover, it decreases the number of optimists more than the number of pessimists (Van der Meer, Dekker, & Steenvoorden, 2009).

Table 4.1 Do you think things are heading in the wrong or in the right direction in the Netherlands?

	Answer (%)	Explanation ^a (%)	Length (in characters)
clearly the wrong direction	17	73	319
more the wrong direction	50	71	238
more the right direction	19	58	190
clearly the right direction	1	46	74
I don't know	12		

a The open-ended explanation question is only asked to people who do not answer 'I don't know'

To be able to explore the extent to which the people who score highest on the scale of societal unease (of the previous chapter) give different answers and show a deeper concern than the other societal pessimists, I differentiate the most societally uneasy people by taking one standard deviation above the mean of the societal unease scale (16%). Table 4.2 presents the answers of the most societally uneasy, which are (as could be expected) very pessimistic. Ninety-two percent of that group thinks the country is going in the wrong direction. Only 2% (i.e., 2 respondents) disagree.² The most uneasy answer the open-ended question slightly more often – and give answers that are somewhat longer – than the societally pessimistic group. Below, I compare the societal pessimists to this subgroup, the most societally uneasy. I like to stress that societal unease is not more extreme than societal pessimism; however, I took an extreme group of people with societal unease to examine the reasoning of that specific subgroup.

Table 4.2 The most societally uneasy on the direction the Netherlands is heading

	Answer (%)	Explanation ^a (%)	Length (in characters)
clearly the wrong direction	49	70	362
more the wrong direction	43	78	232
more the right direction	2	100	123
clearly the right direction	0		
I don't know	6		

a The open-ended explanation question is only asked to people who do not answer 'I don't know'

2 I looked up the arguments of these two respondents. One elaborates this positive stance by pointing to negative developments, a tendency that we will see later in this chapter is common among societal optimists. The other thinks the Netherlands is not doing badly but that it could do much better and that we (especially Parliament) should work harder.

Method: inductive and deductive content analysis

The methodological literature distinguishes various types of content analysis, and I clarify here which type of content analysis I performed. A first distinction can be made between a quantitative content analysis, which deductively examines the occurrence of certain terms, and a qualitative, ethnographic analysis, which is an iterative process in which categorization takes place inductively based on the data, and there is no intent to obtain a representative sample (Bryman, 2008). This latter, qualitative type of analysis is called conventional content analysis by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), who further distinguish between directed and summative content analyses, which are more deductive because they use theoretical, predefined coding schemes. The summative method furthermore focuses on latent, underlying meanings, or the relevance of context to the terms used.

My analysis combines the content analyses differentiated above. On the one hand, I used a deductive strategy, in line with the quantitative and directed method, by mapping the references to the five elements of societal unease and resentment in a large, representative sample of 1,137 respondents that I want to use to draw conclusions about the Dutch population. On the other hand, I inductively coded all of the other text that did not refer to elements of societal unease or resentment. Here, I did not use any predefined codes; instead, I let the text determine the names of the codes. The coding was an iterative process in which I constantly reviewed the choice of codes and their meaning, using memos to keep track of my decisions. During the coding, some codes have been merged, whereas others have been separated. Additionally, I performed various rounds of coding to check whether adjusted codes were used consistently throughout the data.

The resulting codes reflect the data, which means both that some codes are very similar and that codes may show overlap. For instance, the codes 'nature and culture' and 'healthcare and education' show that these issues are often mentioned together. Some codes reflect that more or less the same issue is described differently, such as 'poverty' which for example includes the popularity of free food distribution places [voedselbank], and 'budget cuts hit poor', which discusses how the poor are affected most by the budget cuts.

For the content analysis, I used Atlas.ti (version 7). The respondents' answers are the unit of analysis, not words or sentences. This enabled me to look for overlap of themes and the issues mentioned per respondent. When I show the respondents' text, I present their answers in their entirety, even though only words or sentences may be relevant to the argument at hand. This not only matches the method of coding but also provides a good impression of the data. I underlined the parts of the answer that are relevant to

my argument when showing that answer. The selected answers form a representative selection of the answers that were assigned the relevant code. Because some terms are difficult to translate, in some cases I mention the Dutch words between [straight brackets]. Because I think no English translation can fully capture the original Dutch text, I show them both when presenting full answers.

4.3 Why is the Netherlands heading in the wrong direction?

The explanations about why the country is heading in the wrong direction vary widely in their length, tone, and character, along with the issues that are mentioned. Before discussing these differences, and differentiating the answers of the societally pessimistic and the subgroup of those who are the most societally uneasy, I would first like to point to four general findings.

What is very clear from the answers is that they reflect societal issues. Exceptional cases (pointing how hard it is to find a job at an older age or that ‘our children cannot buy a house’) prove this rule. Another general observation is that people do not tend to nuance their answer that their country is heading in the wrong direction. Without a neutral option, it would not be surprising if some respondents say that they also observe positive tendencies, but that does not occur. People argue their pessimistic stance with firm discontent, without reservation or nuance.

Third, respondents often mention a range of diverse issues. Although some stick to a single problem, many describe a range of issues. Often, it seems that these diverse issues are all related in the respondent’s view. For instances, people discuss their ever-decreasing salary, the rising cost of living, high-placed people [hoge heren] (i.e., directors, governors, and managers), who earn too much, and politicians who do not keep their promises. It seems that diverse issues are not separate problems but instead are all parts of a chain of issues that one can discuss from one to the other. This linking of issues seems very natural and contrasts with researchers’ usual practice of studying attitudes separately.

Fourth, many answers describe processes of decline or deterioration. Although this may not be surprising because the question also relates to a process, namely, whether things are *going* in the right or wrong direction, it is still worth mentioning because it is exactly this process of deterioration that is at the core of both societal pessimism and societal unease. I find that this is mostly the case when respondents discuss two elements of societal unease, namely, decline of community and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability. I come back to this point below.

Turning to the differences, there is a large variation in the length of the answers, and that is closely related to the character of the writing. Whereas some people write

problems down in single terms or describe them very briefly and in a staccato-like fashion, others use entire sentences to describe more or less the same thing. Most often, the latter group is more nuanced and seems less discontented. Below, I present three different styles of answers. The first is very short, merely listing problems, whereas the second is more descriptive, showing concern but not severe discontent, and the third answer does show deep discontent and indignation.

“Too much poverty, the high cost of healthcare, too much unemployment, too much aggression”.

“Te veel armoede, te hoge zorgkosten, te veel werkloosheid, te veel agressie”.

“With the PVV in the cabinet, the wrong example is set for how we should treat each other. The environment gets not enough attention, for example, we have 130 kph roads. Most youngsters cannot rent or buy a house, which makes them subtenants who rent illegally and expensively. Young people who have just graduated cannot find jobs. After saving the banks, nothing has changed. Still, bonuses are paid for poor performance.”

“Met de pvv in de regering wordt een verkeerd voorbeeld gegeven over hoe men met elkaar omgaat. Er wordt veel te weinig rekening gehouden met het milieu. Door b.v. 130 km wegen. De meeste jonge mensen kunnen geen woning huren of kopen waardoor ze illegaal en te duur moeten onderhuren. Jonge afgestudeerden kunnen geen werk vinden. Na het redden van de banken is er niets veranderd. Er worden nog steeds bonussen uitgekeerd na wanprestaties”.

“The perverse legislation. The scandalous treatment of people’s property (pension funds speculating with people’s money). The greedy politics of managers. Admitting too many allochthone people in the Netherlands, which decreases employment and payment for the Dutch. (Allochthones and Poles currently work for Polish-level salaries by being self-employed in the Netherlands, which makes them cheap laborers.) They drive in cars with foreign plates, do not pay road tax and refuse to pay fines because they cannot be collected.”

“De kromheid van regelgeving. De schandaligheid van omgaan met andermans bezit (speculeren door pensioenfondsen met geld van het volk), de graaipolitiek van hogerhand, het teveel toelaten van allochtonen in Nederland waardoor werk en lonen/beloningen niet meer voor Nederlanders is (allochtonen-polen momenteel werken op Poolse lonen beloningen door zelfstandige te worden en dus onder Nederlandse normen waardoor ze als krachten zeer goedkoop zijn). Rijden in auto met buitenlands kenteken, betalen geen houderschapsbelasting verrotten het bekeuringen te betalen, is toch niet te innen”.

The answers above show that the tone that respondents use varies. Some plainly mention issues, others seem concerned, and still others show a deep discontent and indignation. A small group of respondents stand out because of the severity of their discontent and the emotionality that speaks through the words. This made me distinguish a code for anger. I coded text as angry when people used subjective connotations with adverbs such as scandalous, sick and tired. Other reasons to code answers as angry were the use of capital letters and multiple question or exclamation marks. The subjects of anger are diverse, including (members of) the cabinet, the government, the governing elite (managers, directors, and public officials such as mayors), and immigrants and lawbreakers (criminals, people on benefits). This anger about the state of society underlines that people can be emotional about their society. This is in line with the “diffuse affective state” that Rahn et al. call the public mood, which refers to people’s emotions toward their political community (1996: 29). Below, I show some answers that I coded as angry (capital letters in original text; as explained above, underlining refers to the text coded as angry):

‘Politicians cannot be trusted. In my opinion, most politicians are only members of Parliament to look after themselves instead of REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE. They promise the world, but in the end, they do not DELIVER ANYTHING. THEY PROMISE EVERYTHING AND DO NOTHING; THAT IS WHAT POLITICIANS ENJOY’.

“De politiek is over het algemeen niet te vertrouwen. Naar mijn mening zitten de meeste politici in de tweede kamer er alleen maar voor zichzelf in plaats van als VOLKSVERTEGENWOORDIGER. Ze beloven van alles, maar als het er op aankomt geven ze NIET THUIS. VEEL BELOVEN EN WEINIG GEVEN DOET EEN POLITICUS IN VREUGDE LEVEN”.

“The euro crisis: the euro is pushed down our throats and now the Netherlands is eager to help the Greeks, and we are the ones to pay the price for that corrupt bunch”.

“Euro crisis, die euro is gewoon onze strot in gedouwd en nu moet Nederland weer een haantje de voorste zijn om die Grieken te helpen en wij maar betalen voor dat corrupte zootje.”

These emotions are also important in differentiating between societal pessimists and the most uneasy. The second group is more often angry and indignant. Even when their tone is not angry, it is certainly a few shades darker. More generally, we can say that the very uneasy stand out as more discontented, more frustrated, and more

fatalistic, as if they no longer expect things to turn around. This is in line with what we would expect of the group that is most uneasy.

Both the emotions and the issues raised are coded. In Table 4.3, I show the occurrences of the most important codes. In many cases, these codes represent various, more detailed codes merged into one. For an overview of the more detailed codes and their frequency, see Appendix Table B1. The top of Table 4.3 contains the theoretical concepts: the elements of societal unease and resentment. Below that, the inductively coded issues are presented. Table 4.3 also differentiates between the societal pessimists and the very uneasy. The societal pessimists constitute a large group of 663, only 105 of whom are included in the “most uneasy” group. Although the percentages sometimes reflect only a few people, it is interesting not only to review which issues are raised often but also to compare the patterns among the pessimists and most uneasy.

Table 4.3 Issues raised by the societal pessimists and the most societally uneasy^a

	Societal pessimists ^b	Most societally uneasy ^c
Theoretical model:		
distrust in human capability	0	0
loss of ideology	3	4
decline of political power	5	10
decline of community	20	24
increasing socioeconomic vulnerability	16	18
resentment	3	8
Inductive codes:^d		
politics	22	24
economic crisis and austerity measures	24	28
poverty and income inequality	18	27
EU and foreign affairs	9	12
immigration problems	8	11
anti-immigration sentiments	2	3
criminality and safety	12	19
nature and culture	3	2
pension	3	2
healthcare and education	3	2
anger	4	8

a These are not mutually exclusive codes because 1) the large majority of respondents raise multiple issues and 2) terms often refer to multiple issues at once. For instance, criminal immigrants are codes both in criminality and in immigration problems. If people point to poverty and write that it will increase because of retrenched social policies, their answer is coded as both poverty and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability.

b N= 663

c N=105 of the 663

d Appendix Table B1 shows the detailed codes that are merged into these larger categories.

If we first consider the theoretical elements of societal unease, we can see large differences among them in the extent to which they are expressed in the descriptions of the negative state of the country. Decline of community and increasing societal economic vulnerability are referred to by 20% and 16%, respectively, whereas decline of political power (5%), loss of ideology (3%) and resentment (3%) are clearly mentioned less often. Distrust in human capability (0%) is only referenced by two societally pessimistic respondents. These results mean that although the elements of societal unease have commonalities, as shown in Chapter 3, some play a more dominant role than others in the perception of citizens.

The most uneasy refer more often to the elements of societal unease, which is to be expected because they score high on societal unease as a result of their high scores on items on these five elements. Most notably, they more often point to decline of political power (10% versus 5%). In line with my previous remarks about the deeper discontent and darker tone among the most uneasy, they also show more resentment (8% versus 3%) and anger (8% versus 4%).

Among the issues that are not in the theoretical model and coded inductively, six major themes can be differentiated: politics (22%), economic crisis (24%), poverty (24%), Europe (9%), immigration (8+2%) and criminality and safety (11%). If we compare the most uneasy group and the pessimists, it is clear that the most uneasy score higher on all of the issues in Table 4.3. The most notable differences can be found in the categories poverty (27% versus 18%) and criminality and safety (19% versus 12%). Moreover, in Table B1 of Appendix B, all of the issues are mentioned more by the most uneasy, except for Wilders, the PVV and populism. These results indicate that the most uneasy seem to fit a political profile that is both socioeconomically left and culturally right.

I further investigated the mean number of codes that are applicable to the answers of the societally pessimistic and the most uneasy. These numbers cannot be seen as hard facts, because the number of codes per respondent depends on both the detailing of the coding and the overlap between codes, but it is an indication of the diversity of the answers. For Table 4.3, which uses a small number of broad codes, the mean number of codes per respondent is 1.8 for the societal pessimists and 2.5 for the most uneasy. If we look at the coding of Appendix Table B1, we see results of 2.6 and 3.4 for these groups. This means that it is safe to conclude that the most uneasy are not only more negative and more often angry and resentful but also identify more problems in Dutch society.

The observation that people mention multiple issues is in line with the assumption that societal unease and societal pessimism are broad, latent attitudes. It also indicates

that societal pessimism is related to many other attitudes. This diversity of issues can be seen as an indication that societal pessimism is a superficial attitude that points in multiple directions. However, this observation is contradicted by the firmness of the discontent and the relatedness of the way issues are discussed, as I described above.

If we review all of the codes together (both theoretical and inductive codes), eight main themes dominate the arguments about why the Netherlands is heading in the wrong direction: politics, decline of community, socioeconomic vulnerability, poverty and income inequality, the economic crisis, immigration and integration, criminality and safety and the EU and foreign affairs. These themes are highly similar to those found in other studies (conducted between 2008-2013) of arguments about why Dutch society is heading in the wrong direction (e.g. Steenvoorden, 2009; Van Houwelingen, 2011; Dekker, Den Ridder, & Van Houwelingen, 2013). Below, I discuss each of these themes in turn. Because the societal pessimists and the most uneasy do not differ with respect to the issues raised but instead with respect to the extent of negativity and the diversity of issues raised, I do not distinguish between these two groups in this part. Describing these issues separately does not indicate that people do not combine them; on the contrary, they do so all the time, and there are many linkages between these themes.

Politics is discussed in many ways. People describe politicians as incompetent, indecisive, and eager to search for one-liners that make the headlines, instead of unfolding a vision for the country. They are portrayed as happy to follow EU leaders, instead of prioritizing the country's needs. In addition, the current government and its policy decisions are criticized. A lack of sensitivity to what the general public wants and a lack of possibilities for citizens to be heard in political matters are also dominant themes that are mentioned with more indignation than the political issues. A somewhat oppositional view comes from people who are mostly concerned about politics because of the influence of the Populist Radical Right: Wilders' performances, the PVV party and the size of its electorate, populism as a trend, and the minority government that is supported by the PVV.

Decline of community also has a prominent place in the answers. A lack of solidarity, respect for others, and norms and values are discussed. In addition, increasing egoism, self-interest, and aggression in traffic are often mentioned. Various links are made, such as to aggression that results in violence toward medical staff (which is coded as criminality), the need to be self-centered in difficult financial times, and politicians who do not set a good example. In descriptions of a decline of community, a sense of nostalgia is sometimes present, with people saying, although only implicitly, that in

previous times, people did look after each other and did show respect to one another, or to teachers or the police.

Socioeconomic vulnerability, poverty and income inequality are described in terms that are a bit more personal than the other issues. Respondents do not tell personal stories, but their answers describe problems that are more often a part of their daily lives. For instance, people point to increasing costs of living and decreasing salaries. People wonder where politicians think they can make more cuts. Respondents think that the popularity of and need for free food distribution centers [voedselbanken] and the fact that so many people live below the minimum income, is a shame to the country. It is also used as an argument against providing for Third World countries or European countries such as Greece. 'First provide for the poor in our own country', is the message. Respondents have also concerns about the accessibility of higher education (and worry that in the future, only children from well-off families will be able to attend university), about healthcare for the elderly, about how mothers can continue their careers with child-care costs rising, and about how the sick and disabled should manage with less facilities. The retrenchment of social policies is seen as a big mistake, and this trend is sometimes seen as a decline toward American standards. It is here that I found the clearest references to previous, better times, when our welfare state was a point of pride and still provided for people in need.

Next to worries about the poor or about Average Joe [Jan Modaal] or austerity measures which the employed have to provide, there is indignation about the salaries at the top, especially with respect to non-profit organizations but also with respect to the financial sector and its bonuses. This is part of a broader discontent about the elite – i.e., managers, directors and politicians – who, it is argued, do not care about employees but think only of themselves and favor the rich.

The economic crisis and austerity measures are an important theme, although the respondents write about this topic in a manner that is more descriptive and less emotional and indignant. This is a clear problem, but it is relatively new compared to the other issues and not any particular person's fault. When consequences of the crisis are mentioned, such as unemployment, austerity measures, healthcare, education, benefits, and rising costs, people more often seem frustrated, and they link these problems to the political failure to address them. For a variety of reasons, the austerity measures are often called improper. People judge them as too strong, too weak, focused on the wrong policies, too tough for the poorest, too soft on the rich. Again, there seems to be an oppositional camp, so to speak, which believes that the state of the economy deserves less attention and that policies' humanity and people's well-being should be the main focus.

The EU is mentioned in relation to the introduction of the euro, the transfer of political influence and power to the EU, the transfer of money to other European countries, and how the EU (does not) fight the economic crisis. In addition, the influx of Poles, Romanians and Bulgarians and the resulting increase in unemployment and criminality are identified. As this list shows, there are also numerous links to other themes.

When respondents write about immigration and integration problems, they only refer to Eastern Europeans as a specific group. Other nationalities or ethnic minorities are not specifically mentioned. This could either mean that Eastern Europeans cause most discontent and concern or that it seems less acceptable to complain about e.g. citizens with an Moroccan or Turkish background. People often say that there are too many foreigners who do not adjust, that they feel like foreigners in their own country. Notably, the Islam and Muslims are very rarely mentioned. Some are angry that foreigners are better taken care of than they are, which relates to resentment. There is also a small, opposing group that refer to a negative, harsh climate and policies towards immigrants.

Immigration is regularly linked to criminality, it is proposed that we should take the passports of criminal immigrants and send them back to their own countries. Some point to a rise in criminality, which they believe is caused by Eastern Europeans. More generally, people think that there is too much criminality and that lack of safety is a big problem. Violence towards ambulance staff and conductors worries people. The police are too soft and their lack of resolute measures does not enforce respect. Sentences should be tougher and longer, and lawbreakers are dealt with in a manner that is far too soft. A small group is angry that in prison, people are better provided for than those who work hard for a living.

4.4 The presence of the five elements of societal unease

Below, I show how the elements of societal unease and resentment are referred to in the explanations of why the Netherlands is heading in the wrong direction.

Distrust of human capability

This first element, which relates to the limitations of innovation and policies to improve our conditions, and the latent negative side effects of technology, is virtually non-existent in the answers. Only two respondents refer to this element; the second respondent does so only very indirectly.

“The risks of technological progress are underestimated. The political agreement to place masts all over the Netherlands is shocking. The diversity of radiation is incredibly large and the intensity is growing at an alarming pace, causing serious diseases among many citizens”.

“De risico’s van technologische vooruitgang worden onderschat. De goedkeuring van de politiek voor het plaatsen van zendmasten door heel Nederland is verbijsterend. De kakofonie van straling is onvoorstelbaar groot en de intensiteit hiervan neemt schrikbarend toe met als gevolg, ernstige lichamelijke klachten voor veel burgers”.

“No respect for superiors. Medical staff is besieged. Financial situation of the elderly is worsening and so is healthcare. Miscommunication often leads to mistakes being made. Too many institutions, bureaucracy”.

“Geen respect voor meerderen. Hulpverleners worden belaagd. Financiële situatie voor ouderen, wordt moeilijker en ook de zorg. Door miscommunicatie gaat er nog eens iets fout. Te veel instanties, bureaucratie”.

Loss of ideology

The loss of ideology, which deprives us of both a sense of direction where we are heading and a perspective on a better society, is expressed more often: 3% of responses relate to this subject in one of two ways. The first approach discusses the lack of (long term) vision in politics:

“There is absolutely no vision of the future. Without investigating the causes of excess, budget cuts are made on important policies like a chicken with its head cut off. The only concern is to keep the accounts adding up. Furthermore, austerity measures will raise costs in the future. If the government had started this year by raising the pension age one month per year, they wouldn’t have to cut on the pensions at all. Now, costly bureaucratic measures need to be taken to spare people on small pensions”.

“Er is absoluut geen visie voor de toekomst. Zonder naar oorzaken van overschrijdingen te kijken wordt er als een kip zonder kop ‘bezuinigd’ op juist belangrijke zaken. Als op dit moment het huishoudboekje maar klopt. Bovendien zullen de genomen bezuinigingsmaatregelen in de toekomst vaak hogere uitgaven veroorzaken. Als de regering dit jaar begonnen was met de pensioengerechtigde leeftijd ieder jaar met een maand te verhogen was het korten op pensioenen helemaal niet nodig geweest. Nu moeten er weer geldverslindende bureaucratische maatregelen genomen worden om de kleine pensioenen te ontzien”.

“As I indicated, there is less solidarity and more individuality. Politics gives a bad, if not the worst example of norms and values. There is neither a clear structure nor a vision of the future. There is a great deal of fiddling around and waiting to see how things are going to evolve. Just like managers: if things are going well, they are the man; if things are going downhill, they disappear and don't care how those they leave behind are affected”.

“Zoals aangeven wordt het steeds individueler, geen saamhorigheid. Politiek geeft verkeerde, zo niet slechte voorbeeld wat normen en waarden betreft. Een duidelijke structuur ontbreekt, evenals een visie voor de toekomst. We modderen maar wat aan en zien wel wat het wordt. Net als managers: gaat de lijn omhoog, dan zijn ze de bink; wanneer het slechter gaat druipen ze af zonder zich zorgen te maken over de achterblijvers”.

The second way in which the loss of ideology can be traced in the responses is the tendency in politics to make ad hoc decisions and adopt policies without a thorough analysis of the implications, that is, without a well-considered plan or vision.

“The government is not strong enough: it only makes policy measures afterwards and does not seem to think ahead. Addressing abuses (financial, top executives) does not seem to happen. Research is ordered and then ...? Consequences. It is scandalous what is happening with the demolition of nature for the benefit of, for example, several asphalt strips. Aggressiveness is increasing (e.g., football, is this still a game?)”.

“Regering is niet sterk genoeg, neemt beleidsmaatregelen achteraf en lijkt niet vooruit te denken. Het aanpakken van misstanden (financiële, topbestuurders) lijkt niet te gebeuren. Onderzoek vindt plaats en dan? Consequenties. Schandalig wat er gebeurt met het wegvagen van natuur voor bijvoorbeeld meerdere asfaltstroken. De agressiviteit wordt steeds groter onder elkaar (voetbal bijvoorbeeld, is dit nog wel een spel?)”.

“There is not a clear vision. Where do we want to be at the end of 2012?”

“Er is geen duidelijke koers. Waar willen we staan eind 2012?”.

Decline of political power

The third element of societal unease is also present in the answers. The three processes that are suggested in Chapter 2 to drive the decline of political power – depoliticization,

transfer of power to the EU, and globalization of the economy – are all present, although depoliticization is referred to indirectly, by pointing to privatization and liberalization. Excessive influence by Europe or the EU is discussed most of these three, in which case the Netherlands is qualified as too dependent and/or not determined in negotiations. Sometimes, people literally mention (Dutch) ‘politics’, ‘the cabinet’, or (Prime Minister) ‘Rutte’, but many times, they do not.

“We are bullied by the EU”.

“We worden veel te veel geringeloord door de E.U.”

“Neither Dutch politicians nor Dutch citizens know which path we should take. Furthermore, often the EU decides differently. The Netherlands is too controlled by European politics. Being a small country, we do not have a say, although that is denied”.

“Nederlandse politiek, maar ook de burgers (samenleving) weten niet wat de juiste weg is. Bovendien wordt te vaak door Europa anders beslist. Nederland wordt te veel geregeerd door de Europese politiek. En als klein land hebben we weinig te vertellen, hoewel ’t tegendeel wordt beweerd”.

A few people discuss the globalizing economy and the power of financial markets as a problem:

“By considering the financial markets, we increasingly lose control, and that is not in the citizens’ interest”.

“Door de oren te laten hangen naar de financiële markten raken wij steeds meer de controle, die goed is voor de burgers in ons land, kwijt”.

Privatization and liberalization are not often described, but when they are mentioned, it is in a very negative manner. We should not have gone down that road, is the message. People relate these processes to problems in public transportation, healthcare, and the energy market. They think that rising costs and high bonuses at the top of these (semi)private organizations are caused by privatization and liberalization. Sometimes they also point to a decline in quality.

“The entitlements that employees gained over time, such as pensions and childcare, are decreasing. Privatization is said to increase competition and to lower the prices or at least keep them from rising. The opposite is happening: look at health care

and public transportation. Therefore, we need to stop privatization and place many services back under governmental supervision (the old healthcare system, public transportation, etc.)”.

“De rechten die de werknemers in de loop der tijden hebben opgebouwd, worden steeds meer uitgekleed, zoals pensioen, AOW, kinderopvang. De marktwerking zou ervoor zorgen dat er meer concurrentie komt, waardoor het in ieder geval niet duurder of slechter zou worden. Het tegengestelde is hier echter het geval, zie de zorg, openbaar vervoer. Marktwerking zo veel mogelijk dus weer afschaffen en veel meer weer taken naar overheid (goede oude ziekenfonds, goed openbaar vervoer e.d.)”.

“More intolerance, the government does not control utilities, which now have introduced bonuses. Too little attention is paid to climate-saving activities”.

“Meer intolerantie, nutsbedrijven hebben te weinig overheidstoezicht, bonussysteem bij nutsbedrijven. Te weinig aandacht voor milieubesparende activiteiten”.

Decline of community

The disappearance of common norms, values, and solidarity between people is what the fourth element of societal unease is about. Table 4.3 shows that many people (20%) refer to this element, in a wide variety of ways. As I wrote above, people seem to make an implicit comparison to previous times without specification. They imply that things used to be better, people used to respect each other and show solidarity, but that those days are now (becoming) lost. I distinguished a few ways in which the respondents mention the decline of community. One of them is to mention egoism, a lack of solidarity, [‘ikke, ikke, ikke’], every man for himself, and the tendency to focus only on rights, not duties.

“Things are in decline in the Netherlands, there is too much of an attitude and boldness among the youth. People are not willing to help each other anymore, they think only about themselves. Garbage is thrown on the street, however also municipalities mess up. Look abroad, they do succeed in keeping things clean, aside from the Dutch, who are embarrassing. Parks are kept neat, and cleanliness prevents people from making a mess. Maybe there are more actions taken to stop people from littering. Unlike the Dutch, drivers stop at pedestrian crossings in Germany and Austria, they make an emergency stop if needed. It is all about mentality”.

“Nederland glijdt af; houding en mondigheid jeugd (en oudere) is te ver doorgeschoten, men is bijna niet meer bereid elkaar te helpen, het is een ikke-ikke en de rest kan..., afval wordt maar op straat gegooid, maar ook de gemeenten maken er een potje van, kijk maar eens in het buitenland daar lukt het wel om het netjes te houden,

afgezien van die NL-ders waar je je voor schamen moet. Ook de groenvoorzieningen zijn keurig onderhouden en waar het netjes is, nodigt het ook uit om het netjes te laten blijven en misschien wordt er daar iets meer opgetreden tegen vervuiling op straat. Stoppen voor een zebra-pad, denk dat in NL maar niet, in Duitsland en Oostenrijk maken ze bijna een noodstop voor je. Zou er daar regelmatig bekeurd worden of zo? Ach de mentaliteit hè”.

“I think the mentality in the country is becoming more of an ‘I’ mentality. This is bad for the country. We should be willing to help each other and to pay more attention to each other”.

“Ik heb het idee dat de mentaliteit in het land steeds meer de ‘ik’ mentaliteit wordt. Dit is slecht voor Nederland. Iets meer voor elkaar over hebben en rekening met elkaar houden zou veel beter zijn”.

A second theme of decline of community is a lack of respect, norms and values. Although this generally is not further clarified, when people do clarify it, they say that the problem is especially bad among youth, or on the streets and in traffic. People always identify unfamiliar people as disrespectful: they do not say this about friends or acquaintances. This issue is also mentioned in relation to authorities that are not respected.

“Nobody trusts one another anymore. Trust is the most important thing in an economy. Nobody addresses people anymore about their behavior. There is no respect for caretakers. Very sad!”.

“Niemand vertrouwt elkaar meer. Vertrouwen is het belangrijkste wat je nodig hebt in een economie. Niemand kan elkaar meer aanspreken op gedrag. Er is geen respect meer voor hulpverleners. Heel triest allemaal!!!”.

“People treat each other less respectfully. Many people are short-tempered and immediately being to fight. There is a great deal to be done by politicians, who keep saying that they will respond in a manner that is severe. However, nothing happens because judges are too soft in the Netherlands. Spare the rod and spoil the child”.

“Mensen worden al respectlozer tegen elkaar. Velen hebben een kort lontje en slaan er gelijk op los. Heel wat te doen voor de politiek, die steeds schreeuwen we pakken het harder aan. Maar er gebeurt niets omdat de rechters in Nederland veel te mild zijn. Zachte heelmeesters maken stinkende wonden”.

Some answers are very short and need some more interpretation. For example, terms such as intolerance, ‘verruwing’ and ‘verhuftering’, which can be translated as a (total) lack of common decency, are used very generally. Some respondents think the Dutch are intolerant, whereas others use these terms in relation to politicians who set the wrong example.

“I witness a lack of decency and a retrenchment of the welfare state”.

“Ik zie verhuftering plaatsvinden en afbrokkeling van de verzorgingsstaat”.

“Ongoing polarization and lack of decency.”

“Verdergaande polarisatie en gebrek aan tolerantie”.

“The lack of decency is growing and they cannot address it properly. In economic terms, they take the wrong austerity measures by introducing high taxes and austerity measures that primarily hit the “Average Joe”.

“In Nederland slaat de verhuftering toe en men kan dit niet op de juiste manier aanpakken. Economisch probeert men op een verkeerde manier geld te bezuinigen vooral door hoge belastingen en bezuinigingen voor de ‘gewone’ man”.

Terms that need still more interpretation are hardening and individualization. Sometimes these are clarified, when people discuss them in terms of either loss of norms and values or respect, in which case I coded them as decline of community. In other instances, however, they are linked to retrenchment of social policies, in which case they point to increasing socioeconomic vulnerability, the fifth element of societal unease.

“Too much negative attention to immigration policies, too little attention to safety. Individualism and a larger divide between rich and poor”.

“Te veel (negatieve) aandacht voor asiel- en integratiebeleid, te weinig aandacht voor veiligheid, te veel individualisme en een grotere tweedeling in de samenleving tussen arm en rijk”.

“Society is becoming tougher, austerity measures are taken in the wrong places, there is weak political leadership (not only in the national government but also at the regional and municipal levels)”.

“De samenleving wordt harder, bezuinigingen op verkeerde gebieden, matige politieke leiding (niet alleen op regeringsniveau maar ook op landelijk, provincie en stedelijk niveau)”.

Finally, aggression is often mentioned with other aspects of decline of community, such as lack of respect or common decency. Regularly, aggression is also described with respect to more violent incidents, such as those involving football hooligans and violence towards medical staff. There seems to be a sliding scale from a lack of decency toward/aggression, hostility and then violence. It is not always easy to determine whether the respondents mean a decline of community or increasing violence, which can also be seen as criminality and is also coded as such.

“The Netherlands is too densely populated, which causes aggression: people drive each other crazy and get short-tempered. The large number of ethnicities in the Netherlands does not make it easier to trust each other and get along. The Netherlands is in a recession, we are going downhill; too many entitlements have been taken away, and many people are short on money, which affects their mental condition and mood”.

“Nederland is overbevolkt, wat agressie veroorzaakt; de mensen worden gek van elkaar en daardoor worden de ‘lontjes korter’; het enorme aantal verschillende nationaliteiten in Nederland helpt niet om het nog leuk en vertrouwd te hebben met elkaar; Nederland zit in een recessie, we glijden steeds harder naar beneden; er worden teveel vangnetten afgebroken; te veel mensen kunnen maar nauwelijks de eindjes aan elkaar knopen, wat hun geestelijke gezondheid en hun humeur niet ten goede komt”.

“Budget cuts are made in the wrong places, such as health care and education. Additionally, I hear more and more about people losing their jobs: young, highly educated people like myself. Aggression and violence seem to increase and that scares me. And people are becoming less tolerant towards each other”.

“Er lijkt bezuinigd te worden op de verkeerde dingen, zoals zorg en onderwijs. Ook hoor ik steeds meer mensen die werkloos worden, jonge hoog opgeleide mensen, zelf ben ik hier ook één van. Agressie en geweld lijken toe te nemen en daar schrik ik wel eens van. En mensen worden minder tolerant naar elkaar toe”.

Increasing socioeconomic vulnerability

The fifth element of societal unease is also often mentioned in arguments about why the Netherlands is heading in the wrong direction (16%). Again, we see a large variety of ways in which people discuss this. Furthermore, there seems to be a notion that things were once a lot better, although when that was is never specified. However, ‘we’ used to have a very good welfare system, one to be proud of, which is now deteriorating. Often,

respondents complain about the retrenchment of social policies, which they believe are heading toward American (that is, low) standards: you have to take care of yourself.

“Everything is getting more expensive, there is more retrenchment on social welfare, everything is becoming less for more”.

“Steeds duurder en steeds meer verslechtering van sociale zekerheid, alles en dan ook alles wordt heel langzaam minder en duurder”.

“We used to be proud of our healthcare system in the Netherlands, but that is no longer the case, it has changed into an almost American system: no money, no care. This is just one of the things we were proud of. I am not even talking about the euro, which is forced on us without a referendum. Look at Switzerland: they did not do the wrong thing by not adopting the euro, but politicians and big companies are the ones calling the shots in the Netherlands. They make a profit, they need to double the profit the next year, and where do we make budget cuts????”.

“In Nederland waren we trots op ons ziektekosten beleid en daar is weinig van over het is bijna het Amerikaanse systeem geworden, geen geld geen zorg, kortom dit is maar een van de dingen waar we trots op waren, en dan heb ik het nog niet eens over de Euro die ons door de strot is gedrukt zonder referendum, kijk ik naar Zwitserland zou ik toch zeggen dat zij er niet verkeerd aan hebben gedaan om niet mee te doen, maar ja politiek en grote bedrijven hebben het voor het zeggen hier in Nederland, als er het ene jaar winst wordt gemaakt dan moet het volgende jaar dubbel winst worden gemaakt en dan korten we op????”.”

A different way of articulating increasing socioeconomic vulnerability relates to decreasing support or consideration for weaker groups, i.e., the sick and disabled.

“Less social policies, less attention to the environment, less consideration for the weak in society”.

“Minder voorzieningen, minder oog voor de natuur, minder oog voor de zwakken in de samenleving”.

“It is clearly going in the wrong direction because money and the economy are leading. Everything is expressed in money, whereas the human aspects are neglected, such as people with a different philosophy of life (anthroposophy, homeopathy, religion); in addition, poor, ill, vulnerable, and old people are cast aside and stigmatized. Only the smooth, highly educated and well-paid people who are able to keep up with new technologies matter. Policies are based on that group of people. Others have to take

care of themselves with small incomes. The environment, sustainable growth and a more peaceful way of life are not considered. More attention to those things and more means-tested contributions would be a good start”.

“Het gaat duidelijk de verkeerde kant op, omdat er te veel gereageerd en geregeerd wordt vanuit het geld en de economie. Alles wordt uitgedrukt in geld. Er is te weinig ruimte voor de mens met al haar aspecten; andere levensbeschouwingen (antroposofie, homeopathie, geloofsovertuigingen), arme, zieke, kwetsbare, beperkte oude mensen worden aan de kant gezet en gestigmatiseerd. Alleen de snelle, hoogopgeleide en goedverdienende en in de snelheid en ICT meekomende mensen tellen nog echt mee. Daar wordt beleid voor gemaakt; de rest moet maar zien dat hij het redt, met zijn geringe inkomen. Natuur en milieu, duurzaamheid en een rustiger, behapbaar tempo van leven krijgen nauwelijks aandacht. Meer aandacht daarvoor en veel bijdragen naar draagkracht zou al een goede stap in de goede richting zijn”.

In addition, more concrete measures are mentioned, such as the rising cost of healthcare, specifically care and transport facilities for the disabled, mental care, special education, and dental care; student allowances [studiefinanciering]; social workplaces [sociale werkplaatsen]; and the new policy of a personal healthcare budget [PGB].

“The poor are becoming poorer while the rich are getting richer, which means that the gap is becoming too big, and unnoticed poverty is also widespread. There are many things unclear in the tax system. Childcare and education benefits are cut, which means that the children of the average Joe will no longer be able to get an education and people who depend on 2 salaries cannot afford to have children anymore because childcare is too expensive”.

“De armen worden steeds armer en de rijken rijker waardoor de kloof te groot word en de stille armoede is ook erg groot. Er is ook veel onduidelijkheid in het belastingstelsel. Kinderopvang en studiefinanciering zijn er straks niet meer waardoor de kinderen van de gewone burger straks niet meer kan studeren en mensen die afhankelijk zijn van 2 inkomens kunnen straks niet meer eens kinderen krijgen daar de kinderopvang te duur wordt”.

“Too many budget cuts to education, childcare and healthcare. It is not right that you can only rent when you earn less than 34.000 euros per year”.

“Er wordt teveel bezuinigd op onderwijs, kinderopvang en PGB’s. Het is niet goed dat je pas kan huren wanneer je minder dan 34.000 euro per jaar verdient”.

Resentment

In Chapter 2, I described resentment as a mixture of the perception that you are not getting what you deserve and the perception that you unjustly have less than others. As follows from Table 4.3, resentment is not often expressed (3%), which is not surprising as the question is on the societal situation, whereas resentment is more personal. That said, an exploration of how resentment is articulated in the answers about the country taking the wrong turn can provide insight in that attitude. In the answers that I coded as resentment, people express feelings that they are not recognized in a political or an economic sense. Expressions of resentment can be summarized as me and my needs are not considered, whereas those of others are, politicians do not listen to me, do not serve my interest, whereas they do so for others. These “others” are most often immigrants or foreigners but can also include the elite (the managers, directors and politicians), criminals or people on benefits, who are said to receive better treatment than the respondents themselves. I differentiate resentment from the general notion that politicians are not listening to the people (coded as part of politics, see Appendix Table B1) because here people compare themselves to another group that unjustly does receive political attention. Nevertheless, both could be seen as expressions of a low external political efficacy.

Coding resentment is not at all straightforward, because I do not want to code all accusations of other groups having privileges as such. For instance, directors’ salaries and bonuses are often mentioned but can easily be seen as social problems or policy stances, just as money spent on Third World countries. I only coded resentment in instances in which people either made a direct comparison between other groups and their own group (or themselves) or argue about getting what should be theirs, for example, complaining that the rich, immigrants, criminals, and people on benefits [uitkeringstrekkers] receive advantages, while ‘we’ get less.

“I think they do not consider the consequences of decisions. Things are forced. Abuse of power?? And I am afraid that will happen more often. Additionally, I feel that the government’s attention to minorities is growing while they forget the Dutch—who have always worked hard and paid taxes and therefore paid the salaries of the politicians and the like—with all of the current austerity measures”.

“Er wordt volgens mij niet nagedacht over de consequenties van besluiten. Er wordt van alles doorgedramd. Machtsmisbruik?? En ik ben bang dat dat steeds vaker zal gaan gebeuren. Verder heb ik het gevoel dat de regering zich steeds drukker maakt om de minderheidsgroeperingen maar dat de Nederlanders die altijd hard hebben gewerkt en de belastingen hebben betaald, het eigenlijke salaris van onze politici en dergelijke figuren, vergeten worden, zie nu alle bezuinigingen”.

“The subsidy for gymnastics at elementary schools is cut, 24-hour workdays or being available is required, there is no time to relax, as a criminal you have more rights than the victim, if the cabinet stops or dissolves they get benefits and we don't get anything, there are taxes on taxes, as a foreigner you are entitled to everything—houses, money, double passports, double holidays. Money is going to good causes, why does it only go to 5% to the people. There is the 95% food from our own soil, that should be sold here. More attention should be paid to the environment. The ‘I culture should stop’”.

“Gekort op subsidie gym basisschool gekort op subsidie zwemmen basisschool 24 uur per dag werken of beschikbaar zijn, als boef heb je meer rechten als het slachtoffer als het kabinet stopt of uit elkaar valt krijgen ze wachtgeld, wij krijgen niets belasting op waterschap ed moet daar ook voor worden gebruikt als buitenlander heb je meer recht op alles, huis, geld, dubbel paspoort, dubbele feestdagen geld goede doelen, waarom 5% maar bij de mensen, waar blijft die 95% voedsel van eigen bodem hier verkopen meer groen, meer aan milieu doen de ik cultuur moet weg”.

“A badly functioning cabinet does not increase hope for the future. As an ordinary, middle-aged, hardworking citizen you receive few benefits. The rich people are getting more benefits. It is frustrating to see that people around you can afford anything while we have to work hard for it. Fortunately, we are very happy with what we got and how we live! More people should feel that way!”.

“Een slecht kabinet geeft weinig vertrouwen voor de toekomst. Als gewone, middelbare, hartwerkende burger zijn er weinig voordelen. Voor de rijke mensen zien we steeds meer voordelen... Het is heel frustrerend hoe mensen op je heen alles maar kunnen terwijl wij er zo hard voor moeten werken! Gelukkig zijn wij heel gelukkig met wat we hebben en hoe we leven! Zouden meer mensen dat maar is doen!”.

4.5 Arguments of the optimists: why is the country heading in the right direction?

So far, I have focused my attention on societal pessimists' arguments. However, there are also people who disagree with that negative perception and believe that the Netherlands is moving in the right direction. In this section, I explore how they argue this standpoint and explore whether they use outright inverse or simply different arguments compared to the societal pessimists.

Table 4.1 has indicated that societal optimists give shorter answers. Table 4.4 shows what their answers address. Almost one-quarter believe that the measures taken by the cabinet are both promising and correct.

“Politicians are working hard to have everything go well. Many different issues are discussed, which is a good thing for different opinions in society. However, now and then I think politics is losing its focus. Things can and should be better. However, we are on the right track”.

“De politiek werkt er hard aan om alles in goede banen te laten verlopen. Veel verschillende soorten vraagstukken komen aan bod, wat goed is voor de verdeling van meningen in de samenleving. Maar af en toe denk ik dat de politiek zijn focus verliest. Het kan beter en het moet beter. Maar we zijn goed op weg.”

“Many things are taken care of that are tough but that will benefit the country in the long run”.

“Er worden op dit moment zaken geregeld die nu moeilijk zijn, maar het land op termijn gezonder maken.”

Table 4.4 Issues raised by the societal optimists^{ab}

	%
proper measures are taken	23
the crisis is almost over	7
a step back in terms of welfare is good for us	6
we are not doing so badly	10
we are doing better than in other countries	9
we have a good welfare state	1
we should be positive	8
that is how I feel about it	2
other	36
things that are not going well	24

a These are not mutually exclusive codes because some societal optimists refer to more than one issue.

b N= 136

Some societal optimists appear to consider only the economic crisis and conclude that the crisis is in retreat (7%); alternatively, they believe that the economic crisis is a good thing because it either increases the focus on things other than money or brings people closer (6%). Some think that we are not doing so badly (10%) but do not clarify whether they mean compared to previous times or other countries. The latter comparison is sometimes explicitly made (9%), whereas 1% are optimistic about society because of the Dutch welfare state. Following are some examples:

“Many austerity measures are taken. This is hard on everybody but if we don’t do anything, things will become worse. So I think that these are difficult times but that it will be worth it in the long run.”

“Er gaat veel bezuinigd worden. Dit is niet goed voor portemonnee maar als we niet bezuinigen wordt het alleen maar slechter. Dus ik denk dat we nu eerst door een moeilijke tijd gaan maar dat dit zich uiteindelijk terug betaalt.”

“All things considered, I don't think we have reason to complain”.

“Al met al vind ik dat we niet echt reden hebben om te klagen”.

“We are taking a step backwards, but that does not mean that we are doing badly. We still have a high standard of living compared to the rest of the world and social policies for the poor”.

“We doen met z'n allen een stap terug echter dat betekent niet dat het per definitie slecht met ons gaat. We hebben nog altijd een gemiddelde levensstandaard in de wereld die heel erg hoog is, voor minima een goed sociaal vangnet.”

Some societal optimists refer to their state of mind and believe that we should remain positive (8%). Some cannot explain their positive standpoint rationally and say that their views are based on their feelings (2%), but we also find this among the pessimists, 2% of whom make this argument (see Table B1 of Appendix B). Thirty-six percent are coded as other, which includes a very diverse range of argumentation, of which I provide some examples:

“I have trust in the youth, both native and allochthone”.

“Vertrouwen in de jeugd, zowel autochtoon als allochtoon.”

“I believe in the goodness of people. The cabinet will not deliberately worsen the situation”.

“Ik geloof toch in het goede van de mens. Het kabinet zal het ons niet willens en wetens slechter doen hebben.”

“It is going in the right direction but often with errors!”.

“Het gaat wel naar de goede richting maar vaak met veel dwalingen!”

Finally, a substantial portion of the societal optimists (24%) refers to negative developments instead of positive ones. Apparently, these people cannot think of positive things, or change their minds when thinking things through. This tendency has also been noticed in previous studies (e.g. Dekker, Den Ridder, & De Goede, 2010). Therefore, we cannot really see these people as societal optimists.

If we consider all of the categories in Table 4.4, only one-third of all societal optimists point to trends opposite to those noted by the societal pessimists, namely,

governmental measures, the economic crisis, or the welfare state. Other arguments do not necessarily contradict those of the societal pessimists but instead focus on different things. This indicates that most of the societal optimists do not disagree with societal pessimists; rather, they focus on aspects different from those focused on by societal pessimists when answering the question about where their country is heading.

4.6 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter explored qualitative data on the negative view about Dutch society, with the aim to further the insight into the nature of societal pessimism and societal unease. To this end, I investigated expressions of societal pessimism, namely, through an open-ended survey question about why people think the Netherlands is heading in the wrong direction (which is an indicator of societal pessimism). I coded which issues people raise and reflected on how they do so, the extent to which there are differences between societal pessimists and a subgroup of them who is most uneasy (those who score very high on the scale of societal unease from the last chapter), how and the extent to which the elements of societal unease are expressed, and the arguments of societal optimists.

In my definition of societal unease set forth Chapter 2, I made several propositions about the nature of this concept (and that of societal pessimism, which is the same in nature but universally applicable). Comparing the definition in section 2.3 to the outcomes of this chapter tells us whether the assumptions about the nature of the negative sentiment about society have support. Three aspects of that definition are relevant here to review. First, I proposed societal unease to be about *societal* issues, that is, sociotropic concerns. The results of this chapter underline this, because the respondents do not relate to their personal problems but instead describe the societal context. Notwithstanding the fact that personal experiences probably influence the perception of the societal context, societal pessimism is indeed a concern about society. Second, unease is defined as a *latent* concern, and the term *unease* points to a sentiment that is vague and lacks a clear object. The results supports these propositions as well. The fact that respondents mention various issues and often describe these issues as interlinked, indicates a broad, vague attitude about society overall. The differences in the saliency of the five elements of societal unease shows they are not all top-of-mind issues. The fact that they share a commonality, as theorized and empirically supported in previous chapters, is not a connection made by respondents themselves; instead, it is an unconscious, latent association. Third, I also chose the word *unease* in the definition to indicate a low-intensity attitude. Unlike anxiety and fear, unease does not point to a high level of distress. The results in this chapter show some ambiguity about this assumption. On the one hand, the large group of societal pessimists uses a firmly negative but not deeply worried argumentation, which fits this assumption.

On the other hand, the subgroup of societal pessimists who are the most uneasy are often angry and indignant and therefore, they do seem more emotional than the term *unease* would suggest. These emotions are in line with the idea of Rahn et al. (1996) about citizens' emotions about their political community, i.e., public mood. However, because this is the most extreme group, these people are likely to show higher levels of concern, and their argumentation on the state of society is also more emotional because they are more often resentful. Therefore, the use of the word *unease* does seem to fit the negative view of society that is the focus of this book.

Among the societal pessimists, the subgroup of the most societally uneasy stands out in several ways. First, these people's tone is very distinct; they show a deeper concern, their answers show more negativity. This also follows from the higher number of answers that reflect anger and resentment in this group. They also perceive more problems, and more often mention criminality and safety, along with poverty and income inequality. This latter result suggests that the most societally uneasy are especially concerned with socioeconomically leftwing and culturally rightwing issues, just like I found in the previous chapter. This is a group that is not well-represented politically (Van der Brug & Van Spanje, 2009). I further investigate this issue in Chapter 6, in which I examine the influence of societal pessimism on Populist Radical Right voting.

When explaining why the country is heading in the right direction, only one-third of the societal optimists use arguments that oppose those of the societal pessimists. The others argue their stance using different arguments, e.g., either that the situation in the Netherlands is still acceptable or that it is better than elsewhere. One-quarter discuss what is not going well. This pattern is not mirrored among the societal pessimists; they do not point to positive developments.

A next step in this line of research is to analyze the relationship between the view of society and the view of the media. Several authors argue that societal pessimism is caused by the media (McKenzie, 1997; Whitman, 1998). Examining the resemblance of how issues are discussed in the media and by citizens in a longitudinal study might offer insight into whether the media pick up certain issues and their framing or instead cause issues to be more salient and determine how such issues are discussed.

This chapter is the last one on the conceptualization of the concern about the state of society. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 have offered some clarification on the nature of this concern by discussing how we can define, operationalize and measure it, along with how it is expressed by citizens. The next step is to understand its roots. Why are we concerned about society? It is to that question I turn next.

Part II

Causes

CHAPTER 5

Continent of pessimism or continent of realism?

The impact of the political and economic context on societal pessimism in Europe, 2006-2012¹

5.1 Introduction

Having conceptualized and operationalized the concern about the state of society in the previous chapters enables me to start looking at its causes. As announced in Chapter 1, from this chapter on, I will focus on societal pessimism, because of data limitations in the case of societal unease. To the best of my knowledge, explanatory research on the causes of this attitude is nonexistent. This means that multiple angles deserve scientific attention. A first question to ask is whether this attitude is rooted in real societal changes or whether it is a cultural characteristic. If societal pessimism is rooted in reality, a second question involves a determination of which societal changes affect this attitude. In this chapter, I start explanatory research on societal pessimism by examining whether it is rooted in the actual political and economic situation. I do so by examining whether political and economic characteristics explain both cross-national differences, as well as longitudinal differences within countries.

In Chapter 2, I conceptualized societal unease as reflecting a decline in the five aspects of contemporary developed liberal democracies. This implies that real societal changes, which according to a range of authors are problematic, inspire a concern about society. However, both in the public debate and in scientific contributions, people (more

¹ A different version of this chapter is under review. A previous version of this chapter is presented as Steenvoorden, E. H. and Van der Meer, T. (2014). 'A continent of pessimism in times of crisis: A multi-level study of the impact of economic performance, political institutions, and the dual crisis in Europe, 2006-2012' at the 72nd MPSA Annual Conference, Chicago, April 2014.

or less explicitly) deem pessimism about society to be artificially high and/or not rooted in reality. According to several (political) leaders – including French President François Hollande, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, and Pope Francis in his 2014 address to the European Parliament – Europeans should adopt a less pessimistic outlook to prevent societal and economic stagnation or even deterioration (RTL Nieuws, 2013; Vatican Network, 2014; The Times, 2015). Implicit in these accounts is the suggestion that societal pessimism in Europe is a cultural feature that is not rooted in reality. In the scientific arena, we find claims that public pessimism is artificially high because of the influence of the media in sociotropic evaluations, and not because of actual developments, as discussed in the Chapter 1 (McKenzie, 1997; Whitman, 1998; Mazarr, 1998). These characterizations of societal pessimism as not grounded in reality clash with many scholars who theorize, but do not test, that developments negatively affect our society (Taylor, 1991; Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000; Bennett, 2001; Bauman, 2007).

To determine the reality of societal pessimism, I examine two aspects of society: the political context and the economic context. Europe has witnessed troublesome developments in recent years in both the political and economic domains. The Great Recession hit European economies hard after the summer of 2008. Its consequences in Europe have been substantial, including increasing unemployment and government deficits, resulting in austerity measures and in some cases reforms forced by the IMF and the European Commission. Concurrently, Europe is experiencing political crises. Political scientists point to the increase in electoral volatility (Mair, 2008), and the rise of Populist Radical Right parties (Mudde, 2007) that undermine the stability of governmental coalitions. European political integration has received a firm popular rejection through referenda in various European countries (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010; Hakhverdian et al., 2013). The political and economic crises even play off against each other. European citizens have blamed the EU for failing to vigorously address the economic crisis because of its multilayered political structure. However, in countries in which the EU has imposed vigorous measures, there has been a clear backlash against both national and European political authorities.

The relevance of the political and economic context also follows from the conceptualization of societal unease in Chapter 2, which shows the decline of political power and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability to be two of the five elements of societal unease. It can be expected that several political and economic factors relate to these two elements of societal unease. In explaining societal pessimism, I will focus on three political (supranationalization, political instability, and corruption) and four economic factors (retrenchment of welfare-state provisions, economic growth, unemployment and inflation) that relate to those two elements of societal unease.

This chapter investigates the political and economic roots of societal pessimism in 23 EU countries, with 13 waves of the Eurobarometer between 2006 and 2012. Below, I first theorize why the political and economic factors considered are likely to affect societal pessimism. After describing the data and method, I show cross-national differences in the level of societal pessimism and its development from 2006-2012, both on average and per country. The results section continues by testing the influence of political and economic factors on *cross-national* differences in multilevel models, and then proceeds to *longitudinal*, within-country changes to assess which political and economic factors have short-term effects on the level of societal pessimism within countries. The chapter concludes by describing the main outcomes and future research paths on the causes of societal pessimism.

5.2 Theoretical framework

The political causes of societal pessimism

There are several political contextual characteristics that can be considered in explaining societal pessimism, namely, supranationalization, political instability and corruption. What these factors have in common is that they add to a loss of society's grip on its own future, which adds to collective powerlessness, a key aspect of societal pessimism.

From the conceptualization of societal unease in Chapter 2, it follows that the decline of political power inspires societal pessimism. I discussed supranationalization and the transfer of political power to the European Union as one of the causes of the decline of political power because it results in less autonomy and ability to act unilaterally for the national government (Wallace, 1999). Therefore, I expect a transfer of power and resources to the EU to inspire societal pessimism, because it diminishes the grip on society's future in the national arena. To make this issue more concrete, I distinguish between financial redistribution in the EU and adopting the euro. Research shows that countries that benefit financially from the EU show higher evaluations of EU institutions and lower levels of euroscepticism (Mahler, Taylor, & Wozniak, 2000; Karp, Banducci, & Bowler, 2003; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010). Financial support from the EU can inspire optimism, whereas the opposite is likely in countries that pay more to the EU than they receive in subsidies, because they lose control over their own resources. I therefore hypothesize that the net benefit of EU subsidies decreases societal pessimism (H1). Furthermore, the EMU countries (which have the euro as their currency) experience a substantially higher level of interference in national decision making, such as European standards for the maximum level of budget deficit and demands from the Euro group related to the rate and type of social reforms. Therefore,

I expect citizens in EMU countries to be more societally pessimistic (H₂), because supranational power decreases national autonomy in policy decision making, adding to a sense of collective powerlessness.

Second, political instability can be expected to affect societal pessimism. When governments terminate their terms prematurely – regardless of the nature of the conflict within government – they have less of an ability to act in the face of problematic situations, again adding to collective powerlessness. Research into the durability of governments has focused on explaining government termination (Warwick, 1979; Lijphart, 1984; Warwick, 1992; Grofman & Van Roozendaal, 1997; Carmignani, 2002; Laver, 2003). To my knowledge, the only contribution that relates government durability to public opinion is the study of Harmel and Robertson (1986), who show that premature government change decreases support for democracy. I expect political instability to increase societal pessimism (H₃). In addition, I expect the opposite effect from the event of regular elections (regular as opposed to early, premature elections) because they tend to boost feelings of efficacy, i.e., the attitude that citizens have the ability to ‘take the reins’ of politics and society. Thus, I expect regular elections to have a negative effect on societal pessimism (H₄).

The third political factor to consider is corruption. A lack of integrity among politicians is likely to lower people’s expectations for societal improvement and the political system’s ability to achieve results. Despite a lack of research on societal pessimism, there is ample evidence of the effect of corruption on political and social trust. With few exceptions (Criado & Herreros, 2007), most studies find that corruption has a negative effect. Trust in the functioning of democracy (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003), confidence in government (Della Porta, 2000) or Parliament (Van der Meer, 2010), and broad institutional trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Chang & Chu, 2006; Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012) are negatively influenced by corruption. Research into corruption’s influence on interpersonal trust and generalized trust yields similar results (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Zak & Knack, 2001; Seligson, 2002), with the exception of Uslaner (2002). Thus, the fifth hypothesis is as follows: corruption increases societal pessimism (H₅).

The economic causes of societal pessimism

On the economic side, during last decade, multiple factors might have stimulated a perception of increasing socioeconomic vulnerability, which is the fifth element of societal unease in Chapter 2. This increasing socioeconomic vulnerability does not refer to people’s personal finances but instead to their worries about a societal trend of diminishing socioeconomic guarantees (e.g. Samuelson, 1995). This is also referred to as

the individualization of risks (Bauman, 2006; 2007). One development that increases socioeconomic vulnerability is the retrenchment of welfare state provisions across Europe, which corrodes the protection of citizens in a vulnerable position (Pierson, 1998; Korpi, 2003). Cutbacks in social security are therefore expected to increase societal pessimism (H6).

More generally, economic developments are also likely to affect societal pessimism. I specifically look at developments instead of the level of wealth, such as GDP, because societal pessimism indicates a decline. A country's initial level of welfare or wealth seems less important than the losses that are taking place. Economic growth directly boosts society's potential to tackle societal challenges, whereas economic recessions tend to deepen those challenges, and increase socioeconomic vulnerability. I have expectations about three aspects of macro-economic performance: economic growth, unemployment rates, and inflation. Previous research has produced mixed results about the economy's effect on social attitudes. Evidence that growth in GDP influences political support is mixed at best (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Van der Meer, 2010). This also goes for unemployment (De Boef & Kellstedt, 2004; Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012). More consistent support follows from research into the negative effect of inflation on political trust (Clarke, Dutt, & Kornberg, 1993; Taylor, 2000; De Boef & Kellstedt, 2004). I hypothesize that economic recession (H7a), unemployment (H7b), and inflation (H7c) inspire societal pessimism because they increase citizens' socioeconomic vulnerability.

The character of societal pessimism

In this chapter, the influence of political and economic factors is examined both cross-nationally and longitudinally within countries. There are both theoretical and methodological reasons to do so. Theoretically, the political and economic roots of societal pessimism lie in citizens' expectations or evaluations falling short of some standard. It is unclear, however, what shapes this standard. To some extent these standards may be fundamentally idiosyncratic, varying from citizen to citizen based on personality, socio-economic situation, or political outlook. However, to the extent that national events, processes and outcomes affect societal pessimism, there should be some commonality in citizens' standards. Such a benchmark may be based on citizens' historical experiences within each state – e.g., being accustomed to a high level of economic growth. This would imply a within-country, longitudinal comparison. Alternatively, the benchmark may be based on a comparison to other countries. This would imply a cross-national comparison. Finally, the benchmark may be absolute (independent of historical experiences or cross-national comparisons) if

the longitudinal and cross-national analyses produce the same set of determinants of societal pessimism. Methodologically, we can expect the variance of some factors to show mainly cross-national differences, for instance, political factors such as corruption and EMU versus non-EMU countries. These factors do not change much (if at all) over time within countries. Other factors can show both cross-national and longitudinal variation. For these theoretical and methodological reasons, I examine both cross-national and longitudinal comparisons of societal pessimism in this chapter.

In the previous chapters, I theorized societal pessimism to be an attitude with a distinct dynamic, instead of the sum of attitudes about aspects of society. However, when the latter is the case, it is determined by conceptually related attitudes about societal domains such as political trust and economic expectations. To check this, I look at the intermediary role of these two attitudes. I also include life satisfaction to guarantee that the findings are not based on egotrophic pessimism. When societal pessimism is based on citizens' satisfaction with private life, politics and the economy, the hypothesized effects set forth above should be causally mediated by citizens' evaluation of private life, politics and the economy. When societal pessimism is distinct from these domains, such mediating effects should not drive the findings.

5.3 Data and Methods

Data and operationalization

To test the hypotheses, I stapled 13 Eurobarometer (EB) surveys covering the period 2006-2012.² These particular EB waves include an item about the direction in which citizens think their country is heading: "At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in [your country]". The answer categories are "things are going in the right direction" (optimists), "things are going in the wrong direction" (pessimists), and a spontaneous "neither one nor the other" (undecideds). This item is the same as one of the items on societal pessimism in Chapter 3, except that the latter has 4 answer options (see section 3.2). "Don't know" is treated as missing. I restrict the analysis to countries that have been EU members since the beginning of this period, and I exclude Cyprus and Greece because

2 Eurobarometers 66.1 (Sept-Oct 2006), 68.1 (Sept-Nov 2007), 69.2 (Mar-May 2008), 70.1 (Oct-Nov 2008), 71.1 (Jan-Feb 2009), 71.3 (Jun-Jul 2009), 72.4 (Oct-Nov 2009), 73.4 (May 2010), 74.2 (Nov 2010), 75.3 (May 2011), 76.3 (Nov 2011), 77.3 (May 2012) and 78.1 (Nov 2012).

of missing data in those countries. This leaves us with 23 countries³, with East and West Germany merged.⁴

The macro level data stem from various sources. *Net EU benefit* is measured with data from the European Commission, namely, the net balance of costs and benefits to/from the EU in terms of GNI percentage (European Commission, 2013a). A second context variable distinguishes whether countries are in the EMU, with the categories of non-EMU countries (reference category), new EMU countries (which adopted the euro during the period under investigation (2006–2012)), and established EMU countries.⁵

I operationalized *political instability* in two ways. First, I coded early elections in the period 2000–2011 because of an inevitable, obligatory dissolution of parliament (for example, because of conflict within the coalition or a governing party). Early elections that take place on the government's initiative without a political crisis demanding it are not coded as early elections. The variable of early elections indicates whether such an early election occurred the year before each wave. As a second operationalization, I use data from Comparative Political Data Set III⁶, namely, the number of governmental changes during the previous year caused by changes in the composition of government (ministers or parties entering/leaving the coalition and termination of government). Clearly, this is an extension of the early elections variable. Unlike the longitudinal analyses, I used the percentage, or sum respectively, of these variables between 2000 and 2011 in the cross-national models. This longer time span is chosen to reflect recent history, which is likely to shape perceptions of political instability.⁷ The event of *elections* in general is also coded for each country, and this variable indicates whether parliamentary elections have taken place in the previous year.

3 Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

4 Eurobarometer survey data are collected separately for East and West Germany, but country level indicators are only available for Germany as a whole. The data for East and West Germany are merged. To create a ratio of respondents between East and West Germany that is consistent with demographic reality (1:4), 250 of the 500 respondents from East Germany are randomly deleted from each wave.

5 Non-EMU countries: Czech Republic, Denmark, Great Britain, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden. New EMU countries: Estonia, Malta, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Established EMU countries: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain.

6 http://www.ipw.unibe.ch/content/team/klaus_armingeon/comparative_political_data_sets/index_ger.html.

7 I checked whether shortening the timespan to the years 2005–2011 would change the results, but it did not; only the effects were smaller.

Corruption is operationalized with Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, in which a low score refers to a high level of corruption (Teorell et al., 2013). Cutbacks in *social security* are measured with yearly differences in an OECD salary replacement rate, with a negative number indicating a decrease in the social security rate over that year.⁸ Eurostat yearly data on *inflation* and the mean of the two quarters before each wave on *GDP growth* and *unemployment* are used as operationalizations of these economic factors.

On the individual level, I control for gender, age (15-24, 25-39, 40-54, 55+) educational level (low, medium, or highly educated, and students)⁹, employment status (employed, unemployed, or other (which includes people who are retired or ill, homemakers and students)), and type of community (rural area or village, small or medium-sized town and large town). All of the missing individual-level data are list-wise deleted.

To examine the character of societal pessimism, I repeated all of the final analyses, including three individual-level attitudes, which are all dummy variables: satisfaction with life (very or fairly satisfied versus not very or not at all satisfied), economic expectation for the next year (worse versus better or the same), and trust in Parliament (tend to trust versus tend not to trust). The correlations of societal pessimism with these attitudes are weak to moderate: .21 (life satisfaction), .30 (economic expectation) and .39 (political trust).

Research design and method

Because the dependent variable has three answer categories and the data show a hierarchical structure, the most suitable type of analysis is multilevel multinomial regression. I chose optimists as a reference category to obtain a picture of the characteristics that influence societal pessimism. The analyses are performed using MlwiN 2.30.

If societal pessimism is at least partly rooted in external and objective indicators, citizens are assumed to compare their country's performance and procedures against another benchmark. This comparison may be cross-national (i.e., a comparison with other countries) and/or longitudinal (i.e., a comparison to one's own country's past). Therefore, I set up the analyses in two ways.

8 <http://www.oecd.org/els/benefitsandwagesstatistics.htm>. Five countries had missing values in wave 2006-3, which were addressed by adding a dummy to the analyses.

9 Education is originally measured in number of years of education, where 15 years or less is used as a low educational level, 16 to 19 years is medium and 20 or more is high.

First, I examined societal pessimism in a cross-national setup, analyzing country-level differences. The hypotheses in this design imply two levels of analysis: individuals and countries. However, because the data have a three-level structure (individuals, nested in country-specific surveys, nested in countries), the multilevel analyses also cover the country-wave combination as a middle level, even though I do not model any effects at this level. To eliminate joint longitudinal variation from the models that exists independent of country-specific variations (i.e., survey design effects, or cross-national events), I included dummy variables for each wave.¹⁰ I operationalized all of the economic and political effects as country means of the context variables across the 2006-2012 period (except for EMU country, early elections and changes in government; see above).

Second, I examined societal pessimism as the result of within-country, longitudinal changes. Again, the theory requires two levels of analysis (here: individual and country-wave combinations), whereas the data show clustering at three levels (individual, country-wave combinations, countries). In these analyses, I needed to eliminate cross-national variance. I did so in several ways. First, I included country dummies to eliminate any cross-national mean difference of the dependent variable. Second, I centered all of the relevant country-level characteristics around their longitudinal mean, thereby filtering out any cross-national difference of these theoretically relevant independent variables. Finally, I again eliminated any joint longitudinal variation from the models by including dummies for each survey wave.

To avoid overdetermined models and to limit collinearity issues, I carefully built my models in a stepwise fashion. First, I estimated the political and economic models of societal pessimism separately. In the second stage, in which I combined political and economic factors, I included only those contextual determinants for which $b > 1.65$ SE for societal pessimists (because I do not have hypotheses about the undecideds group, these results did not drive the decision to omit or retain variables in the various steps). Moreover, I performed various robustness checks. First, I assessed the robustness of my models by adding variables in a different order. Second, I checked the extent to which the cross-national models hold after the inclusion of Greece (which was likely to function as an outlier because of its extraordinary political and economic developments, but empirically turned out not to be an influential case). All of my checks suggest that the findings are robust.

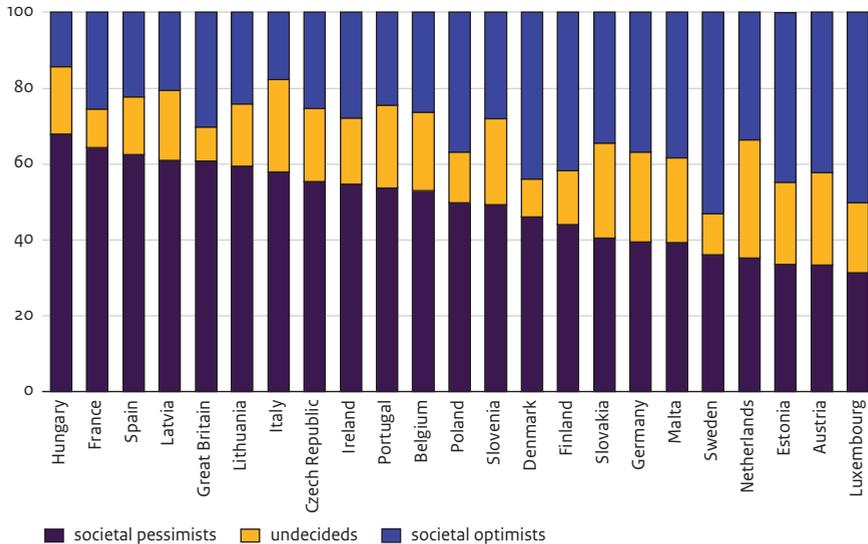
10 A typical example of such a cross-national event outside the scope of the analyses is that of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, which led to both a 'rally 'round the flag' response (i.e., a boost in trust) and an increase in fear across Western countries.

5.4 Results

Descriptive patterns

How societally pessimistic is Europe? Which countries are especially pessimistic? Figure 5.1 answers these questions. Taking the country means for the period 2006–2012, 50% of Europeans think their country is heading in the wrong direction, 32% think it's instead going in the right direction and 19% are undecided. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that as many as half of Europeans can be labeled as societal pessimists during this period. This means that in Europe, societal pessimism is a relatively common phenomenon, not a minority attitude. If we compare countries, we see considerable differences. Although in most countries (except for Sweden,

Figure 5.1 International distribution of societal pessimism (national means, 2006–2012)



Austria, Estonia, and Luxembourg), the pessimists are the largest group, their proportion differs from 68% in Hungary to 31% in Luxembourg. The five most pessimistic and optimistic countries (Hungary, France, Spain, Latvia and Britain versus Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria, Estonia and Luxembourg) are relatively heterogeneous groups. However, we can see some similarities between the most pessimistic and the least pessimistic countries. The societally pessimistic countries are large Western European countries, some with clear ethnic and cultural divisions, such as France, Spain, Great Britain and Italy, whereas the least pessimistic group

consists of relatively small Western European countries with well-developed welfare states, such as Luxembourg, Austria, Sweden, and the Netherlands. Nevertheless, these are only tentative patterns, given that Germany is relatively optimistic and post-Communist countries are both among the most societally pessimistic and the most societally optimistic peoples.

Figure 5.2 presents the development of societal pessimism over time using the pooled data. It shows an overall increase of societal pessimism between 2006 and 2012; however, this pattern is not linear. After the beginning of the financial crisis in the fall of 2008, societal pessimism increased, then slightly decreased, then increased again in the fall of 2011. A comparison of the different waves shows that since the fourth quarter of 2008, the level of societal pessimism was significantly higher than in 2006-3 (third quarter). Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that societal pessimism was already substantial before the economic crisis. During the first three waves included here – 2006 through 2008 – the mean level of societal pessimism in Europe was 42%. This means that despite any influence that the Great Recession may have had on societal pessimism, a great deal of the variance remains unexplained.

Figure 5.2 Distribution of societal pessimism 2006-2012 (pooled data)

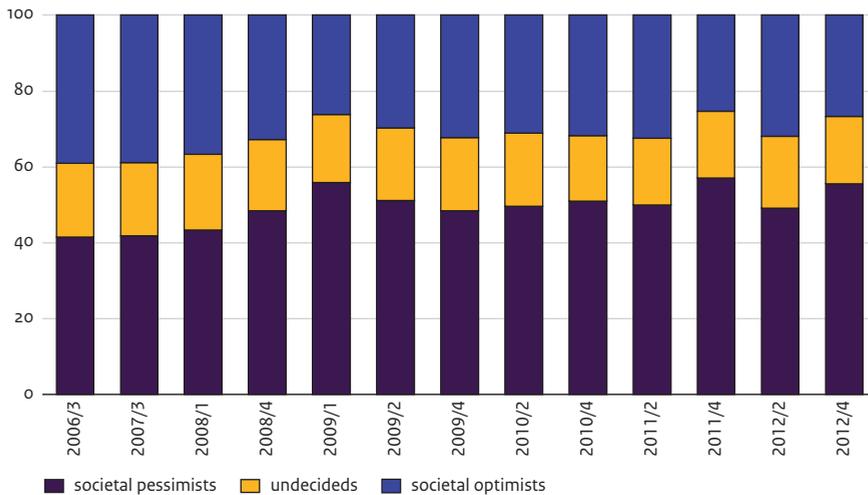


Figure 5.3 Within-country changes in societal pessimism 2006-2012

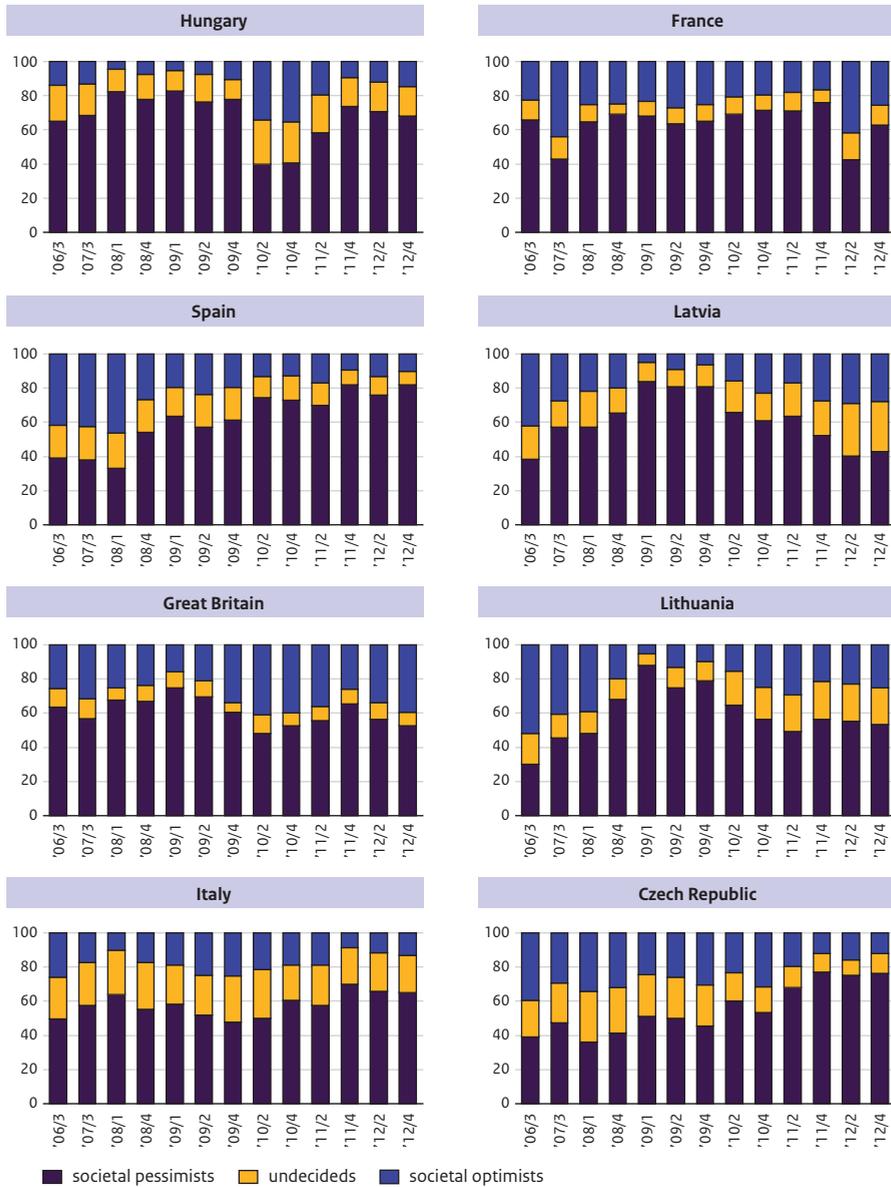


Figure 5.3 (Continued)



Figure 5.3 (Continued)



Figure 5.3 shows the development of societal pessimism for all 23 countries during the period of study, 2006–2012 (with the specific quarters of the year after the /sign). The countries in Figure 5.3 are sorted from most to least societally pessimistic. Several things stand out from these figures. First, societal pessimism is relatively volatile.

We see considerable changes in the level of societal pessimism in 2006-2012. Second, this is applicable to all countries, whether very societally pessimistic or relatively optimistic. Third, on first sight, there is no general, clear-cut pattern of increased societal pessimism caused by the economic crisis. The increase of societal pessimism in Spain, which was hit hard by the economic crisis, since the last quarter of 2008 (when the financial crisis started), is not a European pattern.

If we break down the variance across the different levels of analysis, we can assess how much of the variance of the dependent variable is accounted for at the macro level. Five percent of the total variance between optimists and pessimists is situated at the country level; another 5% is located at the country-wave level. That means that 10% of all differences – a substantial amount – between optimists and pessimists are accounted for by differences between countries and waves. The differences between optimists and undecided are, to a lesser extent, situated at the macro level (3% and 2%, respectively).

Cross-national differences in societal pessimism explained

To what extent can we explain societal pessimism with country determinants? Table 5.1 shows the results of the first set of multilevel multinomial regressions on cross-national differences in societal pessimism, where I use the country means of the independent variables. That table presents the coefficients and SEs of pessimists and undecideds, with optimists as the reference category. Bold numbers indicate the significant variables, where significance is established by either two-sided (individual controls) or one-sided tests (hypothesized context effects). The dummy variables that identify survey waves are not presented in Table 5.1 for reasons of space, but the complete models are shown in Table C1 of Appendix C.

Model 1 starts by including the political factors. It shows that people are more likely to be societally pessimistic than optimistic both in countries with unstable governments (which see many changes) and in countries with higher levels of corruption. For the undecideds, I find significant effects of corruption and changes in government in the same direction. These results are in line with H3 and H5. Contrary to expectations, EMU countries do not show higher levels of societal pessimism, and I find a negative effect for countries that are new to the euro. Additionally, early elections do not have a positive effect on societal pessimism; instead, they have a negative effect. This suggests rejection of H2 and H3. However, in the undecided category, the results are in line with my expectations: people in established EMU countries are more often undecided

Table 5.1 Cross-national differences in societal pessimism explained, 2006-2012^{ab}

		Model 1				Model 2			
		pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
		B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Individual level:									
controls									
gender (male)		0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)	0.21	(.01)	0.19	(.01)
age (40-54)	15-24	-0.21	(.02)	-0.20	(.03)	-0.20	(.02)	-0.20	(.03)
	25-39	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.10	(.01)	-0.11	(.02)
	55+	-0.17	(.01)	-0.09	(.02)	-0.16	(.01)	-0.09	(.02)
education (medium)	low	0.24	(.01)	0.13	(.02)	0.23	(.01)	0.11	(.02)
	high	-0.30	(.01)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.30	(.01)	-0.19	(.01)
	student	-0.37	(.02)	-0.27	(.03)	-0.37	(.02)	-0.27	(.03)
employment status (employed)	unemployed	0.44	(.02)	0.17	(.02)	0.43	(.02)	0.15	(.02)
	other	0.02	(.01)	0.03	(.02)	0.01	(.01)	0.02	(.02)
community (small town)	rural village	0.04	(.01)	0.02	(.01)	0.04	(.01)	0.02	(.01)
	large town	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)
Individual level:									
attitudes									
life satisfaction									
negative economic expectation									
political distrust									
Country level: political									
mean net EU benefit		-0.09	(.07)	0.01	(.06)				
EMU (no euro)	new	-0.44	(.17)	0.26	(.13)				
	established	0.16	(.15)	0.50	(.12)				
governmental changes 2000-2011		0.13	(.04)	0.09	(.03)				
early elections 2000-2011		-0.61	(.25)	0.45	(.19)				
mean elections		0.18	(.77)	-0.68	(.60)				
mean corruption		-0.19	(.05)	-0.16	(.04)				
Country level: economic									
mean change social benefits						0.22	(.11)	0.28	(.09)
Missing values social benefits (see footnote 8)						-0.63	(.22)	-0.31	(.16)
mean GDP growth						0.13	(.22)	0.19	(.19)
mean unemployment						0.06	(.03)	0.02	(.03)
mean inflation						0.04	(.06)	0.01	(.06)
explained variance		69%		75%		23%		15%	
country level									

a Multinomial multilevel analysis with three levels, reference category = optimists.

b B coefficients are log odds. Bold coefficients are significant with $p < .05$. For individual coefficients, two-sided significance tests are performed, for macro coefficients one-sided significance test are performed.

Table 5.1 (Continued)

		Model 3				Model 4			
		pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
		B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Individual level:									
controls									
gender (male)		0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)	0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)
age (40-54)	15-24	-0.21	(.02)	-0.20	(.03)	-0.08	(.02)	-0.15	(.03)
	25-39	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.05	(.01)	-0.10	(.01)
	55+	-0.17	(.01)	-0.09	(.02)	-0.11	(.01)	-0.05	(.02)
education (medium)	low	0.24	(.01)	0.13	(.02)	0.18	(.01)	0.10	(.02)
	high	-0.30	(.01)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.13	(.01)
	student	-0.37	(.02)	-0.27	(.03)	-0.16	(.03)	-0.19	(.03)
employment status (employed)	unemployed	0.44	(.02)	0.17	(.02)	0.21	(.02)	0.04	(.02)
	other	0.02	(.01)	0.03	(.02)	-0.01	(.01)	0.02	(.02)
community (small town)	rural village	0.03	(.01)	0.02	(.01)	0.03	(.01)	0.01	(.01)
	large town	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.03	(.01)
Individual level:									
attitudes									
life satisfaction						0.85	(.01)	0.50	(.01)
negative economic expectation						1.20	(.01)	0.43	(.01)
political distrust						1.64	(.01)	0.93	(.01)
Country level:									
political									
mean net EU benefit									
EMU (no euro)	new	-0.41	(.17)	0.26	(.14)	-0.29	(.16)	0.36	(.14)
	established	0.15	(.16)	0.46	(.13)	0.26	(.15)	0.55	(.13)
governmental changes 2000-2011		0.13	(.04)	0.09	(.03)	0.11	(.04)	0.07	(.03)
early elections 2000-2011		-0.49	(.27)	0.37	(.21)	-0.60	(.24)	0.35	(.22)
mean elections									
mean corruption		-0.13	(.05)	-0.17	(.04)	0.02	(.04)	-0.12	(.04)
Country level:									
economic									
mean change social benefits		0.04	(.09)	0.04	(.07)	-0.10	(.08)	-0.05	(.07)
Missing values social benefits (see footnote 8)		-0.64	(.22)	-0.32	(.16)	-0.64	(.19)	-0.35	(.15)
mean GDP growth									
mean unemployment		0.02	(.02)	-0.01	(.02)	0.01	(.02)	-0.02	(.02)
mean inflation									
explained variance country level		69%		72%		62%		72%	

than optimistic about their country's direction, and early elections also increase the number of undecideds. The hypotheses regarding the other political factors, the net EU benefit (H1) and elections in general (H4) are to be rejected on the basis of model 1. The model explains a very large share of the between-country variance for the pessimists and the undecideds in the amount of 69% and 75%, respectively.¹¹

The individual controls show effects that can be expected and are in line with the results in Chapter 3. Education negatively affects societal pessimism, whereas unemployment has a positive effect. Furthermore, age matters, with the middle-aged (25-39 and 40-55) being the most likely to be pessimistic, whereas the oldest cohort (55+) is not more likely to be pessimistic about society than youth (15-25). People in rural areas are significantly more often found to be societally pessimistic, whereas inhabitants of large cities are less inclined to societal pessimism.

Model 2 focuses on economic determinants. Two factors stand out: the change in the social benefit rate over the previous year and the unemployment level over the previous six months both stimulate societal pessimism. The latter finding is in line with H7b on unemployment, but the former directly contradicts H6. It could be that when benefit rates did increase in this period, it was because of economically problematic developments that are not included in the model. If I compare the results with the hypotheses, H6 on changes in benefits, H7a on recession and H7c on inflation are refuted. Although the explained variance is substantial, it is much smaller than in model 1: 23% (pessimists) and 15% (undecideds), respectively, is explained by the model.

Model 3 includes the significant context factors of models 1 and 2 for societal pessimists. The political factors that showed an influence in model 1 retain significance, and the effects are all in the same direction. Just as in Model 1, new EMU countries show lower levels of societal pessimism than do non-EMU countries, indicating that joining the EMU either injects a positive sentiment or parallels positive developments in a country that yields this positive outlook. In established euro countries, people are not more likely to be pessimistic. Therefore, H2 is not supported by the results. H3, which posits that political instability increases societal pessimism, does find support: more governmental changes result in a higher likelihood of societal pessimism. However, the percentage of early elections, which is the other operationalization of political instability, shows contrasting results. This remarkable result is robust.¹² It means that when considering all of a government's changes, governmental instability boosts

11 The reference model includes wave dummies, individual controls, and (in the case of model 4) individual attitudes.

12 I checked whether the results change when adding only governmental changes, early elections or regular elections, or two out of three, to model 1. This is not the case. Whereas the early elections variable loses significance in one of the alternative models, the effect is still in the same direction. In addition, using an alternative operationalization (see footnote 7) does not alter the results.

societal pessimism, whereas early elections boost optimism. This suggests that the fall of a government can create new hope for a country's future. This could also be the side effect of a political system's responsiveness, which is sensitive to the electorate's sentiment. The effect of corruption also finds support: corruption increases societal pessimism (H5). Because none of the economic factors are significant in model 3, all of the economic hypotheses must be rejected. Clearly, the political factors – namely, political instability and corruption – are far more important than the economic factors to explain cross-national differences in societal pessimism.

Longitudinal differences in societal pessimism explained

Table 5.2 shows the results of the second set of multilevel analyses on longitudinal differences in societal pessimism within countries, using the centered independent variables. The inclusion of wave and country dummies eliminates common variance within waves and within countries (Table C2-1 and Table C2-2 of Appendix C show the full model, including these dummies). In model 5, I present the effects of political changes within countries over time. That model shows that people are less likely to be pessimists or undecideds if their country's net benefit from the EU during the previous year was relatively high compared to other years. This is in line with H1. All of the other political hypotheses must be refuted. Early elections decrease rather than increase societal pessimism, whereas elections stimulate societal pessimism. This contradicts my expectations. It could be that the fall of a malfunctioning government is a positive development, whereas new elections increase uncertainty.

Model 6 presents the effects of economic changes within countries. Unemployment significantly increases societal pessimism, whereas economic growth decreases societal pessimism. Moreover, economic growth and unemployment have the same effects on the chance of being societally undecided instead of optimistic. These results are in line with hypotheses H7a and H7b. However, hypotheses H6 (on change in social benefits) and H7c (on inflation) must be rejected. The explained variance in model 6 is higher than in model 5 (16% and 10% compared to 7% and 7%)¹³, indicating that unlike the cross-national models, economic factors are more important than political factors in explaining longitudinal differences in societal pessimism.

Model 7 shows the effects when the significant predictors in models 5 and 6 are combined. Net EU benefit retains its negative effect for both pessimists and undecideds, and early elections and regular elections retain their unexpected effects.

13 The reference model includes wave dummies, individual controls, and (in the case of model 8) individual attitudes.

Table 5.2 Longitudinal differences in societal pessimism explained, 2006-2012^{ab}

		Model 1				Model 2			
		pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
		B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Individual level: controls									
gender (male)		0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)	0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)
age (40-54)	15-24	-0.21	(.02)	-0.21	(.03)	-0.21	(.02)	-0.21	(.03)
	25-39	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)
	55+	-0.18	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.11	(.02)
education (medium)	low	0.25	(.01)	0.14	(.02)	0.25	(.01)	0.14	(.02)
	high	-0.31	(.01)	-0.19	(.01)	-0.31	(.01)	-0.19	(.01)
	student	-0.37	(.02)	-0.27	(.03)	-0.38	(.03)	-0.27	(.03)
employment status (employed)	unemployed	0.45	(.02)	0.18	(.02)	0.46	(.02)	0.18	(.02)
	other	0.01	(.01)	0.03	(.02)	0.01	(.01)	0.03	(.02)
community (small town)	rural village	0.04	(.01)	0.03	(.01)	0.04	(.01)	0.02	(.01)
	large town	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)
Individual level: attitudes									
life satisfaction									
negative economic expectation									
political distrust									
Country level: political									
	centered net EU benefit	-0.12	(.05)	-0.02	(.03)				
	centered changes government	0.06	(.07)	0.08	(.05)				
	centered early elections	-0.23	(.10)	0.02	(.07)				
	centered elections	0.14	(.08)	-0.03	(.06)				
	centered corruption	-0.04	(.09)	0.13	(.06)				
Country level: economic									
	centered change social benefits					0.00	(.02)	-0.02	(.01)
	Missing values social benefits (see footnote 8)					-0.40	0.20	-0.20	0.14
	centered GDP growth					-0.15	(.03)	-0.06	(.02)
	centered unemployment					0.06	(.01)	0.04	(.01)
	centered inflation					0.04	(.02)	-0.01	(.01)
	explained variance country level	7%		7%		16%		10%	

a Multinomial multilevel analysis with three levels, reference category = optimists.

b B coefficients are log odds. Bold coefficients are significant with $p < .05$. For individual coefficients, two-sided significance tests are performed, for macro coefficients one-sided significance test are performed.

In addition, GDP growth and unemployment remain significant. This means that I can accept hypotheses H1 (on the EU benefit), H7a (GDP growth) and H7b (unemployment) for longitudinal changes in societal pessimism within countries.

Finally, we can conclude that the contextual results in the longitudinal models are very different from those in the cross-national models. Whereas cross-national variations in societal pessimism are best explained by political factors, longitudinal within-country variations are primarily explained by economic factors. That means that cross-national differences in societal pessimism are caused by differences in political context, whereas longitudinal changes in societal pessimism within countries are primarily driven by the economic situation.

Controlling for the mediating effects of individual attitudes

To check whether my findings are driven by political trust, economic expectations or life satisfaction, I add those effects in models 4 and 8. For the cross-national analyses, model 3 can be compared to model 4. This comparison shows that the results are mostly the same. The only difference is that the effect of corruption becomes insignificant. The other determinants are only marginally affected, if at all. For the longitudinal analyses, including attitudinal variables yields almost identical conclusions as model 7 in Table 5.2. The net EU benefit loses its significance, but only slightly (T-value is 1.58).

These results indicate that the effect of political and economic context on societal pessimism is not driven by citizens' evaluation of politics and the economy. Only the cross-national effect of corruption disappears completely after the inclusion of political attitudes, possibly because the latter mediates the effect. This indicates that a political evaluation is occurring when answering a question on societal pessimism. However, none of the other determinants lose their impact on societal pessimism. This suggests that the results are not driven by evaluations based on the political or economic situation. Furthermore, this underlines this book's argument that societal pessimism is an attitude with a dynamic of its own, next to known attitudes in public opinion research such as political trust or economic expectations.

5.5 Conclusions and Discussion

Societal pessimism, or the sentiment that society is in decline, thrives in Europe. Between 2006 and 2012, the average share of societal pessimists was 50%. However, there are large cross-national differences. In some countries, two-thirds of the population is societally pessimistic (Hungary, France, Spain), whereas elsewhere, only approximately one-third of the population is societally pessimistic (Austria, Estonia

and Luxembourg). Furthermore, societal pessimism has increased since the Great Recession hit Europe in 2008, compared to pre-crisis levels in 2006. Nevertheless, the level of pessimism was already high before the crisis, with 42% of Europeans thinking their country was heading in the wrong direction. Although pre-2006 cross-national data for societal pessimism are unavailable, these findings indicate that recent economic developments alone cannot account for a pessimistic outlook on society. Besides the substantial level of societal pessimism, the country-specific figures show that there is considerable volatility in societal pessimism within countries, regardless of the level of societal pessimism.

To understand the political and economic roots of societal pessimism, I performed cross-national and longitudinal analyses. Political characteristics such as supranationalism, political instability, and corruption are likely to drive societal pessimism to the extent that they stimulate a sense of collective powerlessness and an inability to improve societal conditions. Economic characteristics such as decreasing social benefits, recession, unemployment, and inflation are likely to stimulate societal pessimism by increasing socioeconomic vulnerability.

The results show that cross-national differences in societal pessimism depend mostly on political determinants, whereas longitudinal differences within countries are mostly affected by economic determinants. Thus, societal pessimism is rooted in both stable conditions such as political institutions and economic deterioration compared to the previous year. Internationally, corruption and governmental instability increase societal pessimism. Contrary to my expectations, early elections decrease societal pessimism, probably because the fall of an unstable or controversial government can create new hope for the country's future. Also unexpectedly, societal pessimism is lower in new EMU countries than in non-EMU countries. This may indicate that joining the EMU injects a positive sentiment. The other political factors do not achieve significance, nor do any of the economic determinants. The explained variance in the cross-national model is large (69%) at the country level.

In the longitudinal analyses, I find that the net EU benefit decreases societal pessimism, as does economic growth, whereas unemployment increases societal pessimism. Contrary to my expectations, but in line with the cross-national findings, early elections decrease societal pessimism while regular elections increase it, apparently adding to uncertainty. Here, the explained variance is substantially lower (21%), meaning that in future research, more factors need to be taken into account in this type of analysis. The non-finding (both cross-nationally and longitudinally) of the effect of welfare-state retrenchment on societal pessimism is remarkable because it is theorized in Chapter 2 that this retrenchment inspires the perception of increasing

socioeconomic insecurity (e.g. Samuelson, 1995; Bauman, 2006; 2007). Either the perceptions of insecurity are not based on factual developments or other aspects of the welfare state's retrenchment should be considered that reflect benefit eligibility, not benefit levels, for instance.

This chapter also offers insight into the character of social pessimism. First, societal pessimism varies considerably not only between countries but also within countries. This suggests that societal pessimism is partly rooted in structural conditions and partly in more conjunctural ones. Societal pessimism is not just a thermometer of public opinion at a certain point in time, because it is also structurally inspired by country-specific conditions. Second, the different effects in the cross-national and longitudinal analyses suggest that there is no absolute reference point that drives societal pessimism, meaning that, for instance, people believe that corruption is too widespread without making a comparison to either other countries or previous times. Instead, sometimes this reference point is shaped by international comparisons, whereas other times it is shaped by the (recent) history of one's own country. Third, the results suggest that societal pessimism is an attitude with a dynamic of its own; it is not the sum of evaluations of aspects of society or one's own life. This follows from the weak to moderate correlations between social pessimism and life satisfaction, political trust and economic expectations, along with the fact that including these three attitudes barely affects the political and economic determinants of societal pessimism.

The results also indicate that societal pessimism is rooted in objective political and economic developments, events and outcomes in the recent past. Although we must acknowledge that Europe's economic and political conditions are at a relatively high level compared to other continents and that a deterioration of these conditions does not immediately point to real disaster, deterioration is clearly both perceived and problematic to citizens. This challenges the notion of a European culture of pessimism. Apparently, we are pessimistic for good reasons. If anything, our societal pessimism reflects a culture of realism.

The real roots of societal pessimism have two implications. On the one hand, given the supposedly stagnating effects of societal pessimism, there is a risk that enduring societal pessimism – itself caused by political instability or economic recession – induces further stagnation and pessimism. Indeed, this downward spiral is suggested both in the literature (Moïsi, 2009) and by (political) leaders (RTL Nieuws, 2013; Vatican Network, 2014; The Times, 2015). On the other hand, these same political and economic roots of societal pessimism imply that such a self-fulfilling prophecy can be offset by changes in the same institutions and policies that I find to affect societal pessimism: revisions of net contributions to the EU, diminishing political instability (governmental changes)

and economic policy on growth and unemployment. Notwithstanding the political character of such decisions and the fact that they cannot be adjusted easily, political leaders need not sit back and watch societal pessimism take its course.

Having established the effect of various political and economic factors by no means exhausts the list of possible causes of societal pessimism that deserve scrutiny. If we consider the conceptual model of societal unease in Chapter 2, other important causes to consider are the occurrence of technology-related disasters (from nuclear power-plant problems and dangerous levels of resistant bacteria in hospitals to negative side effects of (social) policies), the lack of ideology and long-term vision employed by political parties and their leaders, the influence of multinational companies on governmental decision making, lower financial protection due to more short-time contracts and flexibilization of the labor market, and the level of income inequality, especially the position of the middle class compared to that of the upper class (Ehrenreich, 1989). Although attention to the difference between rich and poor has generally increased since the study of Piketty (2014), I expect that the middle class's worsening position is most important to the rise of socioeconomic vulnerability (Ehrenreich, 1989).

Part III
Correlates and
Consequences

CHAPTER 6

When our country was still our country. Explaining support for Populist Radical Right Parties with societal pessimism¹

6.1 Introduction

This third part of the book examines the correlates and consequences of societal pessimism. This chapter studies the effect of societal pessimism on voting for a Populist Radical Right (PRR) party. In recent decades, the rise of PRR parties has been an important development in Western countries and has been the focus of a comprehensive literature. There are three dominant approaches to explaining support for these parties: economic grievances (socio-structural characteristics), cultural grievances (especially opposition to immigration) and political discontent (or protest) (Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2005; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Oesch, 2008). This chapter proposes that societal pessimism should be considered as an additional and possibly overarching characteristic of PRR voters when explaining their electoral potential. It argues that societally pessimistic voters are attracted to the nostalgic character of PRR parties (Betz & Johnson, 2004). This feature of PRR ideology, which is regularly mentioned by theorists but hardly studied empirically among voters, is exemplified in the recurring notion that the best times are in the past (Taggart, 2004).

As we already know from the figures in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, either the majority or a large minority of citizens in European countries is societally pessimistic. I defined societal pessimism as a sentiment that society is in decline. Societal pessimism is not a mere extrapolation of egotropic concerns but instead a characteristic of voters' worldview that cannot be explained by objective conditions alone. It is an expression

1 A previous version of this chapter is presented as Steenvoorden, E. and Harteveld, E. (2015) Grieving for Grandma's Greener Grass: Explaining Support for Radical Right Parties with Societal Pessimism, at the ECPR General Conference, Montreal, August 26-29.

of concern about unmanageable changes in Western societies that allegedly erode old certainties.

For citizens who are societally pessimistic, PRR parties are attractive because their stances show a similar pessimism and nostalgia for how society used to be. The political program of such parties often aims to radically alter the political and societal status quo (Mudde, 2007) in a way that seeks to ‘restore’ old social, ethno-cultural and political certainties as in the “heartland” (Taggart, 2004; Mudde, 2004). This heartland describes the good old days of yore, which are romanticized and do not necessarily refer to actual past times. Despite the theoretical emphasis on this element in PRR ideology, no attempt has been made to empirically capture this sentiment among voters. I argue and show that societal pessimism is indeed a robust and independent predictor of PRR voting. Whereas I find that societal pessimism is distributed in a tilted U-curve, with higher levels among the Radical Left and PRR end of the political spectrum, societal pessimism is particularly relevant in separating Radical from Mainstream Right voters. Although the data do not allow strong causal claims, the results indicate that societal pessimism is projected onto topics such as immigration and European integration.

This chapter adds to the understanding of PRR voting in several ways. First, by elaborating on the role of nostalgia and societal pessimism, I stress an understudied way in which party ideology and voter sentiment converge. Second, I contribute to the literature by focusing on the differences between PRR voters and those of one of its most important competitors – the Mainstream Right (Van der Brug et al., 2012). This chapter suggests that a large share of the electorally relevant differences between the voters of both party families can be attributed to differences in societal pessimism. Third, this differentiating power of societal pessimism between Mainstream Right voters and PRR voters adds to the understanding of an (emerging) a new axis of political competition centering about the appreciation of the risks in a rapidly globalizing world, transcending old economic Left and Right dichotomies (Kriesi et al., 2008; Azmanova, 2011).

6.2 Theory

In this chapter, I follow the definition of Mudde (2007), who proposes nativism, authoritarianism and populism to be the three central features of Populist Radical Right (PRR) parties. Below, I first discuss how nostalgia is a recurrent theme in the description of PRR ideology by leading scholars in the field, and then I continue to argue that this feature of party ideology is mirrored in their voters’ societal pessimism.

Finally, I discuss how societal pessimism relates to the three main approaches on PRR support.

The Nostalgia of the Populist Radical Right

Although not in the forefront of the theorization of PRR voting, various authors point to a profound sense of nostalgia as a feature of PRR ideology. Betz and Johnson (2004: 311) describe the PRR ideology as “a backward looking reactionary ideology, reflecting a deep sense of nostalgia for the good old days”. This is further elaborated in Taggart’s concept of the so-called “heartland” (Taggart, 2004). In contrast to a utopia, the “heartland” is not an ideal society that can be reached in the future, but a society that used to exist in the past and can be restored in the future. However, Taggart argues, this past is romanticized, and the heartland is an imaginary vision of the past, not a realistic perception. He stresses that the term “heartland” points to an imprecise, ambiguous concept that is felt rather than reasoned. A central feature of the heartland is its “unitary nature” (Taggart, 2004: 278), driven by simplicity. This shows in populist discourse through appeals to ‘the people’ – a notion that parties often do not bother to specify further, but that clearly points to a culturally homogeneous country. This fits with the overall populist ideology, which presents political choices as political truths with clear rights and wrongs (*ibid*). This longing for a previous, imagined country in Western Europe is also signaled by Duyvendak, who refers to it as restorative nostalgia to a national home, instigated by globalization and the presence of immigrants particularly (2011). “The debate over ‘the stolen home’ is deeply nostalgic. The past is portrayed as a closed and conflict-free whole, carried by citizens who all basically shared the same beliefs, norms and traditions” (Duyvendak, 2011: 85).

In a similar vein, and referring to populist parties in general, Canovan discusses the distrust of such parties towards progress as portrayed by mainstream parties (2004). All progressive initiatives, she argues, are advanced by a vanguard, which occupies a privileged status in society. This state of affairs devalues the “opinions, beliefs and way of life of the mass of mankind” (*ibid*: 246). Canovan characterizes populists as relatively suspicious of progress. A new way of doing things is not *per se* superior; instead, longstanding customs and traditions should be taken seriously. Similar to the heartland sentiment, we can label this distrust of progressive policies as backward-looking.

The characterization of far-right parties as the voice of a ‘silent counter-revolution’ (Ignazi, 1992; Ignazi, 2003) is another example of a longing for past times. The leftist revolution of the 1960s has shifted dominant social, moral, legal and political values in Western countries from conservative to progressive. Still, not all citizens appreciated

this shift. However, the opposing, right-wing faction did not have a political actor to speak on its behalf until new right-wing parties emerged to fill this gap. Although Ignazi reserves the specific label 'nostalgic' for the older extreme right parties, which had a fascist ideology that new extreme right parties do not, the silent counter-revolution can also more generally be seen as nostalgic for pre-revolutionary society.

It should be noted, however, that the different elements of this nostalgic heartland do not necessarily have to originate in the same true historical period, nor do all elements have to be shared among all parties. To the contrary, it is argued that "a politics from the heartland is likely to be specific in context" (Taggart, 2004: 285). For instance, some PRR parties – especially in Northwestern Europe – have adopted the defense of freedom of speech and the emancipation of women as important values to be protected against the influx of 'backward' immigrants (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007). This signals the incorporation of relatively recent, culturally progressive 'native norms' in the view of an allegedly immigrant-free heartland. In contrast, other parties, especially in Central-Eastern and Southern Europe, place the traditional family at center stage in their view of the good life of old, therefore defining women's emancipation or gay rights as corrupting elements (Mudde, 2007). Similarly, countries differ in the extent of their experience with mass labor immigration (e.g., Germany, the Netherlands), the presence of pre-statehood national minorities and Roma (Central Europe), or the influence of European integration (Switzerland, Norway), all of which lead to variances in the attributes of the heartland. This suggests that it is the construction of this idealized past in the national context, not some fixed elements within it, which is shared among the PRR.

The authors discussed above have signaled that PRR ideology includes nostalgia for a romanticized past. The other side of this coin is a concern about society's current direction. Saying that things 'used to be better' expresses an unease about developments taking place now. In other words, citizens' views on past, present and future are closely linked. Pessimism about current changes in society is central to the political cleavage of 'opportunity versus risk' proposed by Azmanova (2011). This cleavage is generated by the "social impact of global economic integration" (ibid: 386) and divides society in groups that perceive either increasing insecurities or increasing possibilities. This relates to the idea of 'losers' and 'winners' of globalization (Betz, 1994; Kriesi et al., 2008). Azmanova (2011) argues that political mobilization of the losers versus winners of globalization restructures political competition, and that in the 21st century, the resulting risks-versus-opportunity axis is replacing the classic left-right axis. On the one end of this new axis, both PRR and Radical Left parties can be found to stress risks, whereas Liberal and New Left occupy the other end and stress opportunities.

The sentiment that forms the center of this axis is the anticipation of risks that result from globalization. These risks are clearly economic, but they are also cultural in the sense that open borders and European unification threaten citizens with a homogeneous conception of the nation state (Kriesi et al., 2008). Usually, the extent to which risk perception is either egotropic, based on one's *own position* in society (as a loser or a winner), or results from what awaits *society at large*, remains unspecified. However, for most authors the emphasis is clearly on the former. In contrast, given the evidence discussed below, I argue that our understanding of the 'risks versus opportunity' axis should be broadened to include *sociotropic* evaluations. I expect that anxiety about society's increasing risks is not by necessity only based on citizens' own vulnerability, but also can be grounded in their perception of societal developments more generally. Below, I discuss how this anxiety can be captured by the sentiment of societal pessimism.

Societal pessimism

If PRR parties indeed thrive on nostalgia for yore and pessimism about society's future, this should be discernable in their electorate's attitudes. In other words, we would expect congruence between party ideology and voter sentiment. An attitude that captures this sentiment is *societal pessimism*. As already argued above, nostalgia and societal pessimism are two sides of the same coin.

There has been no research on the relationship between societal pessimism and PRR voting. However, the conceptualization of societal unease in Chapter 2 shows considerable overlap with PRR ideology. I defined societal unease as "a latent concern about the precarious state of society, which is constituted of the perceived unmanageable deterioration of five fundamental aspects of society: distrust in human capability, loss of ideology, decline of political power, decline of community and socioeconomic vulnerability".

Clearly, all of these five elements are related to PRR ideology. *Distrust of human capability* is very similar to the distrust of progress as described by Canovan (2004). The loss of ideology (i.e., the loss of politicians' vision of society) is replied to by PRRs in the form of the heartland (Taggart, 2004). The *decline of political power* caused by globalization and supranational influence (EU) is a central issue in the PRRs' insistence on returning power to the sovereign nation state. *Decline of community* is another feature of current society that PRR parties want to change by returning to the homogeneous heartland with reestablished moral standards and cultural homogeneity. Finally, a focus on (*personal*) *socioeconomic vulnerability* is increasingly a key feature of PRRs' ideology (Rydgren, 2012), in line with the loser-of-globalization thesis and

Azmanova's (2011) risks-versus-opportunity axis of political mobilization. However, socioeconomic vulnerability as part of societal unease reflects concern about general insecurity for most people in your country, not (per se) for yourself. This *sociotropic* form of concern about socioeconomic vulnerability is part of some PRR parties' call for 'de-globalization' (Mayer, 2013).

Because the concern about where society is heading (whether conceptualized as societal unease or societal pessimism) dovetails nicely with the nostalgic, pessimistic feature of PRRs' ideology, this attitude can be seen as echoing PRRs' pessimism among their electorates. Specifically, my hypothesis is that societal pessimism increases the chance of voting for a PRR party independent of established explanatory variables.

Although the aim here is to better understand PRR support, there are some tentative reasons to expect societal pessimism also to be a relevant feature of Radical Left voters. The Radical Left is not studied as a party family nearly as much as the PRR but is distinguished as a group of parties with their own ideological stance and style, namely, a rejection of capitalism and a stance that economic inequality is the basis of current political and social arrangements (March & Mudde, 2005; March & Rommerskirchen, 2015). What is important here is that such parties are also referred to as populist (March & Mudde, 2005; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013; Rooduijn, De Lange, & Van der Brug, 2014). Some of the authors above argue that backward views of a romanticized past and the concept of the 'heartland' are features of *populism* more generally, which can also be found on the Radical Left (Canovan, 2004; Taggart, 2004). Therefore, although I apply these theoretical notions to explain PRR voting, I also investigate whether it exists among the Radical Left's voters.

Established theories on Populist Radical Right voting

How does societal pessimism differ from or relate to existing theories and evidence about determinants of PRR voting? One common model of PRR voting is based on *socio-structural characteristics*. It takes as a starting point that voters' choices are rooted in their structural positions in society. In other words, it assumes a "systematic link between voters' class location and the parties they choose" (Oesch, 2012: 32). Indeed, several socio-economic groups are clearly overrepresented in the electorate of PRR parties, the two most important being the 'petit bourgeoisie' and the 'working classes' (McGann & Kitschelt, 2005; Rydgren, 2012). Many authors have substituted broader category labels to replace the term "working class" to grasp aspects that transcend the classic labor-capital dichotomy. PRR voters often work in particular sectors in particular occupations (Oesch, 2008) and have generally lower levels of education (Ivarsflaten & Stubager, 2012). This combination of cognitive, cultural, and economic resources

divide the 'winners' of globalization, who profit from the economic and cultural consequences of globalization, from its 'losers', who do not (Kriesi et al., 2008; Kriesi et al., 2012). Dovetailing with my societal pessimism hypothesis, this explanation places voters' appreciation of societal changes caused by globalization at center stage in determining their PRR vote. In contrast, however, the losers-of-globalization sentiment above all emphasizes *personal* and *objective* material conditions and can therefore be called an egotropic concern. In contrast, the grievances that constitute societal pessimism include the perception of negative *societal* developments and can be referred to as sociotropic concerns.

Another approach stresses the *protest* element of a PRR vote. This explanation holds that some voters are discontented with the political system and wish to express this discontent by voting for a populist party of whatever color. Obviously, this does not rule out that such discontent might be rooted in socio-structural conditions, as the previous approach would predict. Such parties usually emphasize charismatic leadership, which succeeds in mobilizing voters against the elite. Indeed, PRR voters have indeed been shown to have higher levels of distrust and dissatisfaction with the political system (Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002; McGann & Kitschelt, 2005). The protest sentiment is similar to the negative evaluation inherent to societal pessimism. However, societal pessimism is a more diffuse overall negative expectation for society overall, including but not restricted to evaluations of the (political) elite.

A third approach assumes an *ideological* explanation of PRR voting (Van der Brug et al., 2012). Opposition to immigration and immigrants – probably the core element of PRR ideology – is widespread among large parts of the European electorate (Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002; Mudde, 2007). Voters who are strongly opposed to immigration, finding it a salient topic, will vote for a party that promises to decrease it. Authoritarianism and opposition to European integration are two other relevant issues. Indeed, ideological agreement with PRR parties (on these issues) is usually by far the strongest predictor of PRR voting. The societal pessimism hypothesis is clearly related to this approach, because it also explains PRR voting in terms of ideological congruence between parties and voters. Furthermore, the position of voters on immigration and European integration is likely to be related to societal pessimism, as is shown in Chapter 3. The former two are concrete concerns about specific societal issues, whereas societal pessimism is a more overarching, undirected concern. It is therefore likely that these opinions are related and show some overlap in explaining PRR voting. It is reasonable to expect that the more diffuse sentiment of societal pessimism inspires grievances with regard to more specific issues, such as immigration and European integration.

Therefore, I tentatively investigate the extent to which societal pessimism is expressed *through* concerns such as these.

6.3 Data and method

To test my hypothesis, I use wave 6 of the European Social Survey (2012), which offers measures of societal pessimism and all established explanations of PRR voting. This survey includes respondents from 29 European countries. Because the dependent variable indicates whether people voted for a PRR in the last national election, I only include respondents from countries in which a PRR party is included in the questionnaire. Furthermore, because I want to explain PRR voting, I need each PRR to have a sufficient group of voters in the dataset. This means that I must exclude Germany, Italy and Slovenia from the analyses, because less than 20 respondents voted for the PRR parties in these countries. This results in a selection of respondents from 9 countries: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

Many studies employ models in which PRR voters are compared to all other voters combined. However, because of the diversity of the electoral alternatives, which might differ from the PRR in different ways in each country, it would be an oversimplification to pool all of the other voters (Evans, 2005). Indeed, Zhirkov (2014) shows that different variables distinguish PRR voters from other party families. Following this logic, I compare PRR voters to different relevant subgroups of voters, namely, those of Radical Left parties, Mainstream Left parties, and Mainstream Right parties. The placement of parties in these categories follows the literature. The categorization and definition of Mudde is leading in the context of the PRR parties (2007)², and I follow March and Rommerskirchen in the case of Radical Left parties (2015).³ The Mainstream Left

2 I also included the *Progress Party* (Fremskrittspartiet) in Norway. Although this party is defined by Mudde as Nonradical Right Populists, a category “closely related to the populist radical right” because of their nativism (2007: 47), it has been labeled as Radical Right by other authors (Norris, 2005). The more recent *Party for Freedom* (PVV) in the Netherlands and *Jobbik* in Hungary are not included in Mudde’s categorization but are usually categorized as PRR in the literature (De Lange & Art, 2011; Karácsony & Róna, 2011).

3 An exception is Denmark, where (to my knowledge) two potential Radical Left parties exist, the Red-Green Alliance and the Socialist People’s Party (SF) (March & Rommerskirchen, 2015). Including them both results in a strong dominance of Denmark (226 of 728) in the category Radical Left. Therefore, I decided to include the Red-Green Alliance because it scores more leftist on a left-right scale (March & Rommerskirchen, 2015) and because the ideology of SF resembles aspects of Green parties, which is also shown by its membership in the European Greens. Because voters of Green parties are assumed to be least risk-oriented, just like liberals (Azmanova, 2011), the SF is not a typical Radical Left party in that respect.

group exists only of Social-Democratic parties. The Mainstream Right comprises both Christian-Democratic and Liberal-Conservative parties, depending on which of the two parties was the largest in 2012 in each country. Although the level of societal pessimism is likely to differ between the voters of these two types of parties, the number of cases does not allow me to further distinguish between them. As was the case with the PRR, the other parties also needed a sufficient number of voters (>20) to be included, which led to the exclusion of the Radical Left in Belgium, Hungary and Switzerland. In Appendix D, Table D1 shows the parties that comprise the groups of Radical Left, Mainstream Left, Mainstream Right, and PRR parties, and Table D2 shows the N of voters for these parties in each country in the data.

To measure societal pessimism, the summary score of two items is used: 'Hard to be hopeful about the future of the world' and 'For most people in this country, life is getting worse'. The answer options were "Disagree strongly" (1) to "Agree strongly" (5). These are two out of the three items that measured societal pessimism in Chapter 3, and the second item shows a great deal of similarity with an item used by Keyes for social actualization (Keyes, 1998; Keyes & Shapiro, 2004), and one of Uslaner for (a lack of) optimism (Uslaner, 2002; Uslaner & Brown, 2005) (as discussed in section 3.2), which I both refer to as the opposite of social pessimism in Chapter 2 (section 2.3). Both items adequately measure the core of societal pessimism, given that they capture a diffusely directed concern over society *in general* going in the wrong direction. The (polychoric) correlation between them is $r = 0.48$, which is not too high, but given that the first is very general and the second is more socioeconomic, this is not overly surprising. Because both aspects are important to include in a measure of societal pessimism, to use them both is the best option. Table D3 of Appendix D presents the correlation of these two societal pessimism items per country and shows that it ranges from .40 in France, the Netherlands, and Norway to .51 in Belgium.

As control variables, I include items that cover all of the usual approaches in explaining PRR voting. This enables me to provide as rigorous a test as possible of whether societal pessimism is indeed a factor of influence beyond these established factors in the literature. I control for socio-economic status using the class scheme designed by Oesch (2008): higher-grade service class, lower-grade service class, small business owners, skilled workers and unskilled workers. Furthermore, I include educational level (low, medium and high), the subjective item on 'your place in society' (0-10), an item on source of income (salary or profit versus pension, unemployment benefit, other benefit or other source) and an item about the level of income (household's total net income, in 10 categories).

The protest approach is operationalized to a less satisfactory level because I have only one item, namely, 'how satisfied with the way democracy works in country' (0-10). Nonetheless, I consider this an acceptable measure of the protest sentiment.

The models also include the most important issues in the literature on the ideological position of PRR voters, i.e., immigration, European integration and authoritarianism. For standpoint on immigration, I use a summary score of three items ('immigration bad or good for country's economy', 'country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants', 'immigrants make country worse or better place to live', all reversed). One item measures support for European integration (reversed), and one measures support for authoritarianism ('important to do what is told and follow rules').

To check the interrelatedness of these attitudes with societal pessimism, I examined the bivariate correlations. Societal pessimism correlates weakly with authoritarianism (.03) and European integration (.18), and moderately with immigration (.34) and satisfaction with democracy (.41). This suggests that as expected, societal pessimism is related to but not identical to the usual explanations for PRR voting.

Finally, socio-demographic control variables are included, including gender, age, a squared term for age, whether people live in (the suburbs of) a large city versus (a town in) the countryside, level of religiosity ('How often do you attend religious services apart from special occasions', ranging 1 to 7: never to every day), and political interest ('how interested in politics', reversed).

To facilitate the interpretation of the figures and the comparison of effect sizes in the models, I standardized all of the (scales of) attitudinal items (the variables on societal pessimism, satisfaction with democracy, immigration, European integration, and authoritarianism).

Because societal pessimism is a sociotropic attitude, it should not (for the most part) originate in people's psychological state or happiness. This a consistent finding not only in the few studies on societal pessimism or social discontent (Eckersley, 2000; Elchardus & Smits, 2007; Eckersley, 2013; Kroll & Delhey, 2013), but also in Chapters 3 and 5. Indeed, I find a moderate relationship between societal pessimism and happiness (.31) and a slightly higher correlation with life satisfaction (.36). To exclude influence from personally oriented pessimism, I use the item on life satisfaction (scale 0-10) in the models.

Because I compare categories of voters, I use multinomial regression analyses, with PRR voters as the reference category. I include country dummies to eliminate all cross-national variation. In the follow-up analyses, in which I focus on the difference between PRR and Mainstream Right voters, I use logistic regression analyses, also with country dummies (not presented for reasons of space). The full models with country

dummies are presented in Table D4 of Appendix D. I show y -standardized effects in Table 6.3, which enables a comparison of effect sizes across logistic models. Such a comparison is not possible with normal logistic coefficients.

6.4 Results

Societal pessimism across political party categories

Figure 6.1 shows the mean score on societal pessimism in all countries for the four types of parties. It shows that PRR voters stand out as the most pessimistic of all voters. Whereas the maximum difference of approximately 1 point on the 11-point scale might seem modest, it is important to keep in mind that most of the respondents are located around the middle of the scale ($M = 5.6$, $SD = 2.2$). The second most pessimistic are the Radical Left voters, whereas the Mainstream Right voters are the least pessimistic. Figure 6.1 seems to suggest a tilted U-curve, with the highest level of societal pessimism among the Radical Left and the PRR electorates. However, the difference between Radical Left and Mainstream Left is not significant at the 5% level. Furthermore, Radical Left voters are not nearly as societally pessimistic as PRR voters. This is confirmed in Figure 2, which shows the distribution per country and party category. A variation of the U-curve can be found in all nine countries, but the differences are not very pronounced on the left. In all countries except for Hungary, PRR voters are the most societally pessimistic.

Two preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this descriptive figures. First, societal pessimism sets PRR voters apart from all other voters. This seems to confirm a congruence between PRR parties' nostalgic ideology and their voters' societal pessimism. Second, societal pessimism is a characteristic that separates PRR parties from Mainstream Right parties. This suggests that a pessimistic sentiment that focuses on the risks instead of the opportunities in society does not only apply to egotropic concerns but also translates into a sociotropic concern, thus creating an opposition between PRR and Mainstream Right parties (Azmanova, 2011). However, Radical Left voters' levels of societal pessimism are not similar to those shown by the PRR electorate. It is important to notice, however, that only six cases of the Radical Left are included in the analysis. Further research is therefore welcome.

Figure 6.1 Distribution of societal pessimism across party categories

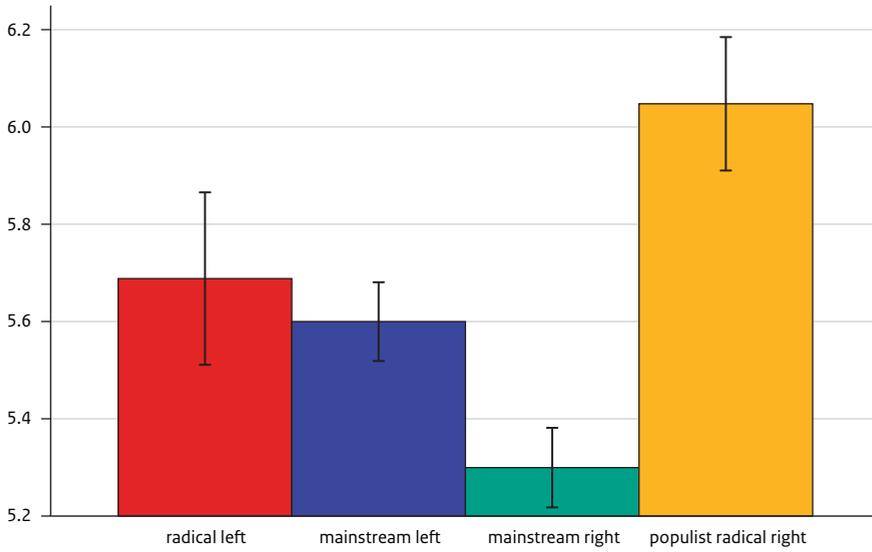
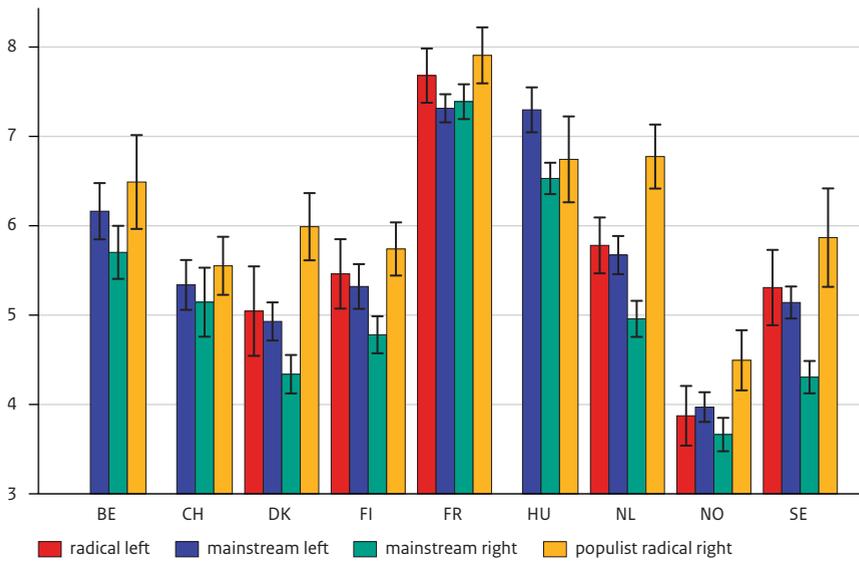


Figure 6.2 Societal pessimism per country and party category



Using societal pessimism to explain voting for a Populist Radical Right party versus other parties

After these descriptive impressions, I now turn to testing whether these conclusions hold in a multivariate model. Table 6.1 shows a summary of the results of several multinomial logistic regressions – each with a different set of independent variables – with voting for the party groups with PRRs as the reference category. Table 6.1 reports the direction and significance of the societal pessimism variable. Dark-shaded cells indicate that an effect is significant at the 5% level; light-shaded cells indicate significance at the 10% level. The table of the full model is available in Table D4 of the Appendix D. In the model of the first row, societal pessimism is the only explanatory variable (other than country dummies and satisfaction with life). This shows that compared to PRR voters, other voters are significantly less pessimistic. This replicates the pessimistic exceptionalism of PRR voters that is visible in Figure 6.1. Predicted probabilities show that societal pessimism doubles the probability of voting for a PRR party from 9,7% for those low in societal pessimism (-1 standard deviation) to 18,0% for those high in societal pessimism (+1 SD). Clearly, societal pessimism is a strong predictor of voting for a PRR party.

Table 6.1 Explaining PRR voting with sets of explanations

	Radical Left	Mainstream Left	Mainstream Right
Societal pessimism only	–	–	–
Societal pessimism + socio-demographics	–	–	–
Societal pessimism + attitudes	–	–	–
Full model	x	x	–

In the second row, basic control variables (gender, age, age², urbanization, religiosity and political interest) and socioeconomic variables (social class, educational level, subjective position in society, source of income and level of income) are added. Under these controls, PRR voters continue to stand out as more societally pessimistic than other voters. This means that socio-economic status does not confound the correlation between societal pessimism and voting for the various party groups.

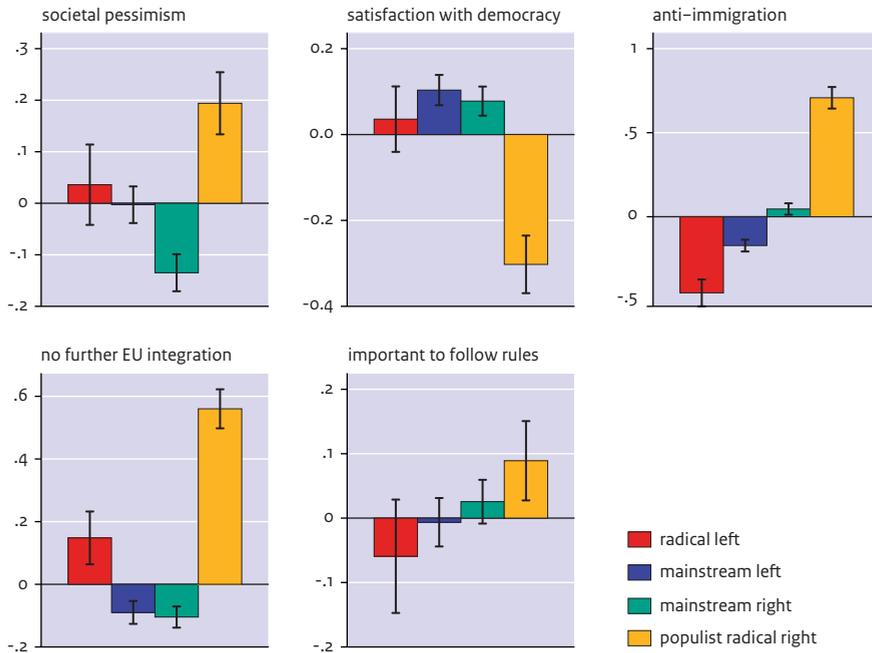
The third row shows the results of a model that includes societal pessimism and attitudes toward a range of issues (immigration, European integration, satisfaction with democracy, authoritarianism). The difference between PRR parties and left-wing parties (both radical and mainstream) is now only marginally significant. However, the effect of societal pessimism continues to hold for the difference between the Mainstream Right and PRR.

The fourth row shows that, controlling for all covariates, societal pessimism still significantly distinguishes PRR from Mainstream Right voting but not from voting for other parties. The effect of societal pessimism is now smaller: the probability of PRR voting compared to Mainstream Right increased from 13,0% to 13,9% in the full model. The smaller effect under the control for a range of other variables suggests that societal pessimism shares explained variance with these other variables (this issue will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter). Still, societal pessimism is a robust and independent factor that distinguishes PRR voters from Mainstream Right voters. This underlines the suggestion that the PRR mobilizes a sentiment that is broader than anticipation of *personal* risks, including an anticipation of societal risks or perceived decline. This is especially interesting because, with respect to other attitudes, such as intolerance of immigrants, the Mainstream and Radical Right voters and parties are relatively similar. Therefore, in the next section I focus on the difference between those two parties.

Zooming in: Populist Radical Right versus Mainstream Right voters

I now turn to a closer investigation of the role played by societal pessimism in guiding voters to PRR parties rather than to Mainstream Right (MR) parties. I do so in two steps. First, I investigate descriptively the extent to which societal pessimism is unique among the usual explanatory factors in being highly distinct between PRR and MR voters. Second, I estimate logistic models to test the relative weight of societal pessimism in explaining voting for PRR versus MR parties.

Figure 6.3 shows the distribution of five attitudes across Radical Left, Mainstream Left, Mainstream Right and PRR parties. All of the variables were standardized to facilitate comparison among groups, variables and countries. Societal pessimism shows that although the tilted U-curve is already visible in Figure 6.1, it has now undergone a transformation due to standardization. As concluded above, the groups that post the most extreme scores on this attitude are the MR voters and the PRR voters. In contrast, if we look at the figures of the other attitudes that are important predictors of PRR voting, we see that MR and PRR voters are not at opposing extremes. In the case of satisfaction with democracy, PRR voters take an extreme position, whereas MR voters do not. The situation on the issues of immigration and following rules is again different. Here, PRR voters hold an extreme position, and MR voters are most similar to the PRR compared to other parties. The pattern of the EU integration issue is most similar to that of societal pessimism because it also shows a U-curve. However, MR and ML voters take the same position here. Thus, we can conclude that societal pessimism is the only attitude for which MR and PRR stand out as clearly opposing extreme groups.

Figure 6.3 Distribution of five attitudes related to PRR voting

This does not prove, however, that societal pessimism is the best differentiator between these two electorates. To draw conclusions on that point, Table 6.2 shows the results of a logistic regression on MR and PRR voters. I present the effects after a so-called standardized-Y procedure (Winship & Mare, 1984), which enables comparison of effect size across logistics models. First, in model 1, I included all variables except for societal pessimism. From model 1, it follows that PRR voters are more often male, less educated, employed in lower-grade services or (unskilled) workers than MR voters, and earning a lower income. Furthermore, three of the four attitudes included in model 1 are significant: PRR voters are less satisfied with democracy and more concerned about immigration and European integration. There is no difference between MR and PRR voters in their stance on the importance of following rules. Additionally, PRR voters more often attend religious gatherings. All of these findings are in line with earlier studies on PRR voting.

Table 6.2 Mainstream Right versus Populist Radical Right voting

	Model 1	Model 2
Demographic characteristics		
gender (male)	0,26 ***	0,27 ***
age	0,01	0,00
age ²	0,00	0,00
city	-0,02	-0,02
religious attendance	0,10 ***	0,10 ***
Socioeconomic characteristics		
educational level (medium)		
low educated	0,16 **	0,16 **
high educated	-0,23 ***	-0,23 ***
class (higher grade services)		
lower-grade services	0,13 *	0,13
small business owners	0,12	0,11
skilled workers	0,35 ***	0,34 ***
unskilled workers	0,39 ***	0,38 ***
place in society	-0,02	-0,02
income source (salary)		
pension	-0,02	-0,02
unemployment benefit	-0,04	-0,04
other benefit	0,05	0,05
other	-0,15	-0,13
level of income	-0,03 **	-0,02 **
Attitudinal characteristics		
political interest	-0,02	-0,02
satisfaction with democracy	-0,13 ***	-0,12 ***
opposition to EU integration	0,18 ***	0,18 ***
opposition to immigration	0,23 ***	0,22 ***
importance attached to following rules	0,00	0,00
satisfaction with life	-0,01	0,00
societal pessimism		0,07 **
pseudo R ²	27,8%	28,1%

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. N=3419

The addition of societal pessimism to model 2 has a significant effect (as we already knew from Table 6.1). Model 2 shows societal pessimism to have a smaller effect (.07) than attitudes on European integration (.18) and immigration (.22), but the difference to satisfaction with democracy is relatively small (.12). Furthermore, a comparison of models 1 and 2 shows that including societal pessimism does not change the effects of other variables. All of the variables that show significance in model 1 also do so in model 2 (except for working in low-grade services, but this variable was already on the edge of significance). In terms of effect sizes, there are only very small changes.

This means that it is safe to conclude that societal pessimism explains variation in PRR voting in addition to and independent from other factors.

Adding societal pessimism increases the explained variance from 27,8% in model 1 to 28,1% in model 2. This means that societal pessimism does not offer a large direct increase in explained variance compared to existing explanatory variables. However, in terms of predicted probabilities, an increase from -1 to +1 SD societal pessimism still increases the probability of PRR voting from 22,9% to 27,6%. Therefore, the effect of societal pessimism remains considerable. Nevertheless, the effect of societal pessimism in model 2 – and its contribution to the explained variance – might be underestimated because societal pessimism manifests itself through the more concrete attitudes. Therefore, the next question to ask is whether the additional explained variance of societal pessimism is small because the effect is mediated through variables included in the model. Although the cross-sectional data do not allow to make strong causal claims, I tentatively investigate this question by assessing which variable appears more causally prior in sequenced block models.

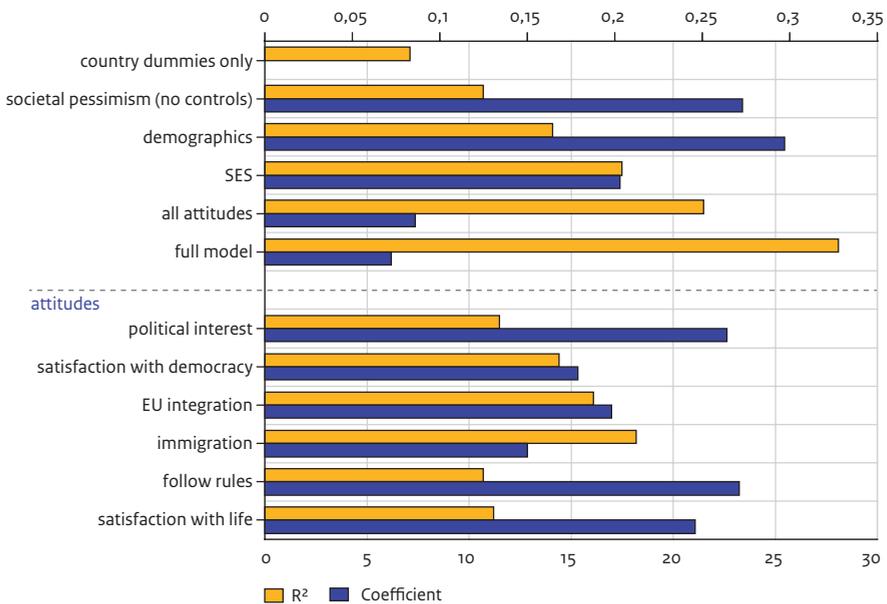
Therefore, I now reverse the order (compared to Table 2) in which I add societal pessimism and the other variables. By first only including pessimism and then adding other factors in turn, we can assess the extent to which societal pessimism's initial effect is affected. A reduction in the effect of societal pessimism would suggest that its effect is mediated by the included variables.⁴ The results are summarized in Figure 6.4. The bars in light grey represent the percentage of explained variance and the bars in dark grey represent the effect size of societal pessimism. First, the explained variance increases from 7,1%, when only country dummies are included in the model, to 10,7%, when societal pessimism is added. In itself, societal pessimism thus explains a substantial proportion of the variance in MR versus PRR voting. Furthermore, the effect size of societal pessimism is not affected by including demographic factors (it even increases somewhat). It somewhat decreases by adding socio-economic status. It decreases considerably when controlling for (only) attitudinal factors, which indicates that these factors act as mediators.

I further investigate this by comparing the effect size of societal pessimism when only one attitude is consecutively added in the model. Figure 6.4 suggests that societal

4 Alternatively, such a reduction of the effect of societal pessimism after including a third variable could indicate that the relation between societal pessimism and Radical Right voting was *confounded* by this third variable. This is likely to happen in the case of relatively exogenous socioeconomic variables, but it is less likely with regard to attitudinal positions that are more concrete (our main interest).

pessimism is mostly mediated by three attitudes toward three issues: European integration, immigration and satisfaction with democracy. The other attitudes – on political interest, following rules, and satisfaction with life – do not affect the effect size of societal pessimism. Notwithstanding the fact that testing mediation is impossible here, because that would call for a longitudinal design, this is tentative evidence that societal pessimism is projected onto more concrete issues, which have earlier been identified as predictors of PRR voting. Another way of describing this finding would be to say that societal pessimism is expressed by PRR voters’ standpoints on these three issues.

Figure 6.4 Effect size and explained variance of societal pessimism across models of voting MR versus PRR



6.5 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter proposes that societal pessimism is a defining characteristic of PRR voters, independent from – but possibly also manifesting itself in – established determinants of PRR voting. It hypothesizes that societal pessimism among the electorate is congruent with PRR ideology, which expresses nostalgia for an idealized past, pessimism about the risks of society, and distrust of progress.

I find that PRR voters are indeed the most societally pessimistic group in the nine European countries studied. Furthermore, societal pessimism relates to the general dimension of political competition in a tilted U-curve. The highest levels of societal pessimism can be found among PRR parties; the least societally pessimistic are the MR voters. This pattern, wherein Radical parties cater to the societally pessimistic while mainstream parties draw relatively optimistic voters, fits Azmanova's (2011) positioning of political parties on a risk-opportunity axis. However, instead of personal, egotropic risks, societal pessimism is an expression of concerns about *societal* risks. The analyses thus show that a risk-opportunity cleavage does not emerge exclusively from objective and personal grievances, but instead should be considered to reflect broader concerns about society overall. This shows not only that societal pessimism is an attitude that is politically relevant, but also that it is a characteristic of an important political cleavage.

Furthermore, the results show that societal pessimism significantly decreases the likelihood of voting for any party – Radical Left, Mainstream Left or Mainstream Right – compared to the PRR. This is true even when controlling for either socio-structural indicators, dissatisfaction with democracy, or policy attitudes. In a full model, with all control variables combined, societal pessimism only remains a significant determinant of Mainstream Right versus PRR voting. This finding is even more interesting because these two parties are important electoral competitors. By further zooming in on the difference between Mainstream Right and PRR voters, I find that societal pessimism is the only attitude in the data from which the Mainstream Right and PRR emerge as extreme, opposing groups. Moreover, besides having a direct effect on mainstream versus PRR voting, the data suggest that societal pessimism might be mediated by attitudes about satisfaction with democracy, European integration and – most of all – immigration. With the reservation that testing mediation is not possible with the cross-sectional data used here, it seems to be the case that many of the electorally relevant differences between the voters of the two party families find part of their origins in their different levels of societal pessimism.

It can be concluded that societal pessimism is an additional explanation of PRR voting, consistent with the nostalgia that is argued to be present in PRR ideology (Ignazi, 2003; Canovan, 2004; Taggart, 2004; Mudde, 2004). The results indicate the need for further inquiry into the role of societal pessimism among both PRRs and their electorate. The element of nostalgia in PRR ideology deserves more empirical scrutiny, for instance, by examining PRR manifestos across both countries and elections. Second, by showing that societal pessimism is a defining element separating PRR and MR voters, I provide evidence for the development of a new axis of political competition centering on the appreciation of the risks in a rapidly globalizing world, transcending old left-

right mobilization (Azmanova, 2011). However, Radical Left voters – who might perceive the risks of current society in a manner similar to that of PRR voters – are not nearly as societally pessimistic as PRR supporters. Finally, future research should consider how PRR support increases societal pessimism. Research shows not only that elite cues from the political leaders of one's party affect societal attitudes (Meffert et al., 2006; Lenz, 2009; Slothuus, 2015), but also that voting behavior and attitudes affect one another, resulting in a spiral of increasingly polarized stances between groups of voters (Harteveld, Kokkonen, & Dahlberg, 2015). This means that PRR voting incites a spiral of increasing societal pessimism, possibly deepening the risk-opportunity axis.

CHAPTER 7

One of a kind, or all of one kind? Groups of participants and their distinctive outlook on society¹

7.1 Introduction

Civic and political engagement have since long been seen as indispensable for a well-functioning democracy (Verba & Nie, 1972). The large range of such activities runs from being a member of a political party, or demonstrating against policy proposals, to helping organize a community event. All of these types of voluntary participation aim to improve society or small parts of it. However, the manner in which they seek to improve things is very different. In this chapter, I theorize and test the extent to which societal pessimism, political trust and social trust are related to specific types of participation. This project serves two aims, namely, to contribute to the understanding of societal pessimism, and to make a broader contribution to the participation literature. To these ends, this chapter's research question is what differentiates types of participants from each other. To stick to the same examples: are members of political parties, people who join demonstrations, and those who join political parties different types of people?

Despite the large number of studies on civic engagement in recent decades, it is still not fully clear which factors differentiate participants from each other. Previous research has established comprehensive knowledge on the factors that drive voluntary participation *in general* in the public domain. Individual characteristics known to increase the likelihood of participation range from political interest and efficacy, resources, and personal and collective motivations, to social network and social capital (e.g. Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995; Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2004). However,

¹ A previous version has been presented in Maastricht, as Steenvoorden, E.H. (2015) 'One of a kind, or all of one kind? Groups of participants and their distinctive outlook on society', at the Politicogen Etnaal 2015.

these common explanations compare non-participants and participants, attempting to explain *why* people participate. Studies that do compare types of participants examine which characteristics stimulate a specific type of participation, compared to the general population. However, they do not compare participants to each other. Therefore, in this chapter I aim to shed more light on what differentiates types of participants from each other, that is, *which* people participate in certain types of participation. I argue and show that such differentiation needs to take *societal* attitudes into account – including not only societal pessimism but also political trust and social trust. I thus show that the role played by societal pessimism becomes clear by unpacking ‘the’ participant, demonstrating that it is associated with some but not other types of participation. More generally, I show that *societal outlook*, rather than resources and interests, is key to differentiating participants of various sorts.

After all, different types of participation are likely to be performed by different types of people, given that the overlap between types of participation is quite low. Whereas various types of political and civic participation – such as contacting a politician, signing a petition, demonstrating, or being a member of a community organization – are related, correlations are only weak to moderate (Verba & Nie, 1972; Dekker, Koopmans, & Van den Broek, 1997; Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007; Van der Meer, 2009).

In research on participation, various types have been compared, including institutional and non-institutional political participation (Kaase, 1999; Hooghe & Marien, 2013), individual versus collective participation (Van Deth, 2012), various types of civic participation (Badescu & Neller, 2007; Van der Meer, Te Grotenhuis, & Scheepers, 2009), and online versus offline participation (Oser, Hooghe, & Marien, 2013). These studies compare types of participants with the general population, including non-participants. This means that we still do not know the extent to which participants differ from each other. Two studies on political participation are an exception: they do single out participants of individual versus collective political participation (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2012) and institutional and non-institutional political participation (Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010), respectively.

In this chapter, I aim to further the understanding of differences among types of participants, and I propose to do so by moving beyond established factors based on resources and interests, to consider citizens’ outlook on society. After all, although established factors such as resources, efficacy and interest explain why people participate, these factors are likely to be high among *all* participants. Therefore, they are unlikely to differentiate between specific participants. In line with studies that propose the ‘matching hypothesis’, I assume that people participate in an organization,

movement or initiative that matches their values and societal perceptions (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Granik, 2005). We can expect societal outlook to differentiate among participants because it influences the domain of society in which people think change or improvement can best be established. Therefore, I examine the relationship between types of participation and three aspects of societal outlook: societal pessimism, political trust and social trust. I assume societal pessimism to reflect whether people think change is possible in formal, institutional participation or whether they instead engage in non-institutional, protest participation. In line with the literature, I propose political trust and social trust to reflect whether people think changes can or cannot be accomplished within the political institutional domain. Three types of participants are compared along these lines: institutional political participants, non-institutional political participants and civic participants.

The question of who participates in which type of activity is very relevant for several reasons. From an academic perspective, differentiation among types of participants can further our understanding of motivations for participation. Although research has successfully predicted which people participate, their motivations are less clear (Granik, 2005; Leighley, 2008). Furthermore, the proposition that participation levels are declining (Putnam, 2000) is often countered by pointing to new, non-institutional forms of participation (Dalton, 2008). If some forms of participation are declining while others are rising, it is essential to know what distinguishes participants in these types of participation from each other. Moreover, understanding the differences among groups of participants is important with respect to the democratic function of participation. If different groups of citizens engage in different types of participation, the voices of those groups are only heard equally loud if all types of civic engagement resonate to the same degree in the political arena, which is not the case (Hooghe & Marien, 2012).

In what follows, I first discuss which types of participation I compare, and then why the societal outlook should be able to differentiate between them. Next, I theorize about the specific relationships of societal pessimism, political trust, and social trust and the three types of participation under study. I proceed by describing the data and method used, and then I present the results. Although this chapter focuses on differences among participants, I include a small, extra analysis to show how societal pessimism relates to non-participation. This chapter concludes by discussing the main findings and suggestions for further research.

7.2 Theory

Types of participation

Because the focus of this chapter is on differentiating types of participants, it is important to elaborate which types are compared. The comprehensive literature on civic engagement, which is too large to do justice here, lacks consensus on both a definition of civic engagement or the less broad concept of political participation, and the types of participation that these definitions encompass (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Berger, 2009; Van Deth, 2014). Part of the conceptualization discussion is whether all types of participation are to be considered or whether there should be a distinction among the area of participation (e.g., political institutions or civic organizations), the type of activity (individual or collective), and the level of activity (only behavior or a broader political involvement).

This lack of consensus shows in the various typologies of participation that are proposed and the operationalizations used. Some studies consider civic engagement and examine all types of civic and political participation in the public domain (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). Many focus on either political (Scott & Acock, 1979; Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; Vecchione & Caprara, 2009) or civic participation, with the latter often split up into various types of organizations, such as interest, leisure time and sports, social-cultural and religious associations (Badescu & Neller, 2007) or interests, leisure and activist organizations (Van der Meer, Te Grotenhuis, & Scheepers, 2009). Some authors draw a line between institutional and non-institutional political participation (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Hooghe & Marien, 2013). Others distinguish voting from other forms of institutional political participation (Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007), or further specify forms of non-institutional political participation such as protesting and consumer participation (Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005; Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007). Still others distinguish between individual and collective participation (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003; Van Deth, 2012; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2012; Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Finally, although most studies compare active and non-active citizens, theorization about non-participation is a small stream a literature in itself (Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Amnå & Ekman, 2014).

A consistent but nonetheless striking finding is that the overlap between types of participation is weak to moderate (Verba & Nie, 1972; Dekker, Koopmans, & Van den Broek, 1997; Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007; Van der Meer, 2009). A mean correlation of .25 across thirteen types of participation indicates a “weak unitary model of participation”, whereas within categories, the correlations are moderate but not high,

except for different instances of voting (Verba & Nie, 1972: 58-59). These outcomes point to the relevance of both categorizing types of participation and understanding differences among types of participants.

The typology used here is a combination of categories of participation in the literature: institutional political participation, non-institutional political (or protest) participation, and civic participation. Institutional political participation can be defined as conventional political participation, namely, as “all acts directly related to the institutional process” (Hooghe & Marien, 2013: 133). Non-institutional political participation is often distinguished from institutional political participation because it attempts to influence the state or politics from outside the political system (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991; Hooghe & Marien, 2013). In line with the literature (Badescu & Neller, 2007; Van der Meer, 2009; Van Deth, 2014), civic participation in this chapter refers to voluntary participation in organizations in the public domain but outside the institutional political domain, which aim to contribute to a specific collective problem or a specific community.²

Differentiating participants by their outlook on society

To examine whether people in these three types of participation are similar or instead one of a kind, we need to know which characteristics should be able to differentiate among types of participants. Surprisingly, the literature does not offer a clear expectation of which characteristics can do so. In the comprehensive literature on participation, the central focus has been on explaining why certain people participate and others do not. Various theoretical models are proposed to answer that question, all of which have a different take on what drives participation. These models are referred to in slightly different terms by different authors (Clary et al., 1998; Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2004; Granik, 2005), but can be called either structural-based (such as civic voluntarism, equity-fairness and the social capital model) or choice-based theories (the cognitive engagement model and the general incentives model) (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2004). These models are not mutually exclusive in the factors that they identify as causes of

² Electoral participation is not included in this chapter for several reasons. First, because electoral systems differ considerably, a decision to vote or not to vote is difficult to compare internationally. Furthermore, a protest vote as an alternative to abstention is determined by the presence of anti-system parties. Moreover, voting can be considered an atypical form of institutional political participation, because it is explicitly requested by the state, it has a clear boundary in terms of time and effort, and it is done by large groups of citizens, whereas only a small proportion of people engage in institutional political participation.

participation, but do have a unique combination of these factors that includes resources (as in time, money, education, or income), political efficacy, political interest, social network, and incentives (or motivations).

Although informative in regard to explaining participation, these ‘established’ factors in participation research are less useful when we want to compare types of participants, because participants score similarly on them. From the small number of studies that compare various groups of participants, it can be concluded that although the effect sizes of these factors may differ to some extent, the direction of the effects is the same (Badescu & Neller, 2007; Van der Meer, Te Grotenhuis, & Scheepers, 2009; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010; Van Deth, 2012; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2012; Hooghe & Marien, 2013). For instance, people involved in boycotting are not distinct from the other types of participants under study (Van Deth, 2012). Two studies on types of civic participants also show no diverging patterns in the characteristics studied (namely, education, employment, size of locality, network, social trust, church attendance and civic duty), only a smaller or larger influence of the characteristics considered (Badescu & Neller, 2007), or only a difference in source of income but not in educational level, income level or political interest (Van der Meer, Te Grotenhuis, & Scheepers, 2009).

That said, these studies do not compare participants with each other but with the general population, including non-participants. Therefore, they do not provide a picture of the similarities and differences among participants. To my knowledge, only two studies have compared types of participants only; those studies have yielded contradictory findings. Quintelier and Hooghe (2012) find no important differences between types of participants, whereas Marien et al. (2010) show institutionalized participants to be less educated, more politically interested and older than those in non-institutionalized participation. However, these studies do not include societal pessimism, political trust or social trust.

Instead of using the established characteristics, I suggest considering societal outlook to distinguish groups of participants. It is likely that people participate in an organization, group or movement of people who ‘think like them’, i.e., who have the same worldview. Clary and Snyder propose the ‘matching hypothesis’, which states that participation results from congruence between individual and organizational values (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Granik, 2005). However, where they mention values, I suggest focusing on societal attitudes to differentiate among participants. Attitudes are more directive and informative with respect to how people evaluate the current situation, and I expect that people participate in organizations that match their view of society and the status quo. Values can be incentives for participation, but the point is that the same values can be related to different types of participation. For instance, there

are many ways in which people can strive for less inequality or a better environment. The manner that they choose will depend on their societal outlook.

What aspects of societal outlook are important in differentiating between types of participants? All of the types of civic engagement studied here can be seen as attempts to improve society, or small parts of it, in the public domain. What differs between types of participation is the way to do that, and I propose that two characteristics of the arena in which participation takes place are particularly important to consider: whether participation takes place within or outside formal, institutional settings and within or outside the political setting. A person's outlook on society should be able to differentiate along these two lines. Specifically, I propose considering societal pessimism, political trust, and social trust to determine how people think change or improvement can be best established. Societal pessimism can be expected to indicate whether people believe change is possible within the established institutions and/or organizations (political and non-political) and are willing to be involved in long-term participation – or whether instead, they do not expect change to be easily established and are only interested in expressing their discontent through protest. In line with the literature, political trust and social trust indicate whether people think participation within or outside the political domain can make a difference. Research shows that political trust is positively related to participation in institutional political participation and negatively to participation in non-institutional political participation (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Kaase, 1999; Hooghe & Marien, 2013), whereas social trust is positively related to civic and non-institutional political participation (e.g. Kaase, 1999; Uslander & Brown, 2005; Badescu & Neller, 2007; Hooghe & Marien, 2013), but negatively related to institutional political participation (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003; Uslander & Brown, 2005; Hooghe & Marien, 2013). In the next section, I further discuss these assumptions and the hypotheses involved.

Before doing so, I want to clarify how I view the causality between attitudes and types of participation. In the established theoretical models of participation, societal outlook or attitudes are not often included; instead, they speak of incentives, values and motives for participation.³ This is not surprising: these models are causal, and the role of attitudes is very difficult to study if one wants to distinguish cause and effect in

3 Examples include collective incentives (public goods such as policy outcomes that the individual thinks benefit the country as a whole), altruistic motives (sense of duty) and expressive motives (affective attachments to the country or political system) in the general incentives model (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2004). Similarly, value motivations (i.e., the opportunity for an individual to express or act on important values) is part of the functional approach (Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999). The social capital model points to social trust both as a stimulus of participation and as a result (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2004).

participation. People might become participants because of certain attitudes, or they might adopt attitudes while participating. However, my focus is to differentiate types of participants from each other, not whether the differentiation took place because of people's attitudes before participating or whether these attitudes were shaped by participation. Therefore, the question of causality with respect to societal attitudes and participation is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Patterns of societal pessimism, political trust, and social trust among participants

How do the three attitudes differentiate among the three types of participants? The literature shows a large number of studies that include political or social trust in research participation, but to consider a set of attitudes is relatively rare. Many studies examine the influence of either political or social trust on participation, but only a few examine both political and social trust (Kaase, 1999; Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005; Allum et al., 2010; Hooghe & Marien, 2013; Suh, Yee, & Chang, 2013). However, these studies compare just one or two groups of participants, and they do not include societal pessimism. Moreover, they do not use these attitudes to differentiate participants from each other. Below, I theorize about the differences in attitudes among participants, disregarding non-participants. Because to my knowledge, there are no prior studies that focus on how participants' societal attitudes vary, these theoretical assumptions are based on the literature which makes no explicit comparison among types of participation.

It is proposed in the previous chapters of this book that societal pessimism is a sentiment among citizens that their society is in decline; the term refers to a sense of unmanageable societal deterioration and collective powerlessness. Because research into societal pessimism is scarce, there are no studies on its relationship with participation to build on. To my knowledge, the only study of this nature is that of Uslaner and Brown (2005), who refer to general optimism but operationalize it with an item that I would consider societal pessimism: 'the lot of the average person is getting worse'. They find a negative relationship between this measure and political institutional, political non-institutional and civic participation, but their aggregated, state-level data from the USA do not tell us about the individual-level relations in which I am interested.

In line with descriptions of societal pessimism as the perception of unmanageable societal deterioration and collective powerlessness, and more specifically, the first element of societal unease in Chapter 2 – distrust of human capability – I think societal pessimists do not expect that improvement in our conditions can easily be made in the current setting. I expect societal pessimism to indicate whether people believe

change is possible within established institutions and/or organizations (political and non-political) and are willing to be involved in long-term participation, or whether they instead do not expect that change can be (easily) established and are primarily interested in expressing their discontent through protest. This means that I expect societal pessimism to distinguish between institutional political participation and civic participation, on the one hand, and non-institutional political participation, on the other hand.

Because the three types of participation under study likely overlap (which I show below to be the case), it is impossible to formulate hypotheses that compare the types of participation to each other, because to do so would imply mutually exclusive groups. Therefore, the hypotheses in this chapter describe the relationship between attitudes and types of participation, not comparisons of types of participation.

H1: societal pessimism is negatively related to political participation

H2: societal pessimism is positively related to non-institutional political participation

H3: societal pessimism is negatively related to civic participation

Both political trust and social trust can be expected to offer insight into whether people want to participate within or outside the political institutional domain. I start by discussing the nature of, previous studies on and hypotheses about political trust, and then proceed to social trust.

Political trust has been defined and operationalized in various ways. Theoretically, trust in the political community can be differentiated from the political regime (performance and institutions) and the political authorities or incumbents (Easton, 1975; Norris, 2011). One example of a definition of political trust is that it is “a summary judgment that the system is responsive and will do what is right even in the absence of constant scrutiny” (Miller & Listhaug, 1990: 358). Empirically, there is clear evidence for a latent coherent factor of political trust that includes various institutions and authorities (Marien, 2011; Hartevelde, Van der Meer, & De Vries, 2013). Here, I focus on trust in the political regime and political authorities: it is likely that people engage in participation because they are either dissatisfied or inspired by the political leaders and political institutions in their country, and not so much the political community.

Research assumes and demonstrates that participants' levels of political trust vary. Political trust is found to be positively related to institutional political participation but negatively related to non-institutional political participation (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Kaase, 1999; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010; Hooghe & Marien, 2013). Similarly, Stolle et al. (2005) find that political consumers (considered non-institutional political

participation) distrust political institutions. Intuitively, this makes sense: why would one engage in a political party if one does not trust political parties, politicians or the political system? Conversely, if you distrust political institutions and authorities, it is likely that you express your dissatisfaction or frustration with how things are going or decisions made outside the political setting, thus in non-institutional political participation. To my knowledge, the relationship between political trust and civic participation is only sporadically discussed in the literature. Studies show that people involved in civic participation are politically distrustful (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Eliasoph, 1998). Brehm and Rahn theorize that this negative relationship follows from a do-it-yourself mentality (1997). With regard to political trust, I therefore formulate the following hypotheses:

H4: political trust is positively related to institutional political participation

H5: political trust is negatively related to non-institutional political participation

H6: political trust is negatively related to civic participation

Social trust has also been the focus of a great deal of scholarly attention that has not resulted in a consensus on the definition of social trust (Delhey & Newton, 2005). There are two types of literature with different conceptualizations of social trust, namely, strategic trust (based on one's interests), which follows a rational choice logic (Hardin, 2002), and moralistic trust (based on an outlook on human nature), which sees trust as resulting from culture and socialization (e.g. Uslaner, 2002). The latter can be further distinguished in generalized trust – i.e., “the belief that most people can be trusted” – and particularized trust – i.e., “the notion that we should only have faith in people like ourselves” (Uslaner, 2002: 21). The difference between the two is the size of the moral community that you consider trustworthy: people in general or your particular group, your ‘type of people’.

Following the literature on participation, I focus on generalized social trust. In recent decades, social capital and its relation to civic and political participation have often been studied, inspired by the seminal work of Putnam (1993; 2000). In such studies, social capital has been used in different ways, for instance, by looking at social networks' membership and level of activity (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003; Tillie, 2004). Although cause and consequence are debated here, social trust (as a form of social capital) is seen as one of the merits of social and civic involvement. Social trust, the sense of a larger community, stimulates and results from participation in organizations, actions, or initiatives of that community and thereby overcomes collective action problems in producing public goods (for an overview of the literature see Van Deth,

2001). Many studies show that social trust is positively related to civic participation (e.g. Dekker, Koopmans, & Van den Broek, 1997; Uslaner & Brown, 2005; Badescu & Neller, 2007). The relationship between social trust and non-institutional political participation follows the same logic as it does in the context of civic participation; this relationship is also underlined by many studies (Kaase, 1999; Benson & Rochon, 2004; Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005; Hooghe & Marien, 2013), although other studies reject it (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003).

In contrast, institutional political participation is not per se driven by membership in a generalized community; instead, it is driven by political camps that have very different ideas and values about what should be done. Therefore, several authors expect and find a negative association between social trust and institutional political participation (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003; Uslaner & Brown, 2005; Hooghe & Marien, 2013). Kim also finds a negative relationship between social trust and political participation, but provides an alternative interpretation of this relationship. He argues that socially trusting individuals are more involved in society and therefore perceive more social problems and policy failures (Kim, 2005). Table 7.1 provides an overview of all of the hypotheses posited in this chapter.

H7: social trust is negatively related to institutional political participation

H8: social trust is positively related to non-institutional political participation

H9: social trust is positively related to civic participation

Table 7.1 Summary of hypotheses

	Institutional political participation	Non-institutional political participation	Civic participation
Societal pessimism	-	+	-
Political trust	+	-	-
Social trust	-	+	+

7.3 Data and Method

Data

To test the hypotheses, I use wave 3 of the European Social Survey (2006), which includes variables not only on all three types of participation and the three attitudes under study, but also on many of the established factors of civic engagement. Despite the similarities between the waves, the ESS 2012 wave does not include variables on political efficacy, which is an important factor in participation research. I included data

from 19 European countries⁴ in the analyses. I left out Russia and the Ukraine because they score not free and partially free, respectively, on the Freedom House index, which measures political rights and civil liberties.⁵ It is likely that this affects the types of participation in which people engage. I also did not include Estonia and Hungary because in these countries income level, which is an important indicator of people's resources available for participation, is not measured. Respondents younger than 18 are excluded because they are atypical on many independent variables (e.g., income, education or marital status). To be able to compare groups of participants, people who do not participate in any way are excluded from the analyses.

The three types of participation are measured by three or four items on specific forms of participation. This general introduction preceded the items: "There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following:". The only exceptions are two items on civic participation, 'Involved in work for voluntary or charitable organization' and 'Help or attend activities organized in local area', which are separate questions in the survey. The operationalizations are presented in Table 7.2, which also shows the percentage of respondents involved in these forms of participation. Here, to enable comparison with other studies, non-participants are included (as well as in Figure 7.1 and Table 7.3). Institutional political participation is measured by four items, namely, whether one is a member of a political party, has contacted a politician in the last 12 months, has worked in a political party or action group in the last 12 months or has worn a campaign badge or sticker in the last 12 months. Non-institutional political participation consists of whether one has signed a petition, demonstrated, or boycotted any products in the last 12 months. Civic participation is measured by whether one has worked in another organization or association (other than a political party or action group), has been involved in a voluntary or charitable organization, or has either helped organize or attended local activities. All of the items are dummies (did or did not participate in such activity in the last 12 months), except for the last two items in Table 7.2, which are recoded to 0 (never) or 1 (ranging from at least every six months to at least every week) to resemble the other items. A yes on one of the variables establishes a yes on being such a type of participant. This operationalization is chosen instead of taking the summary score, because participation in more than one activity does not inform us about the level of activity. Respondents with missing values on any of the ten

4 Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, and Slovakia.

5 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#VJBZ83trVkh>

forms of participation are excluded from the analyses, because they cannot be placed into a group of participants. Among the participants, this applies to 339 respondents, resulting in a final number of 17,398 respondents. Table 7.2 shows that civic participation (58%) is relatively popular compared to institutional political participation (23%) and non-institutional political participation (32%). It also tells us that 31% of respondents do not participate in any form of participation that is measured here.

Table 7.2 Measures of types of participation^a (in %)

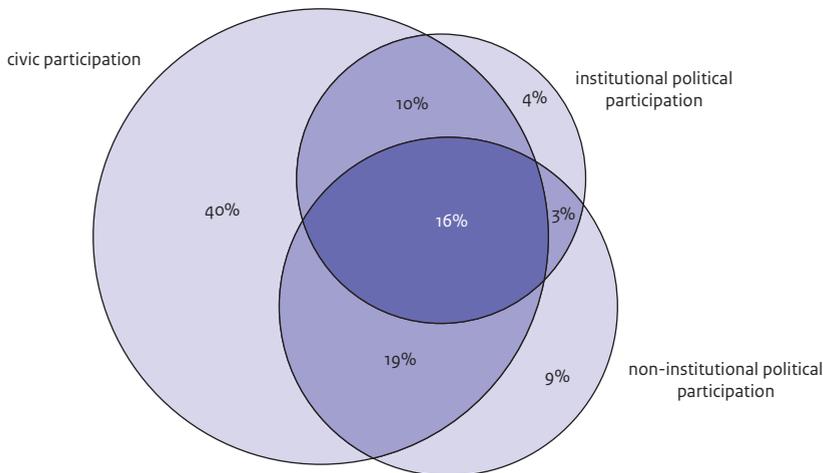
	No	Yes
Institutional political participation	77	23
Member of political party	95	5
Contacted politician or government official	85	15
Worked in political party or action group	96	4
Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker	92	8
Non-institutional political participation	68	32
Signed petition	76	24
Taken part in lawful public demonstration	94	6
Boycotted certain products	84	16
Civic participation	42	58
Worked in another organization or association	85	15
Involved in work for voluntary or charitable organizations	62	38
Help or attend activities organized in local area	53	47
No participation	69	31

a All but the last two items are answers to the following question: "There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following:"

Figure 7.1 shows the percentages of all possible combinations, from participants who participate in one, two, or three of the types of activities. The sizes of the circles relate to the size of the groups. Fifty-two percent of the participants are involved in one type of participation, 32% in two and 10% in all three types of participation. As we know from Table 7.2, the circle of institutional political participation is the smallest (23%), whereas civic participants form the largest group (58%). If we look at the overlap, the combination of institutional and non-institutional political participation is rare (3%), with 10% involved in both institutional political participation and civic participation and 19% involved in both non-institutional political participation and civic participation. From Figure 7.1, we can conclude on the one hand that the majority of participants specialize in one type of participation, as suggested in the literature (Verba & Nie, 1972; Keeter et al., 2002). On the other hand, the overlap indicates

that we cannot view these types of participants as entirely different people. Therefore, I control for this overlap in the analyses, which I clarify in the next section.

Figure 7.1 Overlap between types of participation



Turning to the independent variables, *societal pessimism* is measured by the summary score of two items: ‘For most people in [country], life is getting worse’ and ‘Hard to be hopeful about the future of the world’ ($r = .48$)⁶. These are the same two items as in the previous chapter (in which I used ESS data from 2012) and two out of the three items that measured societal pessimism in Chapter 3. The first shows a high level of similarity with an item used by Keyes for social actualization (Keyes, 1998; Keyes & Shapiro, 2004) and one used by Uslaner to measure (a lack of) optimism (Uslaner, 2002; Uslaner & Brown, 2005), which I both refer to as the opposite of social pessimism in Chapter 2. Although the correlation is lower here than in Chapter 3, it is the same as in Chapter 6. As I also argued in the previous chapter, these items both adequately measure the core of societal pessimism, given that they capture a diffusely directed concern over society *in general* going in the wrong direction. Moreover, although this correlation would ideally be higher, given the fact the first item is more socioeconomic and the second is very general, this is not overly surprising. Because both aspects are important to include in a measure of societal pessimism, the best option use them both. Table E1 of the Appendix E shows the correlation between these two items for all 19 countries separately, ranging from .32 in Spain to .55 in Germany.

6 The reported correlations are polychoric correlations in this chapter in the case of the 1-5 Likert scales.

Political trust is measured by the sum score of three items, which ask the extent to which people trust politicians, political parties, and the national Parliament on a scale from 0-10. These items show correlations ranging from .69 to .86. *Social trust* is also measured by the sum score of three items on a scale from 0-10: 'Most of the time people are helpful or mostly looking out for themselves', 'Most people try to take advantage of you if they had the chance, or try to be fair' and 'Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful in dealing with people'. The correlations range from .49 to .57. I standardized the resulting scales of societal pessimism, political trust and social trust to facilitate direct comparison of the effects. The correlations between the resulting scales are -.35 between societal pessimism and political trust, -.34 between societal pessimism and social trust, and .42 between political trust and social trust.

Of course, I control for a range of factors that are known in the literature to affect participation (e.g. Armingeon, 2007; Badescu & Neller, 2007). For example, gender, age groups (18-34, 35-54, 55+), resident in a rural area or small city versus (the suburbs of) a large city, marital status (married or official partner versus divorced/separated, widowed or single), size of household, number of children and level of religiosity ('How often attend religious services apart from special occasions', ranging 1 to 7: never to every day) are included as established demographic factors related to civic engagement. As an assurance that the measure of societal pessimism reflects only sociotropic concerns, I include a variable on satisfaction with life, which asks how satisfied one is with life as a whole currently, from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).⁷

I also control for established factors in participation research, namely, resources, political interest and political efficacy. Resources are operationalized with educational level (low means whether lower secondary education was completed, medium means whether upper secondary education was completed, and high means whether post-secondary or tertiary education was completed), source of income (salary or profit versus pension, unemployment benefit, other benefit or other source) and level of income (household's total net income, in 12 categories). Political interest is measured with two variables: an item asking how interested one is in politics on a 1-4 scale, with 4 being not interested at all (item is reversed in analyses), and the ratio of time spent following political news and current affairs on TV to all time spent watching TV. Political efficacy is measured by the summary score of two items: 'Politics is too complicated to understand' (reversed) and 'Making mind up about political issues', ranging from 1-5, indicating very difficult to very easy ($r = .49$).

⁷ Excluding this variable yields the same conclusions.

Method

Because the three groups of participants overlap, separate logistic regression analyses for the three types of participation are the most appropriate research method. Alternative solutions would be to exclude all participants who engage in more than one type of participation or to perform multinomial analysis among all seven of the groups in Figure 7.1. The first excludes 48% of all respondents and is theoretically not valid: for instance, you are no less an institutional political participant if you are also an active in civic participation. The second alternative is not valid because it disables a comparison among the three types of participation. However, I need to control for the overlap in types of participation because the people who participate in more than one type come from a specific group – the relatively highly educated and efficacious – which otherwise dominates the analyses and yields different results.⁸ Therefore, I include a dummy in all of the analyses, which is 1 when respondents participate in more than one type of participation. The results of the logistic regressions of the three types of participation are then compared to draw conclusions. In all of the regressions, I eliminate all cross-national variance in the dependent variables by including country dummies. As robustness checks, the logistic analyses are repeated on the ten items that constitute the three types of participation separately and in all countries individually.

7.4 Results

Correlations between types of participation

Before going to the regression analyses, I show the correlations between the ten items on participation, both to examine the interrelatedness of the forms of participation and to show the effect of excluding non-participants. In the literature, correlations are often reported to be low (.0-.3) to moderate (.3-.5) between types of participation, whereas within types of participation, correlations range widely, from low to strong (>.5) (Verba & Nie, 1972; Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007). In Table 7.3, the correlations between all ten items on civic engagement are presented, with within-type correlations placed in boxes. For the correlations in Table 7.3, non-participants are also included. In line with the literature, the correlations are generally low to moderate *between* types of participation. The only four between-type correlations that reach .5 and can be called

8 Without this control variable, the results on the societal attitudes are the same, but some control variables show a different pattern. For instance, the effect of being highly educated is positively significant for all three types of participation without this control variable because the group that engages in more than one type of participation is more often highly educated.

strong are those of wearing a badge during a campaign (no.4) with signing a petition, demonstrating and working in a civic organization. Working in a political and in a civic organization are also relate strongly. Again in line with the literature, the *within*-type correlations vary considerably, from .40 to .79.

Table 7.3 Correlations between the items on participation *including* non-participants^a

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. member of a political party	1									
2. contacted a politician	.45	1								
3. worked in political organization	.79	.62	1							
4. worn or displayed badge	.39	.39	.56	1						
5. signed a petition	.16	.37	.37	.51	1					
6. demonstrated	.21	.32	.48	.57	.57	1				
7. boycotted products	.08	.31	.23	.39	.52	.39	1			
8. worked in civic organization	.39	.49	.57	.51	.43	.37	.35	1		
9. voluntary organization	.27	.35	.38	.35	.30	.25	.27	.60	1	
10. local activities	.20	.33	.31	.26	.30	.24	.23	.40	.62	1

a These are tetrachoric correlations because the variables are dummies. The correlations shown are significant at $p < .05$

Table 7.4 Correlations between the items on participation *excluding* non-participants^a

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. member of a political party										
2. contacted a politician	.36	1								
3. worked in political organization	.76	.55	1							
4. worn or displayed badge	.31	.29	.50	1						
5. signed a petition		.21	.25	.40	1					
6. demonstrated	.12	.22	.42	.50	.47	1				
7. boycotted products	-.05	.16	.12	.28	.38	.28	1			
8. worked in civic organization	.29	.38	.50	.41	.27	.27	.21	1		
9. voluntary organization	.08	.12	.22	.15	-.02	.05		.43	1	
10. local activities	-.05	.02	.09		-.11		-.12	.11	.24	1

a These are tetrachoric correlations because the variables are dummies. The correlations shown are significant at $p < .05$

In Table 7.4, the correlations are shown for the participants only. And that paints a different picture. The correlations are overall much lower, some lose significance, and some turn out to be negative. This points to several important conclusions. First, correlations between types of participation are ‘artificially’ high because non-participation on one type is positively related to non-participation on another type. This explains why correlations are lower when we exclude non-participants. Second,

participation in one type does not always increase participation in another type. Instead, some types of participation show a negative correlation, meaning the opposite is in fact true. Finally, these correlations underline the need to establish what differentiates types of participants, because they are even less alike when we look at them without the ‘noise’ of the non-participants.

Examining differences among types of participants

Table 7.5 shows the results of the regression analyses (the country dummies are shown in Table E2 of the Appendix E) and Table 7.6 summarizes which hypotheses are supported and which are rejected (the latter between brackets). If we first look at the effects of societal pessimism, the results are in line with two of the three hypotheses. Societal pessimism is positively related to non-institutional political participation and thus, people involved in non-institutionalized, protest types of participation are indeed relatively pessimistic about society, which confirms H2. There is support for H3 because there is a significant negative relationship between societal pessimism and civic participation. The relationship between societal pessimism and institutional political participation is not significant and the expected negative relationship (H1) therefore is not supported by the data.

When we turn to political trust, we see that it is positively related to institutional political participation, as anticipated by H4. Those involved in political parties and with politicians indeed are more trusting of these actors and institutions than people who do not participate in this way. The expected negative relationship with non-institutional political participation is also confirmed (H5). These “protest” types of political participation are performed by participants who have relatively low trust in political actors or institutions. The hypothesis on the negative relationship between political trust and civic participation needs to be rejected because they are actually positively related. However, this unexpected finding does not hold in the robustness checks that I discuss below, and therefore, we should not pay attention to the positive effect but instead interpret it as a non-finding. Therefore, political trust is not a differentiating characteristic for civic participation. This differs from earlier studies that report this group as low in political trust (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Eliasoph, 1998). One explanation for this different finding could be that these previous studies focus on a broader range of civic participation and that they include social participation.

Moving on to social trust, Table 7.5 shows social trust to be negatively related to institutional political participation, as hypothesized (H7). People involved in institutional politics are less trusting of the general other than are other types of participants. Social trust is positively related to civic participation (H8) and non-institutional political participation (H9), in line with the literature.

Table 7.5 Logistic regression analyses of three types of participation^a

	Institutional political participation		Non-institutional political participation		Civic participation	
	b	se	b	se	b	Se
Demographic characteristics						
male	0.09*	(.04)	-0.46***	(.04)	0.35***	(.05)
age (18-34)						
* 35-54	0.18**	(.06)	-0.12*	(.06)	0.07	(.07)
*55+	0.31***	(.08)	-0.32***	(.08)	0.01	(.09)
City	-0.22***	(.04)	0.43***	(.05)	-0.26***	(.05)
marital status (married or partnership)						
* divorced or separated	0.01	(.07)	0.12	(.07)	-0.16*	(.08)
* widowed or partner died	-0.18	(.09)	-0.06	(.09)	0.13	(.10)
* single	-0.10	(.06)	0.25***	(.06)	-0.21**	(.07)
household size	0.02	(.02)	-0.05*	(.03)	0.10***	(.03)
children living at home	-0.13*	(.06)	0.04	(.07)	0.01	(.07)
attendance religious services	0.02	(.02)	-0.16***	(.02)	0.27***	(.02)
satisfaction with life	-0.01	(.01)	-0.03**	(.01)	0.03**	(.01)
Resources						
education (medium)						
* low	0.11	(.06)	-0.19**	(.06)	-0.04	(.06)
* high	0.10*	(.05)	0.05	(.05)	0.08	(.06)
source of income (profit/salary)						
* pension	0.06	(.07)	-0.16*	(.07)	0.06	(.08)
* unemployment benefit	0.37*	(.16)	-0.17	(.16)	-0.00	(.16)
* other benefit	0.32*	(.13)	-0.00	(.14)	-0.07	(.14)
* other	0.29*	(.14)	0.17	(.15)	-0.12	(.16)
Household income	-0.05***	(.01)	0.00	(.01)	0.03*	(.01)
Political interest and efficacy						
ratio political news / all news	0.09	(.07)	0.08	(.08)	0.08	(.09)
political interest	0.31***	(.03)	0.17***	(.03)	-0.23***	(.03)
political efficacy	0.08***	(.01)	0.02	(.01)	-0.08***	(.01)
Societal outlook						
societal pessimism	-0.04	(.02)	0.12***	(.03)	-0.14***	(.03)
political trust	0.08**	(.03)	-0.18***	(.03)	0.06*	(.03)
social trust	-0.15***	(.03)	0.07**	(.03)	0.10***	(.03)
more than 1 type of participation	3.02***	(.05)	3.00***	(.04)	2.16***	(.06)

a Coefficients are log odds, with * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Overall, the results confirm seven out of the nine hypotheses on the relationships between the three societal attitudes and three types of participation (see Table 7.6). The societal outlook of the three groups of participants can be summarized as follows: institutional participants trust politics rather than people, non-institutional political

participants are societal pessimists who trust people rather than politics, and civic participants are societal optimists who trust other people.

Table 7.6 Confirmed and rejected (between brackets) hypotheses

	Institutional political participation	Non-institutional political participation	Civic participation
Societal pessimism	(-)	+	-
Political trust	+	-	(-)
Social trust	-	+	+

The control variables used are selected for their known importance to the question of whether people participate. Therefore, it is interesting to see the extent to which they also differentiate between participants. Starting with the demographic factors, men are more often involved in civic participation, whereas women are more often involved in non-institutional participation. The youngest age group (18-35) is more often involved in non-institutional political participation, whereas the oldest age group (55+) is more often involved in institutional political participation. Non-institutional political participation is more often found in urban areas, whereas the other two types of participation are more common in rural areas. Being single increases the chance of non-institutional political participation but decreases civic participation. Religiosity increases civic participation.

Turning to the established participation factors, low-educated people are less often active in non-institutional political participation than the other two types of participation, whereas the institutional political participants are slightly more often highly educated. In addition, being unemployed or on benefits increase the chance of institutional political participation, as is having a low income, whereas a high income increases civic participation. Civic participants stand out because they are not politically interested, and they show lower levels of political efficacy.

Most studies do not find contrasting effects of demographic factors or 'established participation factors'. It is likely that I find such effects here because non-participants are excluded, which creates a reference group of other participants. Additionally, I control for the overlap between groups of participants. The results are intuitively logical and in line with the one study that does find that institutional and non-institutional participants differ on these factors (Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010).

Finally, it is informative to report the pseudo-explained variance of the models. This is artificially high in the models as presented in Table 7.5 because of the inclusion of the control variable of whether people are active in more than one type of participation, namely, 29%, 36% and 18% for the models of institutional political participation, non-

institutional political participation and civic participation, respectively. Without that variable, the explained variance reaches 6%, 11% and 6%. These numbers are quite low, but they are not unexpected given earlier studies on participation (e.g. Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003).

I performed two robustness checks on the results. First, I analyzed the ten participation items separately with logistic regressions to check whether doing so would yield the same results. Table 7.7 shows the effects of societal attitudes on institutional political participation, non-institutional political participation and civic participation as reported in Table 7.5 in bold signs. Below each type of participation, we see the effects for the individual items, with significant effects indicated by plus and minus signs and a non-significant effect indicated by an empty cell. Although as could be expected, there are some deviances from the findings in Table 7.5, the results support the previous analyses. Within all three types of participation, the effects of societal pessimism, political trust, and social trust are in line with those in Table 7.5 for most or all of the items on participation. The only exception is the unexpected positive relationship of political trust and civic participation, which appears to be driven by the item on local activities only and therefore should not be interpreted as evidence that contradicts H6.

Second, I ran the models per country to see whether the results can be repeated in single countries. Although this yields small, skewed groups of participants per country, it is still informative on the robustness of the results. These country models generally resemble the findings in Table 7.5: in the majority of countries, the same effects are found with one-sided tests ($p < .10$). However, there are a few important differences. The unexpected positive association of political trust is only positive in two countries and therefore should not be interpreted as strong evidence opposing H6. The significant relationship of social trust with non-institutional political participation and civic participation appears only in 5 and 4 countries, respectively. This means that the hypotheses on social trust (H8 and H9) are driven by a relatively small number of countries and therefore, they should be treated with some reservations. This finding is surprising because it contradicts the comprehensive literature on the relationship between social capital and civic engagement. It could be the case that social trust is significant in a small number of countries because I compare participants among each other, not to the general population.

Table 7.7 Effects of attitudes on form of institutional political participation, non-institutional political participation and civic participation.

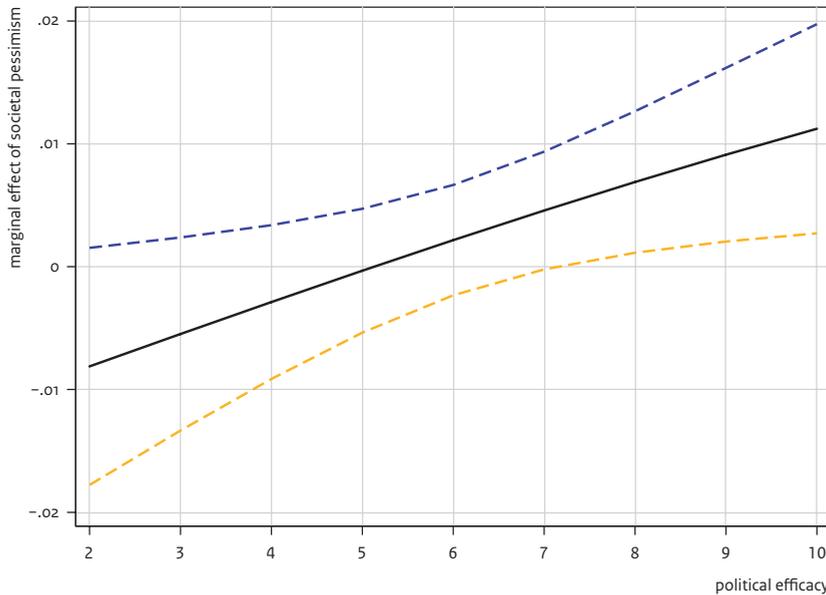
	Societal pessimism	Political trust	Social trust
Institutional political participation			
Member party		+	-
Contacted politician	-		-
Worked in political organization		+	-
Worn/displayed badge		+	
Non-institutional political participation	+	-	
Signed petition	+	-	+
Demonstrated	+		
Boycotted products	+	-	
Civic participation	-	+	+
Worked in civic organization	-		+
Voluntary organization	-		+
Local activities	-	+	+

What about societal pessimism among non-participants?

Although this chapter focuses on differentiating participants, to examine whether societal pessimism is higher among non-participants than among participants adds to our understanding of this attitude. If one is pessimistic about society, one can either raise one's voice and turn to action or refrain from any involvement whatsoever (i.e., the exit option, as discussed by Hirschman (1970)). Although causality is an important issue here (are participants less pessimistic because they are able to put their sentiments into action?), it is still worthwhile to briefly answer this question with a quick look. In descriptive terms, societal pessimism seems related to non-participation. Taking the respondents who answer a 4 or a 5 on the two items on societal pessimism, 30% can be labeled as societal pessimists. We know from Table 7.2 that 69% of the respondents are involved in any type of civic engagement. Among the pessimists, this share is 62%, and among the non-pessimists, this share is 72%, which is a significant difference. This result seems to point to an exit pattern. However, a logistic regression in which non-participants are compared to all participants, using the same variables as in Table 7.5, shows a non-significant finding for societal pessimism. Thus, controlling for all other factors, there is no difference in societal pessimism between participants and non-participants.

Because the results in this chapter show that non-institutional political participants score high on societal pessimism compared to institutional political and civic participants, it could be the case that there is no significant difference in societal pessimism between non-participants and participants because it can be found in both exit and voice options, namely, in refraining from action or engaging in non-institutional political participation. Therefore, I explored the differences between non-participants and non-institutional political participants only, excluding institutional political and civic participants from the analysis. Again, the effect of societal pessimism is not significant, meaning that those groups do indeed have equal levels of societal pessimism, controlling for all other factors.

Figure 7.2 The marginal effect of societal pessimism on participation in non-institutional political participation compared to non-participation for different levels of political efficacy



It could be the case that non-participants and non-institutional political participants show equal levels of societal pessimism, but that their level of political efficacy explains whether societal pessimism transforms that pessimism into action. Indeed, this is the case. Comparing societal pessimism between non-participants and non-institutional political participation for different levels of internal political efficacy shows that while pessimism is not significant for low levels of political efficacy, it is for high levels, as can be seen in Figure 7.2. This means that for people with low political efficacy, societal pessimism is not significant; they will not participate regardless of their level of societal pessimism. For people with high levels of political efficacy, societal pessimism shows a positive effect on non-institutional political participation.

7.5 Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter aimed to examine the societal impact of societal pessimism by investigating how it relates to different types of political and civic participation. More generally, this chapter aimed to provide insight into what differentiates groups of participants from each other. Are participants all of one kind or are they different groups of people, each with a one of a kind set of characteristics? The large literature on participation has focused predominantly on causes of participation, leaving similarities and differences between participants understudied. Additionally, the studies that do examine various types of participants do not compare them with each other; moreover, they include

non-participants in their analyses, which blurs the picture. This chapter asked whether we can differentiate between institutional political, non-institutional political and civic participants based on their societal outlook. In line with the matching hypothesis (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Granik, 2005), I proposed that people engage in participation in an organization, group or movement in which people have the same world view. This outlook is likely to differ with respect to where people seek to make improvements: within or outside institutional settings and within or outside the political setting. Three attitudes are theorized to differentiate among types of participants, namely, societal pessimism, political trust, and social trust.

As a first step, I find that excluding non-participants from the analyses is quite important if we examine something as straightforward as correlations. These are already only moderate while including participants, but decrease substantially, and in some cases even lose significance or turn out to be negative instead of positive, when non-participants are excluded. This underlines both the need to differentiate among types of participants and to exclude non-participants from the process.

The logistic-regression analyses confirm seven of the nine hypotheses on the relationships between societal pessimism, political trust, and social trust and the three types of participation. Societal pessimism is positively related to non-institutional political participation and negatively related to civic participation; however, it is not negatively to institutional political participation as expected. Political trust is, as expected, positively related to institutional political participation and negatively related to non-institutional political participation. The expected negative relationship with civic participation is not supported. Social trust is negatively related to institutional political participation and positively related to both non-institutional political and civic participation. Analyzing the ten items on participation separately instead of taking the three categories as a robustness check yields the same conclusions. However, a reservation must be made with respect to the final two effects of social trust – on non-institutional political and civic participation – because they are driven by a small group of countries. In summary, if we compare types of participants with each other, we can characterize the institutional political participants as trusting politics rather than people, the non-institutional political participants as societal pessimists who trust people rather than politics, and the civic participants as societal optimists who trust other people.

This chapter also sheds more light on the nature of societal pessimism. Societal pessimists are people who either voice their discontent in protest-type activities (such as demonstrating, signing a petition or boycotting products) or do not participate at all. In contrast, they are less often involved in (long-term) organizational, institutional participation of either a political or civic type. This underlines a specific element

of societal unease, namely, distrust of human capability, which means that societal pessimists do not expect that improvement in our conditions can easily be made in the current (institutional and organizational) settings. Furthermore, non-participants are just as likely as non-institutional political participants to be societally pessimistic. Only among those with high levels of political efficacy does societal pessimism increase the likelihood of participating in non-institutional political participation. This means that for people with confidence in their political skills, societal pessimism results in participation, but this is only true for non-institutional political participation, whereas for people low in this type of confidence, societal pessimism does not translate into participation.

The results of this chapter have several implications. First, although societal attitudes are unable to examine causal patterns in participation, they show distinct patterns among participants and therefore can inspire more research into the role of attitudes and motivation in participation. Further research is needed to shed light on the question whether people internalize these attitudes as a result of their participation or whether they become involved in a type of participation because of their particular outlook on society. Although it is likely that both propositions are true, this is very much a hunch.

Second, future research should pay more attention to the influence of personality in differentiating types of participants from each other. Research on the influence of personality characteristics on participation in the public domain is not often integrated with political and sociological factors, with two promising exceptions. Bekkers shows that compared to non-participants, participants in political participation score relatively low on agreeableness, whereas those in non-political participation score higher on openness (Bekkers, 2005). Den Ridder et al. find that civic participants score higher on openness and extraversion compared to the general population (Den Ridder, Dekker, & Van Houwelingen, 2015). Therefore, this line of research seems to be a promising route to increase the understanding of what differentiate types of participants from each other.

Furthermore, the results add insight into the alleged decline in participation (Putnam, 2000; Dalton, 2004). A decline in participation, especially institutional political participation, is unlikely to be counterbalanced by non-institutional political participation, because the two types of participation attract different types of people and there is particularly little overlap between institutional and non-institutional political participation. In addition to the differences in attitudes, the analyses show that non-institutional political participants are relatively young (18-34), whereas political participants are more often 55+.

Moreover, because the results show participants to come from different groups, the influence of one type of participation versus the other becomes more important. If civic engagement is seen as a way to raise one's voice and thereby to play an important role in the functioning of democracy, the influence of one type of voice over the other becomes more important when those voices belong to different people. Indeed, the types of political participation are rather different in terms of their perceived effectiveness (Hooghe & Marien, 2012). This underlines the importance of differentiating types of participation from each other in research on participation.

CHAPTER 8

Explaining identity complexity. Sociotropic uncertainty and political-geographic identification in Europe¹

8.1 Introduction

The final consequence of societal pessimism that I investigate in this book is multiple identification with integrative, political-geographical groups. Citizens' identification with their political community is viewed as critical to its functioning (Miller, 1995). A superordinate or collective identity engenders prioritization of the collective interest over individual self-interest (Kramer & Brewer, 1984), over subgroup interests such as ethnicity (Transue, 2007) and stimulates cooperation between members (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). This chapter addresses the simultaneous identification with multiple political-geographical groups. It argues that societal pessimism, along with other attitudes that tap into sociotropic uncertainty, mitigate such multiple identification.

Europeans belong to several political communities: local, national and European. That is not to say that they identify with all of these groups to the same extent. On the one hand, the globalization of society is argued to stimulate multiple identification, resulting in hybrid combinations of identities (Geschiere & Meyer, 1998; Arnett, 2002; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). On the other hand, recent decades have witnessed an increasing politicization of identity in Europe that stresses the exclusivity of identities. In many countries, regional or national identity is a subject of political mobilization (Huici et al., 1997; Mudde, 2007; Paasi, 2009; Duyvendak, 2011), and the European Union is viewed with reservations (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010). This chapter aims to investigate how societal pessimism affects the concurrent identification with these

1 A previous version of this chapter is presented as Steenvoorden, E.H. and Wright, M. (2014) 'Inclusive optimists versus exclusive pessimists? The effect of societal pessimism on identification patterns in Europe', at the ECPR General Conference 2014, Glasgow.

political communities. I theorize that it is likely that societal pessimism mitigates such simultaneous identification with integrative, political-geographical groups, instead increasing the likelihood of more exclusive identification, if any. The sociotropic uncertainty causes people to seek security from clear, homogenous collective groups that give direction and meaning. I argue that this logic is applicable not only to societal pessimism but also to other types of sociotropic uncertainty, such as political distrust and negative economic expectations.

The extent to which people identify with multiple collective groups and what stimulates or mitigates such multiple identification is unclear. There is consensus that people can hold multiple identities (Kohli, 2000; Brewer, 2001; Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001; Díez Medrano & Gutiérrez, 2001; Risse, 2004), but beyond this recognition, few ask what conditions stimulate or mitigate multiple identification.

In what follows, I use insights from literatures on ‘uncertainty-identity’ (Hogg, 2000; Reid & Hogg, 2005; Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010; Hogg, Meehan, & Farquharson, 2010; Hohman, Hogg, & Bligh, 2010; Grant & Hogg, 2012) and the ‘need-for-closure’ (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Kruglanski et al., 2006), which focus on egotropic types of uncertainty, to make a case about sociotropic uncertainty and how it affects individual identity complexity. With data from the Eurobarometer survey series, I show that sociotropic uncertainty encourages identity retrenchment, or in other words, that concerned individuals will express a less complex pattern of identities. I am agnostic about *which* identities individuals will fall back to; instead, I identify a general pattern in which concerned individuals are likely to retreat to a simpler set of identities and allegiances.

8.2 Theory

Conceptualization of collective identity

There is a comprehensive literature on social identity, with streams of research focusing on ethnic, racial, religious, gender and geographical identity, among others. These social identities are ‘we’ identities, identifications of an individual with a group or a category, as opposed to ‘me’ identities, which are identifications of the individual with social types, roles or characteristics (Brewer, 2001; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). In this chapter, I focus on spatially defined collective groups that can be called integrative because they connect people within a politically unified territory with no other necessary connection.²

2 This excludes identities usually viewed as ‘ascribed’ in character, including race and gender. Religious and class identities, which have something of an ascriptive nature yet are more plastic than race or gender, represent cases that are somewhat more difficult in this regard.

Typically, national identity is emphasized as both the most elementary and minimal form of cohesion for a democratic political system to sustain (Easton, 1975; Miller, 1995; Schildkraut, 2014). That said, there has also been a great deal of interest in the development of a European identity (e.g. Citrin & Sides, 2004; Fligstein, 2008; Risse, 2010; Citrin & Wright, 2014). It is difficult (if not impossible) to do justice to these literatures here. Of special relevance, though, are some further points of a definitional nature. First, ‘identity’ can be described as the most basal sense of belonging, defined as “a subjective or internalized sense of belonging” (Huddy & Khatib, 2007: 65) that is distinct from chauvinism. Again, although the example of national identity is the best developed in the literature, we can apply the same type of definition to one’s town or city identity – also referred to as ‘place attachment’ (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001) – and EU identity.

In general, three dimensions of identity are distinguished: a content-based, a cognitive, and an affective aspect of the concept of identity (Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001; Bellucci, Sanders, & Serricchio, 2012). The first dimension refers to idiosyncratic characteristics (Abdelal et al., 2009): what does it mean to be Parisian, French or European? The cognitive dimension reflects the extent to which people think of themselves as a member of a group. Social identity theory, for instance, points to the influence of identifying as member of or belonging to a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004 [1986]). Researchers in that tradition have shown how even ad hoc and meaningless categorization, the so-called minimal group condition, suffices for people to identify as a member of a group and show intergroup discrimination. However, this *identification as a member of a group* does not reveal the importance of the identity for individuals’ self-image.

This is captured in the third, affective, dimension, which is referred to as *identification with* (e.g. Citrin & Sears, 2009). Here, the idea is that people can identify with a group to a greater or lesser extent. The affective dimension thus describes the strength or intensity of the identification. This conceptualization dovetails with self-categorization theory, which elaborates on social identity theory and introduces the influence of salience and context (Turner et al., 1987). This means that self-categorization acknowledges variability in the strength of identification. The affective dimension also gives room to acknowledge that identity is becoming more a subject of choice, which is also referred to as a change from ascribed identities to acquired identities (Huddy, 2001). It is the affective component that is of greatest interest here because I want to examine the level of identification with different groups concurrently, not identification with a group as an all-or-nothing game.

There is consensus in the literature that people can hold multiple identities (Díez Medrano & Gutiérrez, 2001). For instance, ethnic minorities such as Hispanics and blacks choose a combination of American and ethnic identity if that option is offered,

meaning (presumably) that they identify with both groups at the same time (Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001). Research on European identification also shows that it does not necessarily compete with national or regional identities (Kohli, 2000; Brewer, 2001; Risse, 2004), which serves to illustrate the point that multiple identities need not be zero-sum or competitive. Questions remain, however, about what types of forces lead people to adopt multiple, complex identities instead of simpler ones.

Uncertainty, need for closure and identity

The notion that people identify with social groups to reduce uncertainty (Hogg, 2000; Hogg, 2007), arises independently in two distinct literatures: ‘uncertainty-identity’ theory and ‘need-for-closure’ theory. I discuss each in turn.

As an elaboration of social identity theory, which argues that individuals identify with groups because they seek positive self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), uncertainty-identity theory (UI) argues that group membership and self-categorization into a group are motivated by uncertainty reduction. The process of depersonalization that takes place when we categorize people into social groups and assign them characteristics of that group also takes place when we identify ourselves as part of that group. “In this way, group identification very effectively reduces self-related uncertainty. It provides us with a sense of who we are, that prescribes what we should think, feel and do” (Hogg, 2007: 80). Research shows that uncertainty increases identification in various settings (Hogg, 2000; Reid & Hogg, 2005; Hogg, 2007; Hogg et al., 2007; Hohman, Hogg, & Bligh, 2010; Hogg, Meehan, & Farquharson, 2010; Grant & Hogg, 2012).

The type of uncertainty referred to in this literature is rather broad, invoking uncertainty about oneself that is elevated by social context: “Uncertainty-identity theory focuses on uncertainty as a context-induced state. It is produced by contextual factors that challenge people’s certainty about their cognitions, perceptions, feelings and behaviors, and ultimately, certainty about and confidence in their sense of self” (Hogg, 2007: 77). Consequently, uncertainty has been operationalized in a variety of ways, such as priming uncertainty about one’s personal financial situation (Hogg, Meehan, & Farquharson, 2010) or simply by asking study participants to focus on those aspects of their lives that made them feel uncertain (Hogg et al., 2007). Still others ask respondents to read a speech or a newspaper article and underline the words or sentences that made them feel uncertain about themselves, their place in the world and their future (Hohman, Hogg, & Bligh, 2010; Grant & Hogg, 2012).

Along similar lines, the ‘need-for-closure’ (NFC) literature also relates uncertainty to in-group bias and identification levels. In this work, ‘need-for-closure’ is defined as a “desire for a definite answer to a question, any firm answer, rather than uncertainty,

confusion, or ambiguity” (Kruglanski et al., 2002: 649). NFC is theorized as a continuum that stimulates not only increased identification but also reduced information processing, increased judgmental confidence, a focus on prototypical rather than diagnostic information, and stereotypic judgment (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Moreover, NFC is understood both as being stimulated by context (e.g., situations of time pressure, physical discomfort or any other reason to be in need of a clear decision) and as varying according to individual disposition (*ibid*). Studies show that high NFC increases identification, in-group bias and out-group derogation (Shah, Kruglanski, & Thompson, 1998; Kruglanski et al., 2006; Federico, Hunt, & Fisher, 2013).

Sociotropic sources of uncertainty

Both UI and NFC focus on uncertainty with respect to one’s own situation and future instead of sociotropic sources. The latter comprise individual perceptions about society and are distinct from one’s own position within it. To my knowledge, only one other study has examined the relationship between sociotropic uncertainty and identification. Studying Hong Kong, Kim and Ng (2008) argue that societal uncertainty increases the need for closure and therefore stimulates single instead of dual identities. They show negative expectations about the economy to increase the likelihood of choosing a single identity (Hongkonger or Chinese) instead of a dual one (Hongkonger and Chinese or Chinese and Hongkonger).

Broadening this logic, various types of sociotropic sources of uncertainty can be expected to increase identification with a group that provides a positive self-image and a clear common faith that will mitigate the types of uncertainty at issue. An important aspect in uncertainty-identity research is the result of a stronger in-group bias (Reid & Hogg, 2005; Grant & Hogg, 2012). Moreover, NFC research shows not only in-group favoritism but also out-group derogation (Shah, Kruglanski, & Thompson, 1998; Federico, Golec, & Dial, 2005; Federico, Hunt, & Fisher, 2013). From this, it follows that if sociotropic uncertainty indeed drives stronger identification in one case, it is also likely to simultaneously mitigate other types of identification. Thus, I expect sociotropic uncertainty to mitigate multiple identification because it encourages selectivity with respect to identity choice.

I am interested in geographically defined identities of the (at least potentially) integrative variety: towns, nations, and the EU. This does not, of course, represent an exhaustive list of social groups with which people identify. If my expectation about uncertainty-reduction is valid, it could be that none of these integrative groups provide the type of security sought by individuals to mitigate their uncertainty. Sociotropic uncertainty might drive people towards other social identities that because of data

limitations I cannot study here. Therefore, I need to be cautious in interpreting any apparent ‘simplification’ in peoples’ identity profiles as a result of uncertainty, because people may identify as complexly as they did before using different ingredients that cannot be observed. This is not a problem that could ever be addressed in an entirely satisfactory manner, given the unending list of identities potentially in play. Even so, an observable *simplification* in patterns of identity, even with respect to the identities studied, is a significant finding if for no other reason than because of the uniquely integrative potential of geography rather than, e.g., race, gender, and so on. To summarize, I hypothesize that sociotropic uncertainty mitigates multiple identification, leading to a lower number of groups with which people identify and ultimately leading to no identification at all with political-geographic collective groups. Therefore, the overall hypothesis H1 reads as follows: sociotropic uncertainty mitigates multiple identification (H1).

Which types of sociotropic uncertainty are likely to matter? Three types of attitudes seem worthy contenders: societal pessimism, political distrust and negative economic expectations. I will elaborate shortly on political trust and negative economic expectations below. As is clear from the previous parts of the book, societal pessimism refers to a sentiment about the decline and perceived unmanageable deterioration of society that lacks specificity about which aspects of society are in decline. This concern about society is an uncertainty about where things are heading, which I expect to mitigate multiple identification (H1a).

Political trust has been explicitly tied to identity formation, especially at the national level (Kim & Robertson, 2002; McLaren, 2012; Citrin, Levy, & Wright, 2014). National institutions are seen as cornerstones of the nation state (Anderson, 2006 [1983]) and consequently, trust in these institutions can be seen as source of national identification. Following those who tie political trust to institutional performance (e.g. Mishler & Rose, 2001; Norris, 2011; Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012), it makes sense to view *distrust* as a dimension of sociotropic uncertainty. After all, if you believe politicians are not tackling problems appropriately, you are both uncertain and concerned about what is to be expected societally. Therefore, I also expect political distrust to mitigate multiple identification (H1b).

The literature on economic expectations uses different labels for what are very similar attitudes, e.g., consumer sentiments, general economic outlook and inflation expectation (Haller & Norpoth, 1994; Huth, Eppright, & Taube, 1994; De Boef & Kellstedt, 2004). In this literature, both egotropic and sociotropic considerations are in play. The latter often involve asking what people expect for the next year or a different period in terms of economic development, prices, and unemployment. As mentioned

above, Kim and Ng (2008) emphasize precisely this dimension of sociotropic uncertainty, showing that it mitigates multiple identification in Hong Kong. I expect a similar effect here (H1c).

I would not argue that social attitudes about the state of society, politics and the economy are exogenous to identification. Instead, they are likely to influence each other. It is easy to imagine that, for instance, national identification affects societal pessimism. However, the mechanism that is examined here is whether these attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty affect simultaneous identification, that is, multiple identification. Here, endogeneity is less likely. It is difficult to argue why multiple identification would cause uncertainty, or certainty, for that matter. Therefore, the current hypotheses assume a causal relationship.

8.3 Data and Method

To examine the effect of sociotropic uncertainty on multiple identification I use data from Eurobarometers 68.1 and 77.3 (fielded in 2007 and 2012, respectively). These surveys include the rare combination of items on both identification and the three types of sociotropic uncertainty that I consider: societal pessimism, political trust, and economic expectations. Because I do not expect the structure of the relationships I assess to vary across periods, I pooled the two waves to increase statistical power. Additionally, because EU identity is one of the key integrative identities examined, I included only respondents from one of the 25 countries that have been EU member states since 2004.³

To measure *identification* with the nation, the EU and the town/city, I use items that ask how “attached” respondents feel to each of these three polities: “not at all”, “not very much”, “fairly” and “very” attached. In terms of facial validity, these items are plausible indicators of identity’s affective dimension. Moreover, because respondents are asked about each identity independently, patterns of multiple identification are much easier to observe than with ‘prioritization’-style measures such as rankings. I recoded these variables into dichotomies: low identifiers (collapsing ‘not at all’ and ‘not very much’) and high identifiers (collapsing those who claim to be ‘fairly’ and ‘very’ attached). These dummies are then combined to create 4 categories: low identifiers (low identification with town/city, nation and EU), single identifiers (high identification with only one

3 Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

out of three), dual identifiers (high identification with two out of three) and multiple identifiers (high identification with all three). Note that this measure is entirely agnostic with respect to the geographic hierarchy of these identities.

Table 8.1 Identification categories (%)

low identifiers	3
single identifiers	8
town-only identifiers	3
nation-only identifiers	5
EU-only identifiers	1
dual identifiers	48
town avers	3
nation avers	1
EU avers	43
multiple identifiers	42

In Table 8.1, the four categories and their size are shown. Multiple identifiers and dual identifiers are the two largest groups, comprising 42% and 48% of all respondents, respectively. Eight percent are single identifiers, and only 3% are low identifiers with respect to all three collective groups. The single and dual identifiers can be further divided into three subgroups, as shown in Table 8.1. For the most part, dual identifiers are EU averse (43%), identifying instead with their town and nation: ‘anti-nationalists’ are a very rare species, with only approximately 1% of respondents belonging to this group. For the single identifiers, the nation is twice as common an object of allegiance as the town, and EU-only identity is vanishingly rare (1%).

Societal pessimism is tapped with a question about the direction citizens think their country is heading, worded as follows: “At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in [your country]”. This question is the same as the one that I used in Chapter 3 (Dutch COB data) and Chapter 5 (which also uses Eurobarometer data). It measures societal pessimism very well because of its broad scope of the country as a whole and its focus on the process (decline or improvement). The answer categories are ‘things are going in the right direction’ (optimists), ‘things are going in the wrong direction’ (pessimists), a spontaneous answer of ‘neither one nor the other’ (undecideds), with ‘don’t know’ treated as missing values.

Political distrust is measured with three items about national politics: trust in political parties, the national government and the national Parliament. Of these items, which are all dichotomous (respondents could choose “tend to trust” or

“tend not to trust”), I took the summary score. *Economic negative expectations* are measured similarly, by taking the summary score of two variables: the respondent’s expectations for the next 12 months with respect to the economic situation and national employment, respectively. The answer options for these items are better, worse or the same. The summary score is constituted of those answering ‘worse’ on those two items.

These three types of sociotropic uncertainty show weak-to-moderate correlations: societal pessimism and political distrust correlate at $r=.42$, societal pessimism and negative economic expectations correlate at $r=.37$, and political distrust and negative economic expectations correlate at $r=.26$. To enable direct comparison between the coefficients of these three sociotropic uncertainty attitudes, I dichotomized the societal pessimism indicator, comparing optimists and undecideds with pessimists, and standardized the three attitudes. On the individual level, I control for basic socio-demographic characteristics, namely, sex, age group (15-24, 25-39, 40-54, 55+), educational level (low, medium high, student), employment status (employed versus unemployed and other) and type of community (rural, small town, large city). I also control for attitudes and expectations about one’s personal circumstances to disentangle them from sociotropic uncertainty. To this end, I include a dummy variable on life satisfaction (not very or not at all satisfied versus very or fairly satisfied) and a summary score of the answer “worse” (versus better or the same) on two items on expectations for the next 12 months about personal financial circumstances (the financial situation of one’s household and one’s personal job situation). These two attitudes are also standardized to enable direct comparison with the coefficients of sociotropic uncertainty.⁴

Because the dependent variable consists of four nominal categories, the appropriate type of analysis is multinomial regression analysis. The reference group for such analyses is arbitrary, but given that my interest is in identity simplification, it makes sense to place multiple identifiers in this role. To control for the nested structure of the data in 25 countries and 2 waves, I include dummies for both countries and waves (2007 versus 2012).⁵

4 The correlations of these personal uncertainty variables with the sociotropic uncertainty variables vary between .22 and .33, with the exception of .52 between negative expectations for the national economy and personal financial circumstances.

5 It is not useful to choose multilevel analysis, because I do not have variables at the country level. I did try multilevel analysis, however, and the results are the same. Furthermore, it would not be possible to evaluate differences in explained variance at the individual level, because the variance is set to 3,29 in the multinomial multilevel analysis.

8.4 Results

Table 8.2 shows the results of model 1 only including the sociotropic uncertainty attitudes (a full model including country and wave dummies can be found in Table F1 of Appendix F). All three sociotropic attitudes show a positive, significant effect for low, single and dual identifiers (compared to multiple identifiers, the reference category). This means that being negative about developments on these three aspects of society increases the likelihood of holding fewer identities concurrently. Furthermore, comparing the coefficients of the three attitudes shows political distrust to have the strongest effect and negative economic expectations to have the weakest effect.

Table 8.2 Model 1: Effects of attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty on multiple identification^a

	low identifiers		single identifiers		dual identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty:						
societal pessimism	.344***	(.035)	.240***	(.023)	.205***	(.013)
political distrust	.711***	(.044)	.535***	(.025)	.395***	(.013)
negative economic expectations	.211***	(.032)	.173***	(.022)	.156***	(.013)

a Multinomial regression, reference group = multiple identifiers, coefficients are log odds. N=38454
Controlled for country and wave dummies

*** p<0.001

Table 8.3 presents the analysis including the control variables (Table F2 of Appendix F includes country and wave dummies). The effects of the sociotropic variables still hold in all nine cases, which means that all of my hypotheses are confirmed: sociotropic uncertainty decreases multiple identification and stimulates a more selective identification pattern. Additionally, many of the controls are significant as well. Because there is little work on this topic, it is worth discussing them in some detail. Younger respondents have a higher chance and older groups have a lower chance of being single identifiers. People in the city are less likely to be single or dual identifiers than those from small towns, which indicates that city dwellers are less selective about the groups with which they identify. Educational level also influences identification in some respects, with the highly educated found less often among the low and dual identifiers, and the low educated found more often among the dual than the multiple identifiers. In line with the UI and NFC literature, unemployment has a very straightforward positive effect, decreasing multiple identification significantly, just like negative expectations for one's personal financial situation, whereas life satisfaction

increases multiple identification (except for the effect of financial expectation on the difference between multiple and single identifiers, which is not significant).

Table 8.3 Model 2: effects of sociotropic uncertainty on multiple identification, including control variables^a

	low identifiers		single identifiers		dual identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty:						
societal pessimism	.277***	(.037)	.223***	(.024)	.173***	(.014)
political distrust	.686***	(.047)	.508***	(.026)	.376***	(.014)
negative economic expectations	.146***	(.038)	.153***	(.026)	.116***	(.015)
Control variables:						
male	-.145*	(.064)	.002	(.043)	.087***	(.025)
age (40-54):						
15-24	.592***	(.128)	.418***	(.092)	.046	(.058)
25-39	.271***	(.082)	.211***	(.056)	-.024	(.034)
55+	-.441***	(.106)	-.295***	(.068)	-.010	(.037)
educational level (medium):						
education low	.040	(.106)	.042	(.072)	.184***	(.037)
education high	-.284***	(.082)	-.017	(.052)	-.289***	(.030)
students	.130	(.176)	.217	(.119)	-.221**	(.074)
occupation (employed):						
unemployed	.312**	(.107)	.240**	(.079)	.106*	(.051)
other	-.180	(.103)	-.180**	(.066)	-.038	(.036)
community (small town):						
rural	.085	(.076)	.083	(.049)	.118***	(.029)
large city	-.039	(.082)	-.317***	(.056)	-.164***	(.031)
attitudes of personal uncertainty:						
life satisfaction	-.386***	(.033)	-.257***	(.024)	-.151***	(.014)
negative personal financial expectations	.126***	(.034)	.030	(.025)	.045**	(.015)

a Multinomial regression, reference group = multiple identifiers, coefficients are log odds. N=34808. Controlled for country and wave dummies

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

To examine whether the personal or sociotropic uncertainty variables are more important in explaining identification patterns, we can compare the effects of societal pessimism, political trust and negative economic expectations with those of life satisfaction and negative personal financial expectations, as these are all standardized. Table 8.3 shows that the effect of life satisfaction is similar in size to societal pessimism, and that the effect of negative personal financial expectations is smaller, like the expectations of the national economy. Although ideally we would compare a larger

range of both types of indicators to draw conclusions, these results show sociotropic uncertainty is by no means less important than personal uncertainty when studying identification with political-geographical groups.

To enhance the robustness of my findings, I performed some extra analyses. First, I repeated the analyses for all of the countries separately to determine whether the pattern is robust and no negative results of sociotropic uncertainty appear. This was indeed the case. Second, because the main difference between the multiple identifiers and the dual identifiers is a lack of identification with the EU, I repeated the analysis using dual identifiers as a reference category. As shown in Table F3 of Appendix F, these results replicate the findings, with the exception of the effect of negative economic expectations, which is not significant for the comparisons of dual versus low or single identifiers.

Third, I looked at the results when comparing two identities in pairwise fashion instead of three identities at the same time. Tables F4, F5 and F6 of Appendix F show the results of comparing identification with the nation and the city, the nation and the EU, and the city and the EU. Again, the hypothesis that sociotropic uncertainty makes people more selective in their identification pattern is confirmed in almost all instances and all directions. This means that sociotropic uncertainty leads to simpler patterns of identification, which for some people can involve aversion to the nation, for others to the EU, and for still others to the city. In Table F4, we see that sociotropic uncertainty stimulates identification with only the nation, only the city or neither, although it is clear that those types of identification are found among substantially different groups of citizens. The only exceptions are the effect of societal pessimism for the comparison of dual versus nation-only identifiers and negative economic expectations for the comparisons of dual versus nation-only or low identifiers. In Table F5, sociotropic uncertainty stimulates identification with only the nation, only the EU or neither. Comparing identification with the city and the EU (Table F6), I find that sociotropic uncertainty drives people toward either identification with only their city or neither the EU nor the city.

8.5 Conclusions and Discussion

In this chapter, I aimed to show the relationship between sociotropic uncertainty and a more selective and simplified identification pattern with respect to integrative, political-geographical collective groups. I find that indeed societal pessimism, political distrust, and negative economic expectations go hand-in-hand with selective (rather than multiple) identification. Political distrust has the largest effect of the three,

whereas negative economic expectations have the smallest effect. These findings persist even when controlling for various demographic and socioeconomic factors and more importantly, for the indicators of personal uncertainty that are the typical focus in research on UI or NFC.

My contribution to the sprawling empirical literature on identity-formation is to turn attention away from the strength of *specific* identities and towards the issue of how complex people's identity *profiles* appear to be. This matters for several reasons. First, empirical researchers have only begun to approach identity in this way, and the results shown here raise numerous new and interesting research questions. As just one example, I did not go into cross-national heterogeneity of identification with geographic groups; it is likely, however, that the make-up of the categories of single, dual and multiple identifiers differs among countries. When strong regional identities are present, such as in Spain, Germany or Italy, the multiple identification pattern is likely to differ from countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands or Sweden. The same goes for cross-national differences in the level of euroscepticism. This and many other questions await further research.

On a more practical level, it is generally assumed that cultural and economic globalization drive people toward increasingly complex identities; this may indeed be the case for some, but uncertainty of the kinds explored here seem to push people in the opposite direction. This is a concern because multiple, cross-cutting identifications, particularly with respect to the types of 'integrative' groups studied here, are seen as central to the functioning of polities (Easton, 1975; Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Miller, 1995; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Transue, 2007). The implications of more selective identity patterns – i.e., choosing a smaller number of identities – are therefore troublesome. If people are less willing to identify with the various political entities to which they belong concurrently, this reticence undermines these political communities just as they are confronted by significant political, social, and economic challenges.

With these results, I show once again that societal pessimism matters, in this case because it mitigates multiple identification with political-geographical collective groups. These results add to the evidence that societal pessimism is a distinct attitude, different from, in this case, political trust, negative economic expectations and satisfaction with life. It further colors the picture of societal pessimists as people who focus on specific types of collective groups, if they identify with these groups at all, and therefore seem to be exclusive rather than inclusive towards 'other groups', whichever groups those may be. With these final characterizations, I have reached the end of the theoretical and empirical exploration of the negative view about the state of society. The next chapter discusses the conclusions, contributions and implications of this book.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusions and Discussion

9.1 Introduction

This book started by pointing out the lack of systematic attention in the literature to the concern about the state of society. Although scholars discuss a range of assumed consequences, from individual psychological problems (Bennett, 2001; Ehrenberg, 2010) and decreasing trust in institutions (Mazarr, 1998; Whitman, 1998) to economic and social degradation (Mahbubani, 2008; Moisi, 2009), there is very little knowledge of what this attitude is. There is no such thing as a stream of literature; instead, previous research on this phenomenon is limited to a few studies. Indeed, my first research decision was to conceptualize concern about the state of society as an individual attitude. This means I follow the few other studies that have investigated pessimism, unease or concern about society as an individual-level attitude (Keyes, 1998; Eckersley, 2000; Elchardus & Smits, 2002; Elchardus & Smits, 2007; Eckersley, 2013; Kroll & Delhey, 2013; Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2013). This approach differs from others who instead focus on the culture at large (Bennett, 2001; Furedi, 2002 [1997]) or theorize about developments taking place, instead of the public opinion about those developments (Taylor, 1991; Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000).

Throughout this dissertation, I focused on three main questions: the *conceptualization*, *causes*, and *correlates & consequences* of this concern about the state of society. In Part I, the central research question was how the concern about the state of society can be defined, conceptualized and measured. Part II asked about the causes of the concern about the state of society, and Part III examined the correlates and consequences of this concern.

Below, I first reflect on the findings of this dissertation by chapter. Next, there is a section in which I draw the main conclusions, and one that discusses the limitations of this study. I continue by describing the contributions of this book and routes for future research, and finally I conclude this book with a section that describes its societal implications.

9.2 Chapter summaries

Conceptualization of societal unease and societal pessimism

The question how we can define the concern about the state of society and how it differs from other concepts in the literature was the central question of Chapter 2. To this end, the first decision was to consider the concern about the state of society as an individual attitude with societal issues as its object. Second, the concern about the state of society is described as a concern about the unmanageable deterioration of society and a collective powerlessness to stop that decline. This concern is defined in two ways. *Societal pessimism* is a concern that society is in decline. It does not refer to specific objects of concern, and is therefore theoretically applicable to all types of societies in all phases in history. *Societal unease* is a specification of societal pessimism, and reflects the concern about the state of society in contemporary developed liberal democracies. It is defined as a latent concern, which is composed of the perceived deterioration of five fundamental aspects of society: distrust in human capability, loss of ideology, decline of political power, decline of community and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability. *Distrust of human capability* reflects concerns about the limitations of policies and technological innovations to make improvements. *Loss of ideology* deprives us of a sense of direction about where we are heading and a perspective on a better society. *Decline of political power* points to the diminishing possibility to change things for the better because our tool to do that, the national government, has less ability to do so. *Decline of community* is the perceived decline of shared norms, values and solidarity within the nation. *Increasing socioeconomic vulnerability* reflects the perceived tendency towards increasing instability in citizens' socioeconomic position.

Conceptually, I distinguished resentment and insecurity of status from societal pessimism and societal unease as attitudes about one's personal situation that are typical of our era. In line with the literature, resentment is defined as not getting what you deserve or unjustly having less than others. Insecurity of status is a new concept, which reflects insecurity about one's social position and with whom to identify. The chapter concluded with a theoretical model of the book, and a section on the similarities and differences of societal pessimism and societal unease with anomie, anomia, alienation, and fear.

Chapter 3 aimed to test the conceptualization of societal unease of Chapter 2, to examine the measurement validity of societal unease and societal pessimism, and to explore which groups of citizens are likely to be uneasy about society. First, the conceptual model of societal unease is tested with Dutch COB data gathered in January 2012. The confirmatory factor analyses showed that the five elements do contribute to a

single (second-order) factor that shows good fit, and that other issues than those five do not fit into this scale. This means that this scale of societal unease works well and is a tool that can be used in future research. The measurement validity of societal unease and societal pessimism was supported by a very high correlation between the two concepts, which validated both. Additionally, they both relate weakly to happiness and moderately to anomia, as expected. A third test of measurement validity – whether the conceptual model of societal unease holds among educational subgroups – returned ambiguous results, neither fully contradicting nor confirming the existence of the same scale among these groups.

Finally, I explored the demographic, attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of societally uneasy citizens. I found that the middle aged, the less educated and the lower income group, people who are unsatisfied with their financial position and people with a high external locus of control are more often uneasy about society. In addition, many social attitudes are related to social unease, resentment and concern about the difference between the rich and poor most strongly, but also attitudes about welfare, the EU, the euro and the character of the country are significant, along with trust in the national Parliament, external political efficacy and satisfaction with the national economy. In terms of behavior, volunteers are less likely to be societally uneasy, as are readers of quality newspapers and voters for the VVD, D66, Groenlinks and CDA, in contrast to PVV and SP voters. This finding is in line with the political mobilization axis of Azmanova (2011), who posits risk-oriented, Radical parties in opposition to opportunity-oriented Liberal and Green parties.

In Chapter 4, I explored how people express their negative view of Dutch society with open-ended COB survey questions from 2012 to gain more insight into the nature of societal pessimism and societal unease. Through both inductive and deductive content analysis, I investigated why people think their country is heading in the wrong direction and how they argue their stance. Eight issues dominated the answers: decline of community, socioeconomic vulnerability, poverty and income inequality, the economic crisis, immigration and integration, criminality and safety and the EU and foreign affairs. The answers underlined the conceptualization of societal pessimism and societal unease in several ways. The argumentation virtually always referred to societal issues, not personal ones, as can be expected of a sociotropic concern. The tone of their answers was in line with the choice of the term unease because the respondents were negative and showed a firm discontent but were not deeply worried. An exception was the small group of respondents that show outright anger in their argumentation, which is in line with the distinction of emotions about society called a public mood by Rahn, Kroeger, and Kite (1996). Consistent with the conceptualization of societal

unease as a latent concern, respondents often pointed to several societal issues, often describing these issues as interlinked and thereby pointing to a broad and vague attitude about society in general. This latent character also follows from the differences in which the elements of societal unease are mentioned, which indicates difference in saliency. Whereas decline of community and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability are both often referred to, decline of political power and the loss of ideology were less prominent, while distrust of human capability was virtually non-existent in the data. Apparently, the fact that these elements all related to a latent dimension in Chapter 3 is a connection that is not made by the respondents themselves but that instead takes place in an unconscious, latent fashion. I compared the societal pessimists with their most societally uneasy subgroup, based on the scale in Chapter 3. The latter group showed a deeper concern, exhibited more anger and resentment, and pointed to more issues concurrently. They are more often concerned about criminality and safety, and poverty and income inequality, thus indicating that the most societally uneasy are socioeconomically leftist and culturally rightist. Finally, I explored whether societal optimists disagree with the societal pessimists, but instead of taking an opposing stance, they argue their positive expectations with different developments.

Causes of societal pessimism

Chapter 5 aimed to examine whether societal pessimism is rooted in real societal developments or is a cultural characteristic instead. To that end, the political and economic causes of both cross-national differences in societal pessimism (between 23 countries) and longitudinal differences (between 13 moments in the period 2006-2012) were investigated. Specifically, I theorized that supranationalization, political instability, and corruption were political factors to consider in explaining societal pessimism, and the retrenchment of welfare state provisions, economic growth, unemployment and inflation were economic factors. The analyses showed that political factors best explain differences between countries, while economic factors best explain differences within countries over time. Two political factors, political instability and perceived corruption, explained cross-national differences in societal pessimism as expected. Unexpectedly, early elections decreased societal pessimism, which may be explained by the positive perception of the fall of a problematic government or the responsiveness of a political system. Additionally, contrary to expectations, in new EMU countries, societal pessimism is lower than in non-EMU countries. Apparently, either adoption of the euro or the context in which the euro is introduced produces societal optimism. Longitudinally, within countries, economic recession and unemployment increased and the net EU benefit decreased societal pessimism as hypothesized.

Unexpectedly, regular elections seem to boost uncertainty, whereas early elections decrease societal pessimism.

The results also informed us on the nature of societal pessimism. They imply that societal pessimism is at least partly rooted in real societal developments. This contradicts accounts that frame Europe as culturally pessimistic. Moreover, this means that it is possible to counteract societal pessimism. Additionally, societal pessimism appears to have both a structural and a conjunctural element. The former follows from the considerable cross-national differences in the level of societal pessimism. The latter follows from the substantial fluctuations in the level of societal pessimism within countries over time.

Correlates and Consequences of societal pessimism

Chapter 6 examined the extent to which societal pessimism offers a new explanation of Populist Radical Right (PRR) voting, besides established theories. It argues that societal pessimism among voters is in congruence with the nostalgic character of PRR ideology. By comparing voters of PRR parties to those of Radical Left, Mainstream Left (Social Democratic) and Mainstream Right (Christian Democratic and Liberal-Conservative) parties, I found that societal pessimism is distributed in a tilted U-curve, with PRR as the most and Mainstream Right (MR) as the least societally pessimistic. Moreover, societal pessimism significantly explained why people vote for a PRR party instead of the Mainstream Right, even while controlling for usual factors (such as socioeconomic characteristics, satisfaction with democracy, opposition to immigration, European integration and authoritarianism). This is in line with the risks-opportunity axis of political mobilization that Azmanova (2011) identifies, and shows that not only personal but also sociotropic risks such as societal pessimism fit into this cleavage. This means that societal pessimism is an attitude that is both politically relevant and a characteristic of an important political cleavage. Further analyses showed that societal pessimism is the only attitude on which MR and PRR voters take opposite, extreme positions. In addition to a direct effect, there are indications that societal pessimism is also mediated through satisfaction with democracy, opposition to immigration and European integration, thus explaining this combination of ideological positions.

Chapter 7 theorized and tested the extent to which societal pessimism is related to specific types of political and civic participation. Moreover, it aimed to further the understanding of the similarities and differences between several types of political and civic participants. Despite a comprehensive literature on *why* people participate, little is known about *which* people participate in specific types of engagement. Instead of looking at the established factors in participation research, which are not likely to differ

much between participants, I proposed to differentiate participants by their outlook on society. The hypotheses expected that whether people engage in institutional, formal versus protest participation, and whether that engagement is within or outside political institutions, depends on their level of societal pessimism, political trust and social trust. In the analyses, groups of participants are compared with each other, while excluding non-participants. The results showed that institutional political participants trust politics rather than people, that non-institutional political participants are societal pessimists who trust people rather than politics, and that civic participants are societal optimists who trust other people. Additional analyses of societal pessimism showed that it is equally related to both non-institutional (protest) participation and non-participation. Among politically efficacious citizens only, societal pessimism is more related to protest participation than non-participation.

Chapter 8 investigated whether societal pessimism and other types of sociotropic uncertainty encourage selectivity in their identification with political-geographical groups. I examined multiple identification with respect to three political-geographical groups: the city, the country and the EU. With these identification measures, I constructed four groups: low, single, dual and multiple identifiers. The hypothesis was that the logic of the ‘uncertainty-identity’ and ‘need-for-closure’ literatures, which show the effect of personal uncertainty on identification, can be extended to sociotropic uncertainty and multiple identification. The results confirm that societal pessimism, political distrust and negative economic expectations all lead individuals to express a less-complex pattern of identification. These patterns remain when two (not three) groups are considered (dual identification) in any combination. The implication is that identification with multiple political-geographical groups is hindered by societal pessimism and other types of sociotropic uncertainty. This outcome pictures societal pessimists as people who identify with a single political-geographical group, if at all.

9.3 Main conclusions

In addition to the detailed summaries above, this dissertation offers several overarching conclusions, which I discuss by reflecting on the three main questions. With respect to the first research question of how the concern about the state of society can be defined, conceptualized and measured, several conclusions can be drawn. First, this book proposes two new definitions to capture this phenomenon, namely, societal pessimism – a concern that society is in decline – and societal unease – a latent perception of the deterioration of five specific aspects of society, namely distrust in human capability, loss of ideology, decline of political power, decline of community

and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability. While societal pessimism is universally applicable, societal unease is predominantly present in contemporary developed liberal democracies. Both concepts can be characterized as perceptions of an unmanageable deterioration of society and a collective powerlessness to change things for the better. The findings underline that these attitudes are broad, latent, and relatively unconscious reflections of the state of society.

Second, this book shows both how we can measure societal unease and societal pessimism with survey questions, and that societal pessimism and societal unease are empirically very similar (in the Netherlands in 2012). Third, it theorizes and shows that societal pessimism and societal unease are different from other attitudes such as resentment, insecurity of status, anomia, alienation, happiness, political and societal trust and economic expectations. Societal pessimism and societal unease fill a theoretical gap because they are concerns about society that have only rarely been distinguished in a similar fashion (Keyes, 1998; Eckersley, 2000; Elchardus & Smits, 2002; Elchardus & Smits, 2007; Eckersley, 2013; Kroll & Delhey, 2013; Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2013); furthermore, the results in this book also show that societal pessimism and societal unease are empirically different from those other attitudes. Fourth, this dissertation underlines in several ways that sociotropic concerns should be differentiated from egotropic ones. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, societal pessimism is shown to have an effect independent from both subjective and objective wellbeing, (satisfaction with life and socio-economic status).

These findings also provide more insight into what the concern about society is not. Instead of studying developments in society at large (Taylor, 1991; Beck, 1992; Bauman, 1997; Glassner, 1999; Bauman, 2000; Bauman, 2006; Bauman, 2007), or individual problems typical of our era (Wilkinson, 2001; Ehrenberg, 2010; Han, 2012), here the perception of a decline of society is the subject of study. This study also differs from research that focuses on the gap between private contentment and public pessimism (but not what such public pessimism is) (McKenzie, 1997; Whitman, 1998; Mazarr, 1998) and studies of aggregated attitudes or the sentiment of society overall (Stimson, 1991; Bennett, 2001; Furedi, 2002 [1997]).

The second research question asked about the causes of the concern about the state of society. I showed that there are substantial differences in the level of societal pessimism both cross-nationally and longitudinally, within countries. This suggests that societal pessimism is not a cultural feature but instead, that it is rooted in real societal developments. The findings indeed show that to be the case. Both political and economic conditions affect societal pessimism.

The third research question of this book asks about the correlates and consequences of the concern about the state of society. The results demonstrate that societal pessimism relates to several types of behavior and attitudes that are deemed relevant to the functioning of democracy. The findings show that societal pessimism has an societal impact and is important to consider in social research. First, societal pessimism is in congruence with the nostalgic character of PRR parties, and it increases the chance of voting for such a party. Furthermore, societal pessimism fits into the risks-versus-opportunity axis of political mobilization proposed by (Azmanova, 2011) because it is most common among PRR voters but least common among MR voters. This means that societal pessimism coincides with a current political cleavage. Second, when we compare types of participation, societal pessimism is related to protest participation (non-institutional political participation) such as demonstrating, signing a petition and boycotting certain products; additionally, it is related to non-participants, who are engaged in none of these three types of participation. In contrast, it is least likely to be found among people involved in institutional political participation or civic participation. Third, societal pessimism decreases the chance of multiple identification with political-geographical collective groups, namely, concurrent identification with a city, a country and the EU. Societal pessimism and other types of sociotropic uncertainty encourage people to focus more on specific identities, i.e., to show a simple, selective identification pattern.

Combining this book's outcomes, societal pessimism can be characterized as a latent but firm discontent that is most common among middle-aged citizens (40-55), socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, inhabitants of rural areas, PRR voters, non-participants and non-institutionalized (protest) participants, and Europeans who do not identify concurrently with all of the political-geographical groups to which they belong but instead show a simple, less complex pattern of identification. The results indicate that societal pessimists focus on the risks in their society, aim to make their world less complex by focusing on what is familiar and close to them, and retract from their society rather than engaging in it.

9.4 Limitations

With this dissertation, I aimed to advance the research on the concern about the state of society. Although steps have been made in this regard in this book, four caveats need to be mentioned. First, I theorize that societal unease is the shape of societal pessimism in contemporary developed liberal democracies, but I cannot test that proposition beyond the Netherlands, where I find that the two are indeed empirically

extremely similar. Although the Netherlands is a good case to study societal unease and societal pessimism,¹ I cannot offer any conclusions with respect to the relationship between societal unease and societal pessimism beyond the Netherlands. Although in subsequent chapters, which study societal pessimism cross-nationally in European countries, the character of societal pessimism is implicitly understood as resembling societal unease, it should be empirically validated that the assumed external validity from the case of the Netherlands in 2012 is justified. It could be that societal unease takes shape in a manner that is substantively different in countries with higher levels of societal pessimism, such as France. Further research is needed to show that in other European countries, societal unease also forms a latent attitude, which is composed of the same five elements as in the Netherlands and that is just as highly associated with societal pessimism as it is among the Dutch. The problem is that as it stands, no cross-national data are available to perform such a test. Therefore, the first step here would be to test several countries, one at a time, using national data.

Aside from the relationship between societal pessimism and societal unease, a second caveat involves the question of whether societal pessimism is theoretically and empirically equivalent across countries. Theoretically, societal pessimism is a universal concept that is not predefined in its scope or focus. This means that it is theorized to be a broad attitude, which thus can take shape in many ways and relates to many other attitudes. On the one hand, one can nonetheless wonder what minimum level of equivalence is needed to use it in comparative studies, both cross-nationally and longitudinally. On the other hand, theoretically it is not a problem when in one country, societal pessimism is more related to the economy and in another country, it is more related to issues of safety or immigration. Like the nostalgic character of PRR parties, which takes shape in context-specific ways, the bottom line of societal pessimism is that people think their society is in decline, regardless of the reasons for that decline. Therefore, it does not matter that the issues that constitute societal pessimism differ according to context. Moreover, we still lack the data to investigate societal pessimism cross-nationally more thoroughly than I have in this book.

The empirical cross-national equivalence is important with respect to Chapters 5 through 8, in which I use one or two items on societal pessimism. This equivalence is difficult to examine with such a small number of items. In the only chapter (Ch.7)

1 The Netherlands can be seen as a least-likely case, with a relatively low level of societal pessimism and a high level of personal well-being and economic and social conditions, whereas in the media, the concern about society is regularly assumed and discussed, thus indicating that societal pessimism is certainly not foreign to the Dutch (see Chapter 1).

in which I can use two (instead of one) items of societal pessimism in many countries (19), the correlation between the two items ranges from .32 in Spain to .55 in Germany. Although this range is not to be neglected, it is not too large either because we are speaking of such a broad, latent attitude. Therefore, some cross-national difference is likely to be inherent to the concept, and this range does not seem problematic.

A third caveat is the operationalization of societal pessimism and whether the various operationalizations are equivalent. Given that a cross-national dataset combining the various measures of societal pessimism is unavailable and therefore, the equivalence of these measures of societal pessimism cannot be tested cross-nationally, the analyses in Chapter 3 provide a proxy for such a confirmation. With the Dutch Citizens' Outlooks Barometer from January 2012 this chapter confirms that the various operationalizations of societal pessimism are all closely related to societal unease in the Netherlands, which underlines that the different operationalizations of societal pessimism in subsequent chapters measure the same phenomenon. However, one of those operationalizations, a two-item scale, showed a lower correlation in Chapters 6 and 7 which use European Social Survey data of 2012 and 2006, respectively. This lower correlation in the ESS data than in the Dutch COB data can probably at least partly be explained by the fact that in the COB questionnaire, the two pessimism items are placed close together, between other societal issues, whereas in the ESS, they are further apart and are placed between personal and mental well-being questions. The lower correlation of the societal pessimism items in the ESS data is therefore not very surprising; nevertheless, it is far from ideal, and it represents a limitation of this study. However, the best option was to use both items because theoretically, they are both fit to measure the broad concept of societal pessimism. Using only one of them instead would therefore seem like a deviation of what I aim to measure. After all, the commonality of such items is what I assume to be societal pessimism. Furthermore, the results of Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 underline the measurement validity of societal pessimism because clear patterns can be traced in the causes, correlates and consequences of the concept. Additionally, robustness checks per country in Chapters 7 and 8 confirm the effect of societal pessimism in the large majority of countries, even though small samples and skewed distributions make this less likely. In addition to pointing to measurement validity for societal pessimism, this also provides reassurance that social pessimism has cross-national equivalence.

The fourth caveat is the testing of causal relationships in cross-sectional models in Chapters 5, 6 and 8 because they are the best alternative for testing causality. Although panel data are needed to be conclusive, the minimal conditions for speaking about causality have been met. In Chapter 5, I examine the influence of context factors on

cross-national and longitudinal differences in the level of societal pessimism. By taking data from a period close but prior to the measurement of the survey data, causality is proven to the extent that a causal mechanism is argued, a statistical relationship is shown, and a chronological order between cause and effect is measured. Although theoretically spuriousness cannot be excluded, causality is shown to be very likely. In Chapter 8, in which I examine the effect of societal pessimism on identification patterns, the causal mechanism and the statistical relationship underline causality. Although endogeneity cannot be ruled out, it is unlikely because the causal mechanism only makes sense in the argued direction; it cannot be reversed. The results underline the causal mechanism not only on an aggregate level but also in separate country analyses. In Chapter 6, I studied the influence of societal pessimism on voting behavior. There is reason to expect endogeneity to play a role here. Research shows not only that elite cues from the political leaders of one's party affect societal attitudes (Meffert et al., 2006; Lenz, 2009; Slothuus, 2015) but also that voting behavior and attitudes affect one another, resulting in a spiral of increasing polarized stances between groups of voters (Harteveld, Kokkonen, & Dahlberg, 2015). This means that PRR voting would incite a spiral of increasing societal pessimism. Nevertheless, despite the fact that this research question would derive a particular benefit from panel data, the clear causal mechanism and correlational results that follow from regression analyses support the causal claims that are made.

9.5 Implications

Contributions to the literature and suggestions for future research

With this dissertation, I take various steps to advance the knowledge on societal unease and societal pessimism, and I contribute to the literature in various ways. At the same time, this research field is still underdeveloped and many questions remain. In this section, I discuss this book's contributions and the routes that can be explored in future research to enhance our understanding of the concern about the state of society.

First, with respect to the *conceptualization* of the concern about the state of society, I build on the literature about the gap between private contentment and public pessimism (McKenzie, 1997; Whitman, 1998; Mazarr, 1998; Eckersley, 2000; Eckersley, 2013; Kroll & Delhey, 2013) and studies on a culture of pessimism and 'maatschappelijk onbehagen' (Keyes, 1998; Bennett, 2001; Elchardus & Smits, 2002; Elchardus & Smits, 2007; Dekker, Van Noije, & Den Ridder, 2013; Eckersley, 2013) by offering two new definitions: that of societal pessimism and that of societal unease. For societal unease, I also propose a conceptual model that is embedded in a large, interdisciplinary

literature. This adds to our understanding of this sentiment and provides an overview of the heterogeneous literature on negative societal developments.

Second, this book offers new *measurements* of the concern about the state of society, namely, a scale of societal unease and various operationalizations of societal pessimism. These measurements are validated in this book, not only by the strong correlation between the two in the Netherlands shown in Chapter 3, but also by the fact that the theorized correlates and consequences of societal pessimism are confirmed by the results reported in the subsequent, empirical chapters. Therefore, both the scale of societal unease and the operationalizations of societal pessimism proposed here are tools that can be used in future research.

To further extend the knowledge on the nature of societal pessimism and societal unease, several steps can be taken. As noted above, the scale of societal unease developed for the Dutch case in Chapter 3 should be tested both for cross-national equivalence and with a larger number of items. Additionally, the operationalization of societal pessimism needs improvement, and an investigation not only of cross-national equivalence of societal pessimism itself but also of its relationship with societal unease is necessary. Additionally, a comparison of non-Western and Western countries would be interesting to investigate to what extent the conceptualization of societal unease also applies to citizens of non-Western countries, whether they show societal pessimism, and the subjects of their societal pessimism. Both quantitative as well as qualitative research are useful to investigate the cultural differences in societal pessimism not only within the Western world but also between Western and non-Western countries.

The time dimension is also an important subject for further research. Has societal pessimism always been a feature of (modern) society, or is it primarily characteristic of the current era? Although there are only sporadic studies of societal pessimism over time, these studies have reached interesting and contradictory conclusions. In the USA, societal pessimism seems to have increased since the 1970s and has shown greater volatility since that time (Whitman, 1998). This picture resembles the development of political trust in the USA, which also first decreases and then shows variety, with no clear trend (Norris, 2011). Dutch data for the period 1958 to 2012, with only twelve measurements, shows no meaningful structural trend in (one indicator of) societal pessimism (Dekker & Den Ridder, 2014).

In addition to describing the trend of societal pessimism, it is important 1) to determine the relationship with societal unease over time and 2) to determine the politicization of this attitude. I propose in this book that societal unease reflects the concern about society in current Western countries. Is it the case that in earlier times, societal pessimism reflected different issues, such as during the Cold War or the

rebuilding of Western countries after World War II? Additionally, to what extent is societal pessimism an attitude of importance? Currently, societal pessimism seems to coincide with the risks-versus-opportunity axis of political mobilization (Azmanova, 2011) and shows a large difference between educational groups and political participants. However, it could very well be that in previous periods, societal pessimism was not only substantially different (that is, composed of different societal problems) but also prevalent among different groups and did not have the same political and social meaning and importance that it does now. The saliency of societal pessimism is likely to show different patterns over time.

The third contribution of this dissertation is that it provides both theoretical and empirical additions to several streams of literature on social attitudes. By comparing various attitudes either in a theoretical way, an empirical way or both, I add some insight into the similarities and interrelatedness of attitudes such as resentment, anomia, happiness, political trust, social trust and economic expectations (e.g. Seeman, 1991; Eckersley, 2000; Barbalet, 2001; Uslaner, 2002; Dalton, 2004; De Boef & Kellstedt, 2004; Legge, Davidov, & Schmidt, 2008; Norris, 2011; Kroll & Delhey, 2013).

Fourth, this book takes some first steps to revealing the causes of societal pessimism by showing that cross-national political conditions affect societal pessimism, whereas longitudinally, it is economic conditions that matter the most. These results also indicate that societal pessimism is not a cultural feature; instead, it is rooted in real developments. In terms of consequences, I add to the knowledge on societal pessimism by showing that is related to voting behavior, the type of participation in which people are involved, and identification patterns. Thus the results underline that this attitude is not only common but also consequential, which reaffirms the need to pay more scientific attention to societal pessimism.

Future research is needed to further the understanding of the causes of societal pessimism and societal unease. The first category to consider is that of macro causes of societal unease and societal pessimism. Related to the distrust in human capability, the record of technology-related disasters (from nuclear power plant problems and dangerous levels of resistant bacteria in hospitals to the negative side effects of (social) policies) could increase societal unease. Similarly, in view of the loss of ideology, there could be an analysis of the extent to which political parties offer long-term, ideologically inspired views and the diversity in that views can be considered. On both the political and economic sides, related to the decline of political power and increasing socioeconomic vulnerability, the influence of multinationals on governmental decision making, and citizens' decreased financial protection caused by more short-time

contracts and flexibilization of the labor market can be considered as causes of societal unease and societal pessimism.

Furthermore, the level of income inequality, especially the position of the middle-class compared to the upper-class, is important to investigate in future research (Ehrenreich, 1989). Although in general, attention to the difference between the rich and poor is increasing, especially since Piketty's (2014) study, I expect the worsening position of the middle-class to be most important to the perception of increasing socioeconomic vulnerability (Ehrenreich, 1989). The fragile position of the middle class means that only people at the top of society are free of worry about the future, whereas all others are increasingly vulnerable.

The final macro level cause of societal unease and societal pessimism that I want to point to here is the media. Several authors argue that societal pessimism is caused by the negative tone in the media (McKenzie, 1997; Whitman, 1998). This issue deserves scrutiny: is it indeed the case that media consumption increases societal pessimism? In addition, the influence of the media's tone and content on the concern about society is important. Examining the resemblance of how issues are discussed in the media and by citizens in a longitudinal study might offer insight into whether the media pick up certain issues and their framing or instead, whether they cause issues to be more salient and determine how they are discussed.

Moreover, not only macro, but just as well micro causes of societal pessimism should be investigated. Why are some people more concerned about the state of society than others? In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, societal pessimism is shown to be important *despite* a person's socioeconomic characteristics. This is particularly interesting because it is unclear what causes this remaining effect of societal pessimism. Therefore, differences between (groups of) citizens need to be examined. Future research should consider both personality characteristics and social milieu.

Regarding personality, research shows the effects of both general optimism or pessimism (whether the glass is half full or half empty; whether you expect to succeed in life) and the 'big 5' personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) on political attitudes and behavior (e.g. Uslander, 2002; Mondak & Halperin, 2008). Future research should focus on the relationship between such personality traits and both societal unease and societal pessimism. It would be especially interesting to study general pessimism, to examine the extent to which pessimism in the usual sense of the word is related to societal pessimism. Although the influence of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, as shown throughout this book, contraindicates a particularly strong influence of personality on either societal

unease or societal pessimism, an effect is likely to exist, and it is important to know the size of its influence.

Moreover, research should focus on the influence of social milieu in understanding differences in societal pessimism. Following the famous idea of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1989), attention to the way society is perceived, discussed and framed in people's network, among 'their own people', might provide insight into different levels of societal pessimism among subgroups. Focus group studies of the SCP on how people think the Netherlands is doing show differences in how educational groups perceive society (Dekker, Van der Meer, & Steenvoorden, 2008; Steenvoorden, 2009; Den Ridder, Dekker, & Van Ditmars, 2013). The instant negative consensus among the low educated can clearly be separated from the more optimistic and nuanced vision among the high educated. Insight into the different ways in which society is perceived could be performed with qualitative studies that gather insight into differences among subgroups of society in terms of what is seen as 'common knowledge', i.e., what people think everybody they know could agree upon. More quantitative research can follow up on the equivalence of a scale of social unease among subgroups. In Chapter 3, the analyses did not provide grounds for a final answer about the extent to which social unease is the same among educational groups. With the use of more elaborate measures, it could be possible to reach conclusive results.

The fifth contribution of this dissertation is that it adds to several other streams of literature, besides societal unease and societal pessimism. It contributes to the literature on PRR voting by underlining the nostalgic character of these parties and the societal pessimism among their voters, and it increases the understanding of the difference between MR and PRR support (Ignazi, 2003; Taggart, 2004; Canovan, 2004; Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2005; Mudde, 2007; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Oesch, 2008). Additionally, it shows that societal pessimism can be understood as part of the risks-versus-opportunity cleavage proposed by Azmanova (2011). This means both that sociotropic concerns should be regarded as part of that cleavage and that the electorate on the risk end of that cleavage is potentially larger than suspected.

This book also provides some new insight on civic engagement, specifically on what differentiates participants from each other. The literature on voluntary involvement has focused more on why people participate (e.g. Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995; Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2004) and less on which people participate in what type of activity. Unlike most previous studies, I excluded non-participants, compared participants with each other, and showed, in line with the matching hypothesis (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Granik, 2005), that participants in voluntary engagement can be best distinguished from each other according to their societal outlook.

Finally, this book aims to add to the literature on multiple identification, uncertainty theory and the need-for-closure theory. It is one of the first studies to examine the causes of multiple identification, thereby contributing to the literature on dual and multiple identities (Kohli, 2000; Brewer, 2001; Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001; Díez Medrano & Gutiérrez, 2001; Risse, 2004). Furthermore, I show that the effect of uncertainty on identification, which is the focus of the ‘uncertainty-identity’ literature (Hogg, 2000; Reid & Hogg, 2005; Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010; Hogg, Meehan, & Farquharson, 2010; Hohman, Hogg, & Bligh, 2010; Grant & Hogg, 2012) and the ‘need-for-closure’ literature (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Kruglanski et al., 2006), can be broadened to include not only personal, egotropic uncertainty but also sociotropic uncertainty.

Social policy

The results of this book may also be of interest to politicians and policymakers. The finding that a substantial part of European citizenry is pessimistic about society has various implications.

First, the results underline that in general, politicians should seriously consider citizens’ concern about the state of society. Politicians can choose to reassure citizens by pointing to imminent improvements or other reasons for optimism, but they should not downplay societal pessimism. The latter tactic would not only alienate citizens, but particularly strengthen the division between voters who mainly perceive risks against voters who mainly focus on opportunities in contemporary Western society. This book suggests that would become visible in various ways. One could imagine the consequences for voting behavior. Currently, it is the Populist Radical Right parties that acknowledge this concern most explicitly, which makes them particularly attractive to societally pessimistic voters. Neglecting or downplaying societal pessimism by other political parties thus risks pushing societal pessimists toward the PRR. Another way in which societal pessimism might become politicized is via identity politics. Societal pessimism mitigates identification with multiple political-geographical groups. To ignore societal pessimism as a backward cultural characteristic is therefore harmful in the long run, if it means that people turn their back on their city, their country or the EU, or all three. For the democratic system to function, political communities need their members to have a sense of belonging.

Second, this study suggests that the ongoing depoliticization of public problems and the decline of long-term, ideologically inspired visions among political parties are likely to add to societal pessimism. In particular, the TINA-frame (‘there-is-no-alternative’) is problematic, precisely because it underlines the sentiment of collective

powerlessness against societal decline. These points ought to be taken into account by political leadership, if not in election manifestos than at least as part of their regular discourse.

Third, this study shows that societal pessimism is not unwarranted: it is rooted in political and economic conditions that to some extent can be managed. Politicians and policy makers are therefore not powerless in the face of a societally pessimistic electorate; there are ways to counter it. Tackling political instability, corruption, economic recession, and unemployment all contribute to decreasing societal pessimism. Even early elections bring down societal pessimism, meaning that terminating a malfunctioning government is perceived positively by citizens.

Fourth, policy makers should be aware that the voices of societal pessimists are easily overlooked. Societally pessimistic citizens less often engage in formal, institutionalized participation. If they participate, they are more likely to do so in the form of non-institutional protests. Politicians and policy makers are thus not likely to encounter societally pessimistic citizens in institutional meeting places such as neighborhood organizations and political parties. Engaging with societally pessimistic citizens and learning about their stance, thus requires politicians and policymakers to make an extra effort. It may not be easy to set up such engagements, though. It is questionable whether societally pessimistic citizens would be willing either to join events or meetings designed for citizens to have a say or to participate in (new) initiatives that aim to improve society.

Fifth, the underlying attitude of societal pessimism can offer insight into concrete and topical issues such as perceptions of the refugee crisis, climate change or terrorism. All of these issues portray the complexity of current society and the collective powerlessness to make actual changes in the course of events. Citizens' concerns with – and perhaps even agitation about – such problems can be understood somewhat better by studying societal pessimism. Such problems are concrete examples of societal deterioration that is perceived to be unmanageable and that reaffirm pessimism about society's future.

Ultimately, the main risk is one of a negative spiral in which new problems confirm pre-existing pessimism on societal decline and collective powerlessness, and contribute to a further increase of societal pessimism.

Appendices

Appendix A

Table A1 Description of independent variables in Table 3.6 and 3.7^a

Variable	Exact item wording
Educational level	Low: pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) Medium: vocational degree (HAVO, VWO, MBO) High: professional or university degree (HBO, WO)
Satisfied with personal financial situation	How satisfied are you with your personal financial situation? ^b
Satisfied with health	How satisfied are you with your health? ^b
Satisfied with daily activity	How satisfied are you with your main daily activity (job, studies, other activity)? ^b
Positive self	In general, I think very positively about myself ^c
No control over things that happen	I have little control over what happens to me ^c
Does volunteering	How many hours a week do you engage in volunteering; unpaid work for an organization or association? ^d
Supports people outside household	How many hours a week do you provide help to people outside your household? ^d
Reads tabloid newspaper regularly	Which newspapers do you read regularly? (answer: Telegraaf)
Reads quality newspaper regularly	Which newspapers do you read regularly? (answer: NRC Handelsblad, de Volkskrant, Trouw)
Uses Internet regularly	To what extent do you use the Internet to follow national political news? ^e
People should rely less on welfare	People in our country should rely less on welfare and be more self-reliant ^c
Difference between rich and poor too large	The difference between rich and poor has become too large in the Netherlands ^c
Sentences too lenient	In general, sentences in the Netherlands are too lenient ^c
Less immigrants would be appealing	The Netherlands would be a more appealing country if there were fewer immigrants ^c
Introducing the euro a bad thing	It is a bad thing that the gulden has been replaced by the euro ^c
Country is losing its character	Because of immigration and open borders, the Netherlands is in danger of losing its character ^c
Membership in EU good thing	Dutch membership in the EU is a good thing ^c
Satisfaction with national economy	How satisfied are you with the Dutch economy? ^b
Trust in Parliament	How much do you trust the national Parliament right now? ^b
Politics too complicated for me	National politics is often too complicated for me to understand ^c

Table A1 (Continued)

Variable	Exact item wording
People like me have no influence	People like me have no influence on what the government does ^c
Voting	If there were to be national Parliamentary elections at this moment, would you vote for? If yes: Which party would you probably vote for?

a Don't know answers are treated as missing values and listwise deleted in the regression analyses.

b The original scale 1-10. Answers 1 thru 5 are coded as 0, 6 thru 10 as 1.

c The original scale is 1-5, (fully disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, fully agree). Answers 1 thru 3 are coded as 0, 4 and 5 as 1.

d The original scale is 1-40 hours with the extra option "not at all". The latter is treated as 0, any hours is treated as 1.

e The original scale is 1 to 4 (not at all, seldom, regularly, many times). Answers 1 and 2 are coded as 0, 3 and 4 as 1.

Appendix B

Table B1 Detailed coding (bold letters refer to categories in Table 4.3)^a

	Societal pessimists ^b	Most societally uneasy ^c
Theoretical model:		
distrust in human capability	0	0
loss of ideology	3	4
decline of political power	5	10
decline of community	20	24
increasing socioeconomic vulnerability	16	18
resentment	3	8
Inductive codes:		
politics:		
competence, one-liners, polarization	7	9
this cabinet, Rutte, wrong cabinet	7	8
Wilders/PVV/populism	5	1
policy (no decisiveness, much disagreement)	3	3
policy (not my party, disagree with policies)	2	3
“politics does not listen to the people”	2	5
economic crisis and austerity measures:		
budget cuts in general	8	10
economy, economic crisis	8	6
unemployment	6	8
“too much attention to the economy”	3	6
housing market	3	3
banks	2	1
poverty and income inequality:		
rising costs, less money to spend		
bonuses, greedy rich and (hoge heren)	7	10
difference between rich and poor	5	6
poverty, minimum income group, (voedselbanken)	4	8
“budget cuts hit too much the poorest/(Jan Modaal)”	4	5
EU and foreign affairs:		
EU/Europe: European leaders, expansion, Eastern Europeans	3	3
euro: introduction, rising prices because of the euro, euro crisis	3	5
too much money to Greece, other EU countries, Third World	4	6
immigration and integration:		
immigrants	8	10
anti-immigrant sentiments/policy	2	3
Islam	1	1

Table B1 (Continued)

	Societal pessimists ^b	Most societally uneasy ^c
criminality and safety: (also low sentences, soft police)	12	19
nature and culture: (too much austerity, too little attention)	3	2
pension (rising age, lower allowance)	3	2
healthcare and education (too many cuts)	3	2
angry	4	8
Other:		
media	2	1
elderly (care, position off)	2	6
Dutch identity disappearing	2	1
youth (less respect)	1	1
managers versus employees	1	2
people on benefits (uitkeringstrekkers)	1	0
diverse (unclear)	9	10
a feeling that things are heading in the wrong direction	2	2

a These are not mutually exclusive codes because 1) the large majority of respondents raise multiple issues and 2) terms often refer to multiple issues simultaneously. b N= 663 c N=105

Appendix C

Table C1-1 Cross-national differences in societal pessimism, (Model 1 and 2) 2006-2012^{ab}

		Model 1				Model 2			
		pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
		B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Individual level: controls									
gender (male)		0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)	0.21	(.01)	0.19	(.01)
age (40-54)	15-24	-0.21	(.02)	-0.20	(.03)	-0.20	(.02)	-0.20	(.03)
	25-39	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.10	(.01)	-0.11	(.02)
	55+	-0.17	(.01)	-0.09	(.02)	-0.16	(.01)	-0.09	(.02)
education (medium)	low	0.24	(.01)	0.13	(.02)	0.23	(.01)	0.11	(.02)
	high	-0.30	(.01)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.30	(.01)	-0.19	(.01)
	student	-0.37	(.02)	-0.27	(.03)	-0.37	(.02)	-0.27	(.03)
employment status (employed)	unemployed	0.44	(.02)	0.17	(.02)	0.43	(.02)	0.15	(.02)
	other	0.02	(.01)	0.03	(.02)	0.01	(.01)	0.02	(.02)
community (small town)	rural village	0.04	(.01)	0.02	(.01)	0.04	(.01)	0.02	(.01)
	large town	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)
Individual level: attitudes									
life satisfaction									
economic negative expectation									
political distrust									
Country level: political									
mean net EU benefit		-0.09	(.07)	0.01	(.06)				
EMU (no euro)	new	-0.44	(.17)	0.26	(.13)				
	established	0.16	(.15)	0.50	(.12)				
changes government 2000-2011		0.13	(.04)	0.09	(.03)				
early elections 2000-2011		-0.61	(.25)	0.45	(.19)				
mean elections		0.18	(.77)	-0.68	(.60)				
mean corruption		-0.19	(.05)	-0.16	(.04)				
Country level: economic									
mean change social benefits						0.22	(.11)	0.28	(.09)
Missing values (five countries, see footnote 8)						-0.63	(.22)	-0.31	(.16)
mean GDP growth						0.13	(.22)	0.19	(.19)
mean unemployment						0.06	(.03)	0.02	(.03)
mean inflation						0.04	(.06)	0.01	(.06)

Table C1-1 (Continued)

	Model 1				Model 2			
	pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Wave dummies (2012/4)								
2006/3	-0.71	(.12)	-0.32	(.09)	-0.56	(.13)	-0.23	(.09)
2007/3	-0.72	(.12)	-0.34	(.09)	-0.70	(.12)	-0.32	(.09)
2008/1	-0.63	(.12)	-0.26	(.09)	-0.61	(.12)	-0.23	(.09)
2008/4	-0.37	(.12)	-0.19	(.09)	-0.35	(.12)	-0.16	(.09)
2009/1	-0.01	(.12)	0.02	(.09)	0.00	(.12)	0.04	(.09)
2009/2	-0.25	(.12)	-0.08	(.09)	-0.24	(.12)	-0.05	(.09)
2009/4	-0.38	(.12)	-0.15	(.09)	-0.37	(.12)	-0.12	(.09)
2010/2	-0.30	(.12)	-0.09	(.09)	-0.29	(.12)	-0.08	(.09)
2010/4	-0.29	(.12)	-0.21	(.09)	-0.28	(.12)	-0.19	(.09)
2011/2	-0.34	(.12)	-0.23	(.09)	-0.33	(.12)	-0.22	(.09)
2011/4	0.06	(.12)	0.05	(.09)	0.05	(.12)	0.04	(.09)
2012/2	-0.32	(.12)	-0.13	(.09)	-0.32	(.12)	-0.12	(.09)
Constant	1.56	(.49)	0.07	(.38)	0.17	(.28)	-0.52	(.25)
explained variance country level			69%		75%		23%	

a Multinomial multilevel analysis with three levels. reference category = optimists.

b B-coefficients are log odds. Bold coefficients are significant with $p < .05$. For individual coefficients. two-sided significance tests are performed. for macro coefficients one-sided significance test are performed.

Table C1-2 Cross-national differences in societal pessimism (Model 3 and 4), 2006-2012^{ab}

		Model 3				Model 4			
		pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
		B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Individual level: controls									
gender (male)		0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)	0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)
age (40-54)	15-24	-0.21	(.02)	-0.20	(.03)	-0.08	(.02)	-0.15	(.03)
	25-39	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.05	(.01)	-0.10	(.01)
	55+	-0.17	(.01)	-0.09	(.02)	-0.11	(.01)	-0.05	(.02)
education (medium)	low	0.24	(.01)	0.13	(.02)	0.18	(.01)	0.10	(.02)
	high	-0.30	(.01)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.13	(.01)
	student	-0.37	(.02)	-0.27	(.03)	-0.16	(.03)	-0.19	(.03)
employment status (employed)	unemployed	0.44	(.02)	0.17	(.02)	0.21	(.02)	0.04	(.02)
	other	0.02	(.01)	0.03	(.02)	-0.01	(.01)	0.02	(.02)
community (small town)	rural village	0.03	(.01)	0.02	(.01)	0.03	(.01)	0.01	(.01)
	large town	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.03	(.01)
Individual level: attitudes									
life satisfaction						0.85	(.01)	0.50	(.01)
economic negative expectation						1.20	(.01)	0.43	(.01)
political distrust						1.64	(.01)	0.93	(.01)

Table C1-2 (Continued)

		Model 3				Model 4			
		pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
		B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Country level: political									
mean net EU benefit									
EMU (no euro)	new	-0.41	(.17)	0.26	(.14)	-0.29	(.16)	0.36	(.14)
	established	0.15	(.16)	0.46	(.13)	0.26	(.15)	0.55	(.13)
changes government 2000-2011		0.13	(.04)	0.09	(.03)	0.11	(.04)	0.07	(.03)
early elections 2000-2011		-0.49	(.27)	0.37	(.21)	-0.60	(.24)	0.35	(.22)
mean elections									
mean corruption		-0.13	(.05)	-0.17	(.04)	0.02	(.04)	-0.12	(.04)
Country level: economic									
mean change social benefits		0.04	(.09)	0.04	(.07)	-0.10	(.08)	-0.05	(.07)
Missing values (five countries, see footnote 8)		-0.64	(.22)	-0.32	(.16)	-0.64	(.19)	-0.35	(.15)
mean GDP growth									
mean unemployment		0.02	(.02)	-0.01	(.02)	0.01	(.02)	-0.02	(.02)
mean inflation									
Wave dummies (2012/4)									
2006/3		-0.57	(.13)	-0.25	(.09)	-0.42	(.11)	-0.18	(.09)
2007/3		-0.71	(.12)	-0.35	(.09)	-0.54	(.10)	-0.28	(.08)
2008/1		-0.63	(.12)	-0.27	(.09)	-0.72	(.10)	-0.31	(.08)
2008/4		-0.37	(.12)	-0.20	(.09)	-0.50	(.10)	-0.26	(.08)
2009/1		0.00	(.12)	0.00	(.09)	-0.07	(.10)	0.00	(.08)
2009/2		-0.25	(.12)	-0.09	(.09)	-0.18	(.10)	-0.07	(.08)
2009/4		-0.37	(.12)	-0.16	(.09)	-0.34	(.10)	-0.17	(.08)
2010/2		-0.29	(.12)	-0.09	(.09)	-0.21	(.10)	-0.08	(.08)
2010/4		-0.28	(.12)	-0.21	(.09)	-0.16	(.10)	-0.18	(.08)
2011/2		-0.34	(.12)	-0.23	(.09)	-0.09	(.10)	-0.11	(.08)
2011/4		0.06	(.12)	0.04	(.09)	0.00	(.10)	0.01	(.08)
2012/2		-0.32	(.12)	-0.13	(.09)	-0.31	(.10)	-0.12	(.08)
Constant		0.93	(.55)	0.11	(.43)	-2.43	(.50)	-1.33	(.45)
explained variance country level			69%		72%		62%		72%

a Multinomial multilevel analysis with three levels. reference category = optimists.

b B-coefficients are log odds. Bold coefficients are significant with $p < .05$. For individual coefficients, two-sided significance tests are performed. for macro coefficients one-sided significance test are performed.

Table C2-1 Longitudinal differences in societal pessimism explained (Model 1 and 2), 2006-2012^{ab}

		Model 1				Model 2			
		pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
		B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Individual level: controls									
gender (male)		0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)	0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)
age (40-54)	15-24	-0.21	(.02)	-0.21	(.03)	-0.21	(.02)	-0.21	(.03)
	25-39	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)
	55+	-0.18	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.11	(.02)
education (medium)	low	0.25	(.01)	0.14	(.02)	0.25	(.01)	0.14	(.02)
	high	-0.31	(.01)	-0.19	(.01)	-0.31	(.01)	-0.19	(.01)
	student	-0.37	(.02)	-0.27	(.03)	-0.38	(.03)	-0.27	(.03)
employment status (employed)	unemployed	0.45	(.02)	0.18	(.02)	0.46	(.02)	0.18	(.02)
	other	0.01	(.01)	0.03	(.02)	0.01	(.01)	0.03	(.02)
community (small town)	rural village	0.04	(.01)	0.03	(.01)	0.04	(.01)	0.02	(.01)
	large town	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)
Individual level: attitudes									
life satisfaction									
economic negative expectation									
political distrust									
Country level: political									
centered net EU benefit		-0.12	(.05)	-0.02	(.03)				
centered changes government		0.06	(.07)	0.08	(.05)				
centered early elections		-0.23	(.10)	0.02	(.07)				
centered elections		0.14	(.08)	-0.03	(.06)				
centered corruption		-0.04	(.09)	0.13	(.06)				
Country level: economic									
centered change social benefits						0.00	(.02)	-0.02	(.01)
Missing values (five countries, see footnote 8)						-0.40	0.20	-0.20	0.14
centered GDP growth						-0.15	(.03)	-0.06	(.02)
centered unemployment						0.06	(.01)	0.04	(.01)
centered inflation						0.04	(.02)	-0.01	(.01)
Wave dummies (2012/4)									
2006/3		-0.74	(.12)	-0.33	(.08)	-0.28	(.12)	-0.11	(.09)
2007/3		-0.75	(.12)	-0.35	(.08)	-0.35	(.12)	-0.12	(.09)
2008/1		-0.68	(.12)	-0.29	(.08)	-0.28	(.12)	-0.05	(.09)
2008/4		-0.41	(.12)	-0.23	(.08)	-0.21	(.12)	-0.06	(.09)
2009/1		-0.02	(.12)	0.01	(.08)	-0.11	(.12)	0.06	(.09)
2009/2		-0.27	(.12)	-0.09	(.08)	-0.60	(.14)	-0.13	(.10)
2009/4		-0.41	(.12)	-0.16	(.08)	-0.45	(.11)	-0.11	(.08)
2010/2		-0.29	(.12)	-0.08	(.08)	-0.16	(.12)	-0.05	(.08)
2010/4		-0.29	(.12)	-0.22	(.08)	-0.15	(.12)	-0.17	(.08)
2011/2		-0.32	(.12)	-0.22	(.08)	-0.18	(.11)	-0.21	(.08)
2011/4		0.09	(.12)	0.07	(.08)	0.19	(.11)	0.07	(.08)
2012/2		-0.33	(.12)	-0.11	(.08)	-0.31	(.11)	-0.10	(.08)

Table C2-1 (Continued)

	Model 1				Model 2			
	pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
country dummies (France)								
Belgium	-0.24	(.16)	0.61	(.11)	-0.14	(.15)	0.76	(.11)
Netherlands	-0.68	(.22)	0.66	(.15)	-0.44	(.16)	1.13	(.11)
Germany	-0.86	(.17)	0.37	(.12)	-0.73	(.15)	0.55	(.11)
Italy	0.11	(.27)	1.52	(.18)	0.22	(.15)	1.25	(.11)
Luxembourg	-1.31	(.20)	-0.24	(.14)	-1.21	(.16)	0.10	(.12)
Denmark	-0.67	(.25)	-0.76	(.18)	-0.52	(.15)	-0.33	(.11)
Ireland	-0.20	(.17)	0.33	(.12)	-0.39	(.15)	0.36	(.11)
Great Britain	-0.24	(.17)	-0.42	(.12)	-0.17	(.15)	-0.21	(.11)
Spain	-0.01	(.17)	0.57	(.12)	-0.47	(.17)	0.21	(.12)
Portugal	-0.18	(.20)	0.89	(.14)	-0.45	(.15)	0.66	(.11)
Finland	-0.70	(.24)	-0.37	(.17)	-0.66	(.15)	-0.02	(.11)
Sweden	-1.11	(.25)	-0.86	(.17)	-1.12	(.15)	-0.55	(.11)
Austria	-1.14	(.18)	0.20	(.12)	-0.94	(.16)	0.54	(.11)
Czech Republic	-0.12	(.26)	0.91	(.18)	0.03	(.15)	0.78	(.11)
Estonia	-0.92	(.21)	0.33	(.15)	-1.32	(.16)	0.25	(.12)
Hungary	0.74	(.28)	1.40	(.19)	0.40	(.16)	1.07	(.11)
Latvia	0.37	(.31)	1.18	(.21)	-0.12	(.19)	0.79	(.14)
Lithuania	0.37	(.33)	0.94	(.23)	-0.07	(.17)	0.63	(.13)
Malta	-0.93	(.20)	0.52	(.14)	-0.78	(.15)	0.45	(.11)
Poland	-0.50	(.29)	0.27	(.20)	-0.54	(.16)	-0.04	(.11)
Slovakia	-0.76	(.28)	0.91	(.19)	-1.05	(.15)	0.43	(.11)
Slovenia	-0.31	(.17)	0.80	(.12)	-0.04	(.16)	0.91	(.11)
Constant	1.24	(.15)	-0.84	(.10)	0.90	(.14)	-0.99	(.10)
explained variance country level			7%		7%		16%	

a Multinomial multilevel analysis with three levels, reference category = optimists.

b B-coefficients are log odds. Bold coefficients are significant with $p < .05$. For individual coefficients, two-sided significance tests are performed, for macro coefficients one-sided significance test are performed.

Table C2-2 Longitudinal differences in societal pessimism explained (Model 3 and 4), 2006-2012^{ab}

		Model 3				Model 4			
		pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
		B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Individual level: controls									
gender (male)		0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)	0.22	(.01)	0.19	(.01)
age (40-54)	15-24	-0.21	(.02)	-0.21	(.03)	-0.08	(.02)	-0.16	(.03)
	25-39	-0.10	(.01)	-0.10	(.02)	-0.05	(.01)	-0.09	(.01)
	55+	-0.18	(.01)	-0.11	(.02)	-0.12	(.01)	-0.06	(.02)
education (medium)	low	0.25	(.01)	0.14	(.02)	0.19	(.01)	0.11	(.02)
	high	-0.31	(.01)	-0.19	(.01)	-0.18	(.01)	-0.13	(.01)
	student	-0.38	(.03)	-0.27	(.03)	-0.17	(.03)	-0.19	(.03)
employment status (employed)	unemployed	0.46	(.02)	0.18	(.02)	0.21	(.02)	0.04	(.02)
	other	0.01	(.01)	0.03	(.02)	0.00	(.01)	0.03	(.02)
community (small town)	rural village	0.04	(.01)	0.02	(.01)	0.03	(.01)	0.02	(.01)
	large town	-0.06	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.04	(.01)	-0.03	(.01)
Individual level: attitudes									
life satisfaction						0.87	(.01)	0.50	(.01)
economic negative expectation						1.23	(.01)	0.45	(.01)
political distrust						1.68	(.01)	0.96	(.01)
Country level: political									
centered net EU benefit		-0.16	(.05)	-0.08	(.03)	-0.06	(.04)	-0.03	(.03)
centered changes government									
centered early elections		-0.20	(.10)	0.00	(.07)	-0.16	(.08)	0.00	(.07)
centered elections		0.19	(.05)	0.02	(.04)	0.16	(.05)	0.01	(.04)
centered corruption									
Country level: economic									
centered change social benefits									
Missing values (five countries, see footnote 8)									
centered GDP growth		-0.15	(.03)	-0.06	(.02)	-0.12	(.03)	-0.05	(.02)
centered unemployment		0.07	(.01)	0.05	(.01)	0.06	(.01)	0.04	(.01)
centered inflation		0.02	(.02)	-0.01	(.01)	0.02	(.02)	-0.01	(.01)
Wave dummies (2012/4)									
2006/3		-0.40	(.12)	-0.16	(.08)	-0.28	(.10)	-0.11	(.08)
2007/3		-0.37	(.12)	-0.13	(.09)	-0.24	(.10)	-0.08	(.08)
2008/1		-0.30	(.12)	0.05	(.09)	-0.44	(.10)	-0.12	(.08)
2008/4		-0.23	(.12)	-0.07	(.09)	-0.37	(.10)	-0.15	(.08)
2009/1		-0.10	(.12)	0.07	(.09)	-0.13	(.10)	0.06	(.08)
2009/2		-0.60	(.13)	-0.13	(.01)	-0.42	(.12)	-0.08	(.09)
2009/4		-0.47	(.11)	-0.12	(.08)	-0.38	(.10)	-0.11	(.08)
2010/2		-0.19	(.11)	-0.09	(.08)	-0.12	(.10)	-0.08	(.08)
2010/4		-0.17	(.11)	-0.21	(.08)	-0.05	(.10)	-0.18	(.08)
2011/2		-0.17	(.11)	-0.19	(.08)	0.04	(.10)	-0.08	(.08)
2011/4		0.20	(.11)	0.09	(.08)	0.11	(.10)	0.04	(.08)
2012/2		-0.31	(.11)	-0.10	(.08)	-0.29	(.09)	-0.10	(.07)

Table C2-2 (Continued)

	Model 3				Model 4			
	pessimists		undecideds		pessimists		undecideds	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Country dummies (France)								
Belgium	-0.12	(.14)	0.77	(.11)	-0.10	(.13)	0.77	(.10)
Netherlands	-0.36	(.16)	1.17	(.11)	-0.28	(.13)	1.23	(.11)
Germany	-0.74	(.14)	0.57	(.10)	-0.67	(.12)	0.64	(.10)
Italy	0.26	(.15)	1.26	(.11)	0.04	(.13)	1.19	(.10)
Luxembourg	-1.14	(.15)	0.13	(.11)	-0.88	(.13)	0.31	(.11)
Denmark	-0.53	(.15)	-0.28	(.11)	0.13	(.13)	-0.03	(.11)
Ireland	-0.31	(.15)	0.41	(.11)	-0.63	(.13)	0.22	(.10)
Great Britain	-0.13	(.15)	-0.17	(.11)	-0.33	(.13)	-0.32	(.11)
Spain	-0.50	(.17)	0.22	(.12)	-0.40	(.14)	0.29	(.12)
Portugal	-0.21	(.16)	0.79	(.12)	-0.87	(.14)	0.50	(.12)
Finland	-0.66	(.14)	0.01	(.11)	-0.32	(.13)	0.15	(.10)
Sweden	-1.12	(.14)	-0.52	(.11)	-0.62	(.13)	-0.31	(.10)
Austria	-0.84	(.15)	0.59	(.11)	-0.61	(.13)	0.75	(.11)
Czech Republic	0.27	(.16)	0.90	(.12)	-0.39	(.14)	0.57	(.11)
Estonia	-0.91	(.21)	0.46	(.15)	-1.33	(.18)	0.25	(.15)
Hungary	0.84	(.20)	1.32	(.15)	0.19	(.17)	1.05	(.14)
Latvia	0.28	(.23)	0.98	(.17)	-0.47	(.20)	0.53	(.16)
Lithuania	0.54	(.25)	0.91	(.18)	-0.51	(.22)	0.30	(.18)
Malta	-0.62	(.16)	0.56	(.12)	-0.55	(.14)	0.70	(.11)
Poland	-0.22	(.18)	0.15	(.13)	-0.84	(.16)	-0.20	(.13)
Slovakia	-0.85	(.16)	0.53	(.12)	-1.17	(.14)	0.41	(.11)
Slovenia	0.11	(.16)	1.00	(.12)	-0.41	(.14)	0.76	(.11)
Constant	0.74	(.14)	-1.10	(.11)	-1.58	(.13)	-2.19	(.10)
explained variance country level			21%		13%		14%	

a Multinomial multilevel analysis with three levels, reference category = optimists.

b B-coefficients are log odds. Bold coefficients are significant with $p < .05$. For individual coefficients, two-sided significance tests are performed, for macro coefficients one-sided significance test are performed.

Appendix D

Table D1 Overview of Parties

Country	Radical Left	Mainstream Left	Mainstream Right	Populist Radical Right
Belgium	–	Socialist Party Differently (SP.A)	Christian-Democratic and Flemish (CD&V)	Flemish Interest (VB)
Switzerland	–	Social Democratic Party	FDP. The Liberals	Swiss People's Party (SVP)
Denmark	Red-Green Alliance	Social Democrats	Denmark's Liberal Party (Venstre)	Danish People's Party (DF)
Finland	Left Alliance (VAS)	Social Democratic Party	National Coalition Party	True Finns (PS)
France	Left Front (FDG) / Radical Left Party (PRG)	Socialist Party	Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)	National Front (FN)
Hungary	–	Hungarian Socialist Party	Fidesz	Jobbik
The Netherlands	Socialist Party (SP)	Labour (PvdA)	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)	Party for Freedom (PVV)
Norway	Socialist Left Party (VAS)	Social Democrats	Conservative Party (Høyre)	Progress Party (FrP)
Sweden	Left Party (VP)	Social Democratic Party	Moderate Party	Sweden Democrats (SD)

Table D2 Number of respondents per party

Country	Radical left	Mainstream Left	Mainstream Right	Populist Radical Right	Total
Belgium	–	143	195	47	385
Switzerland	–	187	123	181	491
Denmark	85	360	345	117	907
Finland	103	286	370	202	961
France	111	459	358	126	1.054
Hungary	–	229	633	73	935
Netherlands	142	352	361	96	951
Norway	71	436	305	132	944
Sweden	75	453	447	64	1.039
Total	587	2.905	3.137	1.038	7.667

Tabel D3 Polychoric correlation items on societal pessimism per country

	<i>r</i>
Belgium	.51
Switzerland	.44
Denmark	.46
Finland	.44
France	.40
Hungary	.47
Netherlands	.40
Norway	.40
Sweden	.42

Source: ESS 2012

Table D4 Full multinomial regression model of Table1 (reference category = RR voters)

	Radical Left		Mainstream Left		Mainstream Right	
Demographic characteristics						
gender (male)	-0.73***	(0.13)	-0.66***	(0.09)	-0.63***	(0.09)
age	-0.03	(0.02)	0.05**	(0.02)	-0.01	(0.02)
age ²	0.00	(0.00)	-0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
city	-0.06	(0.13)	0.35***	(0.09)	0.09	(0.09)
religious attendance	0.09	(0.06)	-0.04	(0.04)	-0.21***	(0.04)
Socioeconomic characteristics						
educational level (medium)						
low educated	0.00	(0.18)	-0.09	(0.12)	-0.25*	(0.12)
high educated	1.03***	(0.19)	0.79***	(0.15)	0.54***	(0.15)
class (higher grade services)						
lower-grade services	-0.11	(0.22)	0.07	(0.17)	-0.37*	(0.17)
small business owners	-0.87**	(0.29)	-0.98***	(0.20)	-0.32	(0.19)
skilled workers	-0.28	(0.22)	-0.25	(0.16)	-0.80***	(0.16)
unskilled workers	-0.17	(0.25)	-0.36	(0.18)	-0.94***	(0.18)
place in society	-0.05	(0.05)	-0.04	(0.03)	0.07*	(0.03)
income source (salary)						
pension	-0.31	(0.24)	0.11	(0.16)	0.02	(0.16)
unemployment benefit	0.60	(0.38)	0.09	(0.32)	0.23	(0.33)
other benefit	0.30	(0.30)	-0.11	(0.25)	-0.13	(0.27)
other	-0.61	(0.63)	-0.00	(0.41)	0.48	(0.39)
level of income	-0.05	(0.03)	-0.02	(0.02)	0.08***	(0.02)
Attitudinal characteristics						
political interest	0.19*	(0.09)	-0.04	(0.06)	-0.02	(0.06)
satisfaction with democracy	0.11	(0.08)	0.28***	(0.06)	0.35***	(0.06)
opposition to EU integration	0.04	(0.07)	-0.32***	(0.05)	-0.38***	(0.05)
opposition to immigration	-1.43***	(0.08)	-0.87***	(0.06)	-0.47***	(0.05)
importance attached to following rules	-0.04	(0.06)	0.01	(0.05)	0.00	(0.05)
satisfaction with life	-0.11**	(0.04)	-0.03	(0.03)	0.02	(0.03)
societal pessimism	0.14	(0.08)	0.06	(0.06)	-0.19**	(0.06)
Country (Denmark)						
Belgium	-17.05	(1023.52)	0.39	(0.24)	0.77**	(0.24)
Switzerland	-19.40	(1127.22)	-1.50***	(0.20)	-2.06***	(0.20)
Finland	-0.96***	(0.23)	-1.11***	(0.18)	-0.63***	(0.17)
France	0.36	(0.26)	0.72***	(0.20)	0.84***	(0.20)
Hungary	-16.64	(801.93)	0.77**	(0.26)	2.30***	(0.25)
Netherlands	0.55*	(0.25)	0.30	(0.20)	0.34	(0.20)
Norway	-0.77**	(0.25)	-0.16	(0.18)	-0.50**	(0.18)
Sweden	0.08	(0.27)	0.78***	(0.21)	0.92***	(0.21)
Constant	1.33	(0.87)	0.84	(0.63)	2.17***	(0.62)

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001; Pseudo R² = .16; N=6417

Table D5 Mainstream Right versus Populist Radical Right voting, including country dummies.

	Model 1	Model 2
Demographic characteristics		
gender (male)	0,26***	0,27***
age	0,01	0,00
age ²	0,00	0,00
city	-0,02	-0,02
religious attendance	0,10***	0,10***
Socioeconomic characteristics		
educational level (medium)		
low educated	0,16**	0,16**
high educated	-0,23***	-0,23***
class (higher grade services)		
lower-grade services	0,13*	0,13
small business owners	0,12	0,11
skilled workers	0,35***	0,34***
unskilled workers	0,39***	0,38***
place in society	-0,02	-0,02
income source (salary)		
pension	-0,02	-0,02
unemployment benefit	-0,04	-0,04
other benefit	0,05	0,05
other	-0,15	-0,13
level of income	-0,03**	-0,02**
Attitudinal characteristics		
political interest	-0,02	-0,02
satisfaction with democracy	-0,13***	-0,12***
opposition to EU integration	0,18***	0,18***
opposition to immigration	0,23***	0,22***
importance attached to following rules	0,00	0,00
satisfaction with life	-0,01	0,00
societal pessimism		0,07**
Country (Belgium)		
Switzerland	1,09***	1,09***
Denmark	0,29**	0,31**
Finland	0,67***	0,68***
France	0,05	0,02
Hungary	-0,56***	-0,56***
Netherlands	0,15	0,15
Norway	0,47***	0,52***
Sweden	0,00	0,02
Pseudo R ²	27,8%	28,1%

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. N=3419, no constant presented because these are y-standardized coefficients.

Appendix E

Tabel E1 Polychoric correlation items on societal pessimism per country

	<i>r</i>
Austria	.48
Belgium	.47
Bulgaria	.43
Switzerland	.38
Cyprus	.49
Germany	.55
Denmark	.41
Spain	.32
Finland	.40
France	.42
United Kingdom	.44
Ireland	.36
Netherlands	.36
Norway	.34
Poland	.36
Portugal	.52
Sweden	.37
Slovenia	.40
Slovakia	.37

Source: ESS 2006

Table E2 Logistic regression analyses of three types of participation, full model^a

	Institutional political participation		Non-institutional political participation		Civic participation	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Demographic characteristics						
male	0.09*	(.04)	-0.46***	(.04)	0.35***	(.05)
age (18-34)						
* 35-54	0.18**	(.06)	-0.12*	(.06)	0.07	(.07)
*55+	0.31***	(.08)	-0.32***	(.08)	0.01	(.09)
City	-0.22***	(.04)	0.43***	(.05)	-0.26***	(.05)
marital status (married or partnership)						
* divorced or separated	0.01	(.07)	0.12	(.07)	-0.16*	(.08)
* widowed or partner died	-0.18	(.09)	-0.06	(.09)	0.13	(.10)
* single	-0.10	(.06)	0.25***	(.06)	-0.21**	(.07)
household size	0.02	(.02)	-0.05*	(.03)	0.10***	(.03)
children living at home	-0.13*	(.06)	0.04	(.07)	0.01	(.07)
attendance religious services	0.02	(.02)	-0.16***	(.02)	0.27***	(.02)
satisfaction with life	-0.01	(.01)	-0.03**	(.01)	0.03**	(.01)
Resources						
education (medium)						
* low	0.11	(.06)	-0.19**	(.06)	-0.04	(.06)
* high	0.10*	(.05)	0.05	(.05)	0.08	(.06)
source of income (profit/salary)						
* pension	0.06	(.07)	-0.16*	(.07)	0.06	(.08)
* unemployment benefit	0.37*	(.16)	-0.17	(.16)	-0.00	(.16)
* other benefit	0.32*	(.13)	-0.00	(.14)	-0.07	(.14)
* other	0.29*	(.14)	0.17	(.15)	-0.12	(.16)
Household's income	-0.05***	(.01)	0.00	(.01)	0.03*	(.01)
Political interest and efficacy						
ratio political news / all news	0.09	(.07)	0.08	(.08)	0.08	(.09)
political interest	0.31***	(.03)	0.17***	(.03)	-0.23***	(.03)
political efficacy	0.08***	(.01)	0.02	(.01)	-0.08***	(.01)
Societal outlook						
societal pessimism	-0.04	(.02)	0.12***	(.03)	-0.14***	(.03)
political trust	0.08**	(.03)	-0.18***	(.03)	0.06*	(.03)
social trust	-0.15***	(.03)	0.07**	(.03)	0.10***	(.03)
more than 1 type of participation	3.02***	(.05)	3.00***	(.04)	2.16***	(.06)
Country dummies (Austria)						
Belgium	-0.01	(.12)	0.66***	(.12)	-0.80***	(.16)
Bulgaria	0.50*	(.20)	-0.67**	(.22)	-0.42*	(.21)
Switzerland	-0.95***	(.12)	1.47***	(.13)	-0.95***	(.16)
Cyprus	0.91***	(.15)	-0.55***	(.16)	-0.84***	(.18)
Germany	-1.12***	(.11)	1.06***	(.11)	-0.39**	(.15)

Table E2 (Continued)

	Institutional political participation		Non-institutional political participation		Civic participation	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Denmark	-0.67***	(.12)	1.16***	(.12)	-0.85***	(.16)
Spain	-0.40**	(.13)	0.99***	(.13)	-0.53**	(.17)
Finland	-0.14	(.11)	1.01***	(.12)	-1.08***	(.15)
France	-0.52***	(.12)	1.36***	(.12)	-0.93***	(.15)
United Kingdom	-0.63***	(.12)	1.60***	(.12)	-1.09***	(.15)
Ireland	0.07	(.13)	0.38**	(.13)	-0.89***	(.18)
Netherlands	-0.59***	(.12)	0.36**	(.12)	-0.05	(.17)
Norway	0.04	(.11)	0.57***	(.11)	-0.30	(.17)
Poland	0.01	(.18)	0.35*	(.18)	-0.84***	(.20)
Portugal	0.16	(.16)	-0.70***	(.18)	0.26	(.20)
Sweden	-0.56***	(.11)	1.72***	(.12)	-1.46***	(.15)
Slovenia	-0.12	(.14)	-0.10	(.14)	-0.33	(.18)
Slovakia	-0.98***	(.16)	0.97***	(.15)	-0.45*	(.19)
Constant	-3.47***	(.19)	-1.94***	(.19)	1.20***	(.23)

a Coefficients are log odds. with * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix F

Table F1 Model 1: effects of sociotropic attitudes on multiple identification, including country and wave dummies^a

	low identifiers		single identifiers		dual identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty:						
societal pessimism	.344***	(.035)	.240***	(.023)	.205***	(.013)
political distrust	.711***	(.044)	.535***	(.025)	.395***	(.013)
negative economic expectations	.211***	(.032)	.173***	(.022)	.156***	(.013)
Control dummies						
year (ref=2007)	-.173**	(.062)	-.213***	(.040)	-.080***	(.023)
Country (ref= France)						
Belgium	.549**	(.193)	-.069	(.121)	-.192*	(.079)
The Netherlands	1.694***	(.195)	1.400***	(.119)	1.043***	(.084)
Germany West	.178	(.199)	-.034	(.117)	.155*	(.074)
Italy	-.373	(.218)	-.940***	(.144)	-.318***	(.083)
Luxembourg	.472	(.265)	-.257	(.181)	-.168	(.107)
Denmark	-.716*	(.334)	.211	(.136)	.804***	(.079)
Ireland	-.425	(.242)	-1.210***	(.172)	.105	(.082)
Great Britain	1.137***	(.203)	.784***	(.128)	1.058***	(.088)
Greece	-1.684***	(.334)	-1.568***	(.182)	.488***	(.078)
Spain	-.736**	(.248)	-.465***	(.134)	-.195*	(.083)
Portugal	-.687**	(.242)	-1.366***	(.169)	-.051	(.082)
Finland	.199	(.269)	.939***	(.127)	1.337***	(.082)
Sweden	-.079	(.264)	.289*	(.132)	.789***	(.080)
Austria	.339	(.232)	-.551***	(.162)	.674***	(.080)
Cyprus (Republic)	-.400	(.351)	.086	(.175)	.791***	(.106)
Czech Republic	.643***	(.189)	-.294*	(.127)	.126	(.080)
Estonia	.946***	(.214)	.785***	(.126)	.860***	(.083)
Hungary	-.421	(.216)	-.821***	(.138)	-.095	(.080)
Latvia	-.197	(.216)	-.463***	(.131)	-.155	(.081)
Lithuania	.413*	(.209)	.047	(.131)	.482***	(.083)
Malta	.266	(.302)	-.058	(.190)	.243*	(.114)
Poland	-2.074***	(.357)	-1.854***	(.185)	-.602***	(.084)
Slovakia	.290	(.208)	-.278*	(.133)	.254**	(.079)
Slovenia	-.277	(.218)	-.754***	(.139)	.009	(.079)
Constant	-2.700***	(.164)	-1.312***	(.093)	-.059	(.060)

a Multinomial regression, reference group = multiple identifiers, coefficients are log odds. N=38454
Controlled for country and wave dummies

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Table F2 Model 2: effects of sociotropic uncertainty on multiple identification, including control variables and country and wave dummies^a

	low identifiers		single identifiers		dual identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty:						
societal pessimism	.277***	(.037)	.223***	(.024)	.173***	(.014)
political distrust	.686***	(.047)	.508***	(.026)	.376***	(.014)
negative economic expectations	.146***	(.038)	.153***	(.026)	.116***	(.015)
Control variables:						
male	-.145*	(.064)	.002	(.043)	.087***	(.025)
age (40-54):						
15-24	.592***	(.128)	.418***	(.092)	.046	(.058)
25-39	.271***	(.082)	.211***	(.056)	-.024	(.034)
55+	-.441***	(.106)	-.295***	(.068)	-.010	(.037)
educational level (medium):						
education low	.040	(.106)	.042	(.072)	.184***	(.037)
education high	-.284***	(.082)	-.017	(.052)	-.289***	(.030)
students	.130	(.176)	.217	(.119)	-.221**	(.074)
occupation (employed):						
unemployed	.312**	(.107)	.240**	(.079)	.106*	(.051)
other	-.180	(.103)	-.180**	(.066)	-.038	(.036)
community (small town):						
rural	.085	(.076)	.083	(.049)	.118***	(.029)
large city	-.039	(.082)	-.317***	(.056)	-.164***	(.031)
Attitudes of personal uncertainty:						
life satisfaction	-.386***	(.033)	-.257***	(.024)	-.151***	(.014)
negative personal financial expectations	.126***	(.034)	.030	(.025)	.045**	(.015)
Control dummies						
year (ref=2007)	-.202**	(.065)	-.254***	(.043)	-.073**	(.025)
Country (ref= France)						
Belgium	.584**	(.204)	.008	(.129)	-.178*	(.084)
The Netherlands	1.890***	(.208)	1.541***	(.130)	1.161***	(.092)
Germany West	.071	(.210)	.037	(.125)	.102	(.080)
Italy	-.667**	(.229)	-1.045***	(.152)	-.476***	(.088)
Luxembourg	.564*	(.279)	-.230	(.193)	-.190	(.115)
Denmark	-.427	(.340)	.380**	(.143)	.954***	(.085)
Ireland	-.485	(.249)	-1.166***	(.180)	.048	(.088)
Great Britain	1.210***	(.214)	.936***	(.137)	1.012***	(.094)
Greece	-2.151***	(.342)	-1.685***	(.190)	.370***	(.085)
Spain	-1.048***	(.263)	-.552***	(.142)	-.335***	(.088)
Portugal	-1.309***	(.255)	-1.732***	(.180)	-.391***	(.089)
Finland	.397	(.279)	1.071***	(.134)	1.400***	(.087)
Sweden	.175	(.274)	.479***	(.140)	.888***	(.085)
Austria	.136	(.243)	-.557***	(.168)	.517***	(.086)
Cyprus (Republic)	-.714	(.403)	.002	(.193)	.776***	(.116)
Czech Republic	.559**	(.199)	-.240	(.136)	.082	(.087)
Estonia	.694**	(.231)	.636***	(.139)	.721***	(.092)

Table F2 (Continued)

	low identifiers		single identifiers		dual identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Hungary	-.862***	(.227)	-.969***	(.148)	-.317***	(.087)
Latvia	-.487*	(.229)	-.740***	(.147)	-.276**	(.090)
Lithuania	.117	(.219)	-.137	(.141)	.395***	(.090)
Malta	.085	(.341)	-.128	(.220)	.002	(.132)
Poland	-2.203***	(.362)	-1.919***	(.195)	-.670***	(.089)
Slovakia	-.064	(.220)	-.441**	(.142)	.065	(.086)
Slovenia	-.392	(.228)	-.770***	(.147)	-.032	(.084)
Constant	-2.436***	(.190)	-1.207***	(.115)	.044	(.072)

a Multinomial regression, reference group = multiple identifiers, coefficients are log odds. N=34808
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Table F3 Effects of sociotropic attitudes on multiple identification (reference group = dual identifiers)^a

	low identifiers		single identifiers		multiple identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty:						
societal pessimism	.104**	(.036)	.051*	(.023)	-.173***	(.014)
political distrust	.310***	(.046)	.132***	(.026)	-.376***	(.014)
negative economic expectations	0.031	(.038)	0.037	(.025)	-.116***	(.015)
Control variables:						
male	-.233***	(.063)	-.085*	(.041)	-.087***	(.025)
age (40-54):						
15-24	.546***	(.125)	.372***	(.088)	-0.046	(.058)
25-39	.295***	(.081)	.235***	(.054)	0.024	(.034)
55+	-.431***	(.104)	-.285***	(.065)	0.01	(.037)
educational level (medium):						
education low	-0.144	(.104)	-.142*	(.069)	-.184***	(.037)
education high	0.005	(.081)	.272***	(.050)	.289***	(.030)
students	.351*	(.173)	.438***	(.115)	.221**	(.074)
occupation (employed):						
unemployed	.206*	(.104)	0.134	(.075)	-.106*	(.051)
other	-0.142	(.102)	-.142*	(.064)	0.038	(.036)
community (small town):						
rural	-0.033	(.075)	-0.035	(.047)	-.118***	(.029)
large city	0.125	(.081)	-.153**	(.055)	.164***	(.031)
Attitudes of personal uncertainty:						
life satisfaction	-.235***	(.032)	-.106***	(.023)	.151***	(.014)
negative personal financial expectations	.080*	(.033)	-0.015	(.024)	-.045**	(.015)
Control dummies						
year (ref=2007)	-.129*	(.064)	-.181***	(.042)	.073**	(.025)
Country (ref= France)						
Belgium	.763***	(.203)	.186	(.129)	.178*	(.084)

Table F3 (Continued)

	low identifiers		single identifiers		multiple identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
The Netherlands	.729***	(.202)	.380**	(.122)	-1.161***	(.092)
Germany West	-.031	(.208)	-.064	(.124)	-.102	(.080)
Italy	-.191	(.228)	-.569***	(.152)	.476***	(.088)
Luxembourg	.754**	(.281)	-.040	(.197)	.190	(.115)
Denmark	-1.381***	(.338)	-.574***	(.140)	-.954***	(.085)
Ireland	-.532*	(.247)	-1.214***	(.179)	-.048	(.088)
Great Britain	.198	(.208)	-.076	(.128)	-1.012***	(.094)
Greece	-2.521***	(.340)	-2.055***	(.187)	-.370***	(.085)
Spain	-.713**	(.262)	-.217	(.141)	.335***	(.088)
Portugal	-.918***	(.253)	-1.341***	(.179)	.391***	(.089)
Finland	-1.002***	(.275)	-.328*	(.128)	-1.400***	(.087)
Sweden	-.713**	(.272)	-.408**	(.137)	-.888***	(.085)
Austria	-.381	(.240)	-1.074***	(.166)	-.517***	(.086)
Cyprus (Republic)	-1.490***	(.397)	-.775***	(.181)	-.776***	(.116)
Czech Republic	.477*	(.197)	-.322*	(.133)	-.082	(.087)
Estonia	-.027	(.227)	-.085	(.135)	-.721***	(.092)
Hungary	-.545*	(.225)	-.652***	(.146)	.317***	(.087)
Latvia	-.210	(.228)	-.463**	(.147)	.276**	(.090)
Lithuania	-.278	(.215)	-.533***	(.137)	-.395***	(.090)
Malta	.084	(.338)	-.130	(.217)	-.002	(.132)
Poland	-1.534***	(.362)	-1.249***	(.196)	.670***	(.089)
Slovakia	-.130	(.218)	-.507***	(.140)	-.065	(.086)
Slovenia	-.360	(.226)	-.738***	(.145)	.032	(.084)
Constant	-2.481***	(.189)	-1.251***	(.113)	-.044	(.072)

a Multinomial regression, coefficients are log odds. N=34808

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Table F4 Effects of sociotropic attitudes on dual identification: Nation vs City (reference group = dual identifiers)

	low identifiers		nation only identifiers		city only identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty:						
societal pessimism	.154***	(.032)	0.027	(.023)	.211***	(.035)
political distrust	.426***	(.039)	.116***	(.023)	.359***	(.041)
negative economic expectations	0.064	(.034)	0.037	(.025)	.104**	(.035)
Control variables:						
male	-.211***	(.057)	-0.02	(.040)	-.240***	(.060)
age (40-54):						
15-24	.679***	(.110)	.367***	(.088)	.658***	(.119)
25-39	.280***	(.073)	.211***	(.053)	.288***	(.078)
55+	-.383***	(.093)	-.183**	(.063)	-.437***	(.100)

Table F4 (Continued)

	low identifiers		nation only identifiers		city only identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
educational level (medium):						
education low	-0.125	(.097)	-.239***	(.072)	-0.1	(.099)
education high	0.099	(.070)	.294***	(.048)	.261***	(.074)
students	.387*	(.153)	.310**	(.114)	.379*	(.159)
occupation (employed):						
unemployed	.277**	(.094)	.259***	(.076)	0.048	(.106)
other	-.198*	(.093)	-.137*	(.061)	0.01	(.096)
community (small town):						
rural	-0.012	(.067)	0.081	(.046)	-0.035	(.069)
large city	-0.003	(.072)	-.184***	(.053)	-.226**	(.079)
Attitudes of personal uncertainty:						
life satisfaction	-.260***	(.029)	-.121***	(.024)	-.187***	(.032)
negative personal financial expectations	.087**	(.030)	-0.009	(.025)	0.037	(.033)
Control dummies						
year (ref=2007)	-.154**	(.057)	-.243***	(.041)	-0.101	(.061)
Country (ref= France)						
Belgium	.851***	(.175)	-.394***	(.113)	1.085***	(.191)
The Netherlands	1.117***	(.179)	.381***	(.105)	.976***	(.203)
Germany West	-.022	(.185)	-.563***	(.110)	.566***	(.194)
Italy	-.351	(.202)	-1.151***	(.143)	-.082	(.218)
Luxembourg	.783***	(.230)	-.498**	(.164)	-.188	(.339)
Denmark	-1.108***	(.294)	-.330**	(.112)	-1.162***	(.327)
Ireland	-.689**	(.227)	-1.592***	(.167)	-1.167***	(.304)
Great Britain	.416*	(.187)	-.373**	(.121)	.725***	(.202)
Greece	-2.455***	(.311)	-2.305***	(.185)	-1.444***	(.267)
Spain	-.908***	(.238)	-1.583***	(.167)	.854***	(.194)
Portugal	-1.140***	(.230)	-2.000***	(.184)	-.727**	(.242)
Finland	-.502*	(.234)	-.241*	(.108)	-.781**	(.282)
Sweden	-.540*	(.244)	-.482***	(.116)	-.283	(.251)
Austria	-.400	(.222)	-1.476***	(.158)	-.339	(.251)
Cyprus (Republic)	-1.498***	(.388)	-.590***	(.158)	-1.370**	(.417)
Czech Republic	.386*	(.177)	-.751***	(.123)	.056	(.211)
Estonia	.115	(.205)	-.051	(.113)	-.231	(.256)
Hungary	-.448*	(.195)	-.988***	(.132)	-.723**	(.239)
Latvia	-.404*	(.204)	-1.256***	(.145)	.157	(.211)
Lithuania	-.073	(.188)	-.952***	(.130)	-.102	(.217)
Malta	.140	(.301)	.044	(.168)	-.415	(.420)
Poland	-1.830***	(.317)	-1.438***	(.155)	-.998***	(.274)
Slovakia	-.168	(.194)	-1.093***	(.133)	-.186	(.223)
Slovenia	-.455*	(.202)	-1.148***	(.132)	-.549*	(.233)
Constant	-2.883***	(.167)	-1.548***	(.096)	-3.192***	(.186)

a Multinomial regression, coefficients are log odds. N=34808

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Table F5 Effects of sociotropic attitudes on dual identification: Nation vs EU (reference group = dual identifiers)

	low identifiers		nation only identifiers		EU only identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty:						
societal pessimism	.297***	(.028)	.178***	(.014)	.194***	(.049)
political distrust	.682***	(.036)	.397***	(.014)	.298***	(.051)
negative economic expectations	.162***	(.029)	.122***	(.015)	.104*	(.051)
Control variables:						
male	-.127*	(.050)	.109***	(.024)	-.269**	(.086)
age (40-54):						
15-24	.559***	(.099)	-0.078	(.057)	.652***	(.172)
25-39	.258***	(.064)	-0.041	(.033)	0.152	(.114)
55+	-.450***	(.082)	-0.016	(.037)	-0.213	(.143)
educational level (medium):						
education low	0.081	(.081)	.224***	(.037)	-0.122	(.162)
education high	-.243***	(.063)	-.374***	(.030)	.469***	(.102)
students	0.172	(.134)	-.263***	(.072)	0.409	(.229)
occupation (employed):						
unemployed	.176*	(.086)	0.081	(.049)	0.238	(.154)
other	-0.13	(.080)	-0.042	(.035)	-0.059	(.141)
community (small town):						
rural	0.045	(.058)	.105***	(.028)	-0.028	(.101)
large city	-.177***	(.064)	-.151***	(.031)	-0.131	(.109)
Attitudes of personal uncertainty:						
life satisfaction	-.333***	(.026)	-.151***	(.014)	-.177***	(.048)
negative personal financial expectations	.079**	(.027)	.043**	(.015)	.146**	(.048)
Control dummies						
year (ref=2007)	-.151**	(.050)	-.079**	(.024)	-.121	(.087)
Country (ref= France)						
Belgium	.823***	(.164)	-.312***	(.085)	1.035***	(.225)
The Netherlands	1.864***	(.170)	1.224***	(.088)	1.147***	(.251)
Germany West	.645***	(.163)	.186*	(.079)	-.198	(.271)
Italy	-.346	(.183)	-.405***	(.087)	-.131	(.273)
Luxembourg	.367	(.245)	-.162	(.116)	.603*	(.302)
Denmark	-.253	(.260)	1.087***	(.083)	-1.161**	(.431)
Ireland	-.384	(.210)	.231**	(.087)	-1.264**	(.430)
Great Britain	1.545***	(.172)	1.150***	(.091)	.636*	(.289)
Greece	-1.492***	(.248)	.538***	(.083)	-1.062**	(.351)
Spain	.243	(.174)	-.258**	(.087)	.278	(.258)
Portugal	-.867***	(.200)	-.264**	(.088)	-1.003**	(.343)
Finland	.440	(.227)	1.611***	(.084)	.182	(.313)

Table F5 (Continued)

	low identifiers		nation only identifiers		EU only identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Sweden	.604**	(.204)	1.071***	(.083)	-1.025*	(.430)
Austria	.365	(.198)	.700***	(.084)	-.466	(.365)
Cyprus (Republic)	-.569	(.322)	.933***	(.113)	-1.526*	(.740)
Czech Republic	.652***	(.166)	.245**	(.085)	-.042	(.280)
Estonia	.734***	(.190)	.840***	(.089)	-.517	(.377)
Hungary	-.610**	(.185)	-.247**	(.086)	-.342	(.280)
Latvia	.046	(.178)	-.147	(.088)	-.355	(.294)
Lithuania	.379*	(.178)	.556***	(.088)	.389	(.263)
Malta	.013	(.285)	-.082	(.130)	-.506	(.545)
Poland	-1.663***	(.259)	-.592***	(.089)	-1.131**	(.344)
Slovakia	.250	(.178)	.249**	(.084)	-.402	(.308)
Slovenia	-.168	(.184)	.128	(.083)	-.646*	(.307)
Constant	-2.219***	(.154)	-.121	(.071)	-3.199***	(.233)

a Multinomial regression, coefficients are log odds. N=34808

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Table F6 Effects of sociotropic attitudes on dual identification: City vs EU (reference group = dual identifiers)

	low identifiers		city only identifiers		EU only identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Attitudes of sociotropic uncertainty:						
societal pessimism	.208***	(.024)	.185***	(.014)	0.059	(.033)
political distrust	.510***	(.027)	.415***	(.014)	.186***	(.032)
negative economic expectations	.143***	(.026)	.123***	(.015)	0.038	(.036)
Control variables:						
male	0.005	(.043)	.107***	(.025)	-0.042	(.057)
age (40-54):						
15-24	.314***	(.093)	0.002	(.059)	.681***	(.117)
25-39	.205***	(.056)	-0.035	(.034)	.189*	(.077)
55+	-.303***	(.068)	-0.01	(.037)	-0.075	(.092)
educational level (medium):						
education low	0.046	(.072)	.207***	(.038)	-.383**	(.118)
education high	-.165**	(.052)	-.377***	(.031)	.368***	(.068)
students	0.088	(.122)	-.260***	(.074)	0.283	(.154)
occupation (employed):						
unemployed	.304***	(.078)	0.082	(.051)	.340**	(.109)
other	-.188**	(.066)	-0.041	(.036)	-0.159	(.090)
community (small town):						
rural	.111*	(.050)	.111***	(.029)	0.12	(.066)
large city	-.173**	(.056)	-.173***	(.032)	-.271***	(.075)

Table F6 (Continued)

	low identifiers		city only identifiers		EU only identifiers	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Attitudes of personal uncertainty:						
life satisfaction	-.305***	(.024)	-.152***	(.014)	-.120***	(.036)
negative personal financial expectations	.069**	(.025)	.034*	(.015)	-0.004	(.037)
Control dummies						
year (ref=2007)	-.280***	(.043)	-.169**	(.057)	-.066**	(.025)
Country (ref= France)						
Belgium	-.287*	(.131)	-.031	(.138)	-.175*	(.089)
The Netherlands	1.510***	(.127)	.647***	(.151)	1.291***	(.095)
Germany West	-.282*	(.129)	-.356*	(.148)	.325***	(.083)
Italy	-1.171***	(.151)	-.932***	(.185)	-.332***	(.091)
Luxembourg	-.156	(.187)	-.177	(.193)	-.148	(.122)
Denmark	.432**	(.142)	-.098	(.158)	1.174***	(.088)
Ireland	-.918***	(.163)	-1.725***	(.263)	.276**	(.091)
Great Britain	.806***	(.136)	-.155	(.194)	1.230***	(.095)
Greece	-1.931***	(.196)	-2.168***	(.303)	.598***	(.087)
Spain	-1.542***	(.175)	-1.540***	(.225)	-.111	(.090)
Portugal	-1.832***	(.177)	-1.756***	(.246)	-.185*	(.092)
Finland	1.101***	(.133)	-.124	(.174)	1.641***	(.090)
Sweden	.439**	(.141)	-.373*	(.173)	1.152***	(.088)
Austria	-.422**	(.158)	-1.525***	(.257)	.763***	(.089)
Cyprus (Republic)	.038	(.189)	-.586*	(.278)	.982***	(.119)
Czech Republic	-.021	(.128)	-.852***	(.187)	.272**	(.089)
Estonia	.684***	(.136)	.083	(.165)	.906***	(.095)
Hungary	-1.146***	(.147)	-.496**	(.169)	-.153	(.090)
Latvia	-.986***	(.152)	-1.167***	(.194)	-.047	(.092)
Lithuania	-.244	(.140)	-.586**	(.180)	.597***	(.093)
Malta	-.094	(.212)	.310	(.217)	.025	(.140)
Poland	-2.120***	(.204)	-1.319***	(.195)	-.532***	(.093)
Slovakia	-.490***	(.140)	-1.037***	(.191)	.310***	(.089)
Slovenia	-.740***	(.143)	-1.091***	(.186)	.181*	(.087)
Constant	-1.142***	(.113)	-1.792***	(.135)	-.196**	(.076)

a Multinomial regression, coefficients are log odds. N=34808

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Summary in Dutch

Introductie

In veel Westerse landen heerst er een gevoel dat het de verkeerde kant op gaat. Academics en publicisten verwijzen naar Europa als het continent van angst en pessimisme. Hiermee wijzen ze op een sentiment onder burgers dat we niet meer de controle hebben over waar het heen gaat met onze samenleving en op de negatieve verwachtingen voor de toekomst van de samenleving. Deze typering wordt weerspiegeld in cijfers die laten zien dat een grote minderheid – en soms zelfs de meerderheid – van burgers in Europese landen en de Verenigde Staten pessimistisch zijn over de samenleving. In de media in West-Europese landen wordt de negatieve stemming over de samenleving aangeduid met verschillende termen, zoals ‘malaise’ in Frankrijk, ‘unease’ in Groot-Brittannië, ‘Unbehagen’ in Duitsland en ‘maatschappelijk onbehagen’ in België en Nederland. Al deze termen hebben betrekking op hetzelfde fenomeen, namelijk een bezorgdheid over de toestand en toekomst van de samenleving.

Zowel in het publieke debat als in de wetenschappelijke literatuur wordt gesuggereerd dat een dergelijke pessimistische houding negatieve gevolgen heeft. Zo deden in de afgelopen jaren zowel Premier Rutte, President Hollande als Paus Franciscus een oproep tot meer optimisme, vanwege de vrees dat dit pessimisme zal leiden tot politieke, economische en sociale stagnatie in respectievelijk hun land en Europa als geheel. In het wetenschappelijke debat wordt een ‘publiek pessimisme’ geassocieerd met minder innovatie en een naar binnen gericht Europa, dat de belangen van zichzelf en andere landen schaadt. Op het individuele niveau wordt het in verband gebracht met depressie en minder vertrouwen in instituties.

Hoewel de bezorgdheid over de samenleving wijdverspreid is en er negatieve consequenties aan worden verbonden, is er nog erg weinig onderzoek naar gedaan. Er is een omvangrijke literatuur over de publieke opinie, maar dergelijk onderzoek richt zich – op enkele uitzonderingen na – op één specifiek aspect van het persoonlijk leven of van de samenleving, en niet de perceptie van de samenleving als geheel. Daarnaast zijn er veel theoretische studies naar negatieve ontwikkelingen in de samenleving, maar die kijken niet naar de publieke opinie over dergelijke ontwikkelingen.

Mijn dissertatie is erop gericht meer inzicht te krijgen in de *bezorgdheid over de samenleving onder burgers*. Daarbij staan drie vragen centraal die respectievelijk worden

behandeld in deel 1, 2 en 3 van dit boek: (i) wat is deze bezorgdheid over de samenleving, (ii) wat zijn de oorzaken van deze bezorgdheid over de samenleving en (iii) wat zijn de gevolgen van de bezorgdheid over de samenleving? Het uitgangspunt van dit boek is het zogenaamde Thomas Theorema, dat stelt dat als mensen iets ervaren, het ook consequenties heeft, ongeacht de realiteit van die ervaring. Dat betekent dat ik niet onderzoek in hoeverre een bezorgdheid over de samenleving gerechtvaardigd is, maar zal trachten meer duidelijkheid te geven over de aard van deze houding.

De maatschappelijk relevantie van dit boek bestaat eruit een spiegel voor te houden aan burgers, media en politiek, en de samenleving als geheel. Hoewel er vaak wordt gesproken over bijvoorbeeld maatschappelijk onbehagen in Nederland, weten we eigenlijk niet precies wat we daarmee bedoelen, hoe wijdverbreid dit onbehagen is en welke groepen onbehaaglijk zijn. Bovendien kan deze studie kan een handvat vormen voor politici en beleidsmakers hoe om te gaan met dit maatschappelijk onbehagen.

De wetenschappelijke relevantie dit proefschrift is driedelig. Ten eerste geeft het een gevolg aan de theoretische literatuur die een achteruitgang van de samenleving beschrijft, door na te gaan hoe en in hoeverre dit leeft onder burgers. Ten tweede biedt het een nieuwe conceptualisatie en operationalisering van de perceptie van de burger over de samenleving. Hoewel vele deelaspecten van het individuele leven en de samenleving wel veel aandacht krijgen in onderzoek naar publieke opinie, geldt dit niet voor de houding naar de samenleving als geheel. Zo zijn er bijvoorbeeld op persoonlijk niveau begrippen voor geluk, tevredenheid met het leven, werk of vriendenkring. Op maatschappelijk niveau bestaan er bijvoorbeeld concepten voor de perceptie van de politiek (politiek vertrouwen), de medemens (sociaal vertrouwen), de economie en identificatie met het land. Ten derde biedt dit boek inzicht in de oorzaken en gevolgen van de bezorgdheid over de samenleving.

In dit boek focus ik op Westerse landen, aangezien de conceptualisatie van maatschappelijk onbehagen (zie hieronder) van toepassing is op ontwikkelde, liberale democratieën, waaronder zich voornamelijk Westerse landen bevinden. Vanwege databeperkingen richten de empirische hoofdstukken zich op een deel van de Westerse landen, en gebruiken hoofdstuk 5 tot en met 8 maten van maatschappelijk pessimisme in plaats van maatschappelijk onbehagen. Hoofdstuk 3 en 4 richten zich specifiek op Nederland, en hoofdstuk 5 tot en met 8 op een selectie van 9 tot 25 Europese landen.

Deel I: Conceptualisatie

Hoofdstuk 2 is het theoretische raamwerk van dit boek. Het definieert de bezorgdheid over de samenleving op twee manieren. *Maatschappelijk pessimisme* verwijst naar de bezorgdheid onder burgers dat hun samenleving er op achteruit gaat. Dit is niet

gespecificeerd in een object; de bezorgdheid kan dus overall betrekking op hebben. Dit begrip is daarom universeel toepasbaar, in alle type samenlevingen en alle fasen in de geschiedenis. *Maatschappelijk onbehagen* is gedefinieerd als een latente bezorgdheid onder burgers over de precaire staat van de samenleving, die bestaat uit gepercipieerde achteruitgang op vijf aspecten van de samenleving: (i) verlies van vertrouwen in menselijk kunnen, (ii) verlies van ideologie, (iii) verlies van politieke macht, (iv) verlies van gemeenschapszin en (v) toenemende sociaaleconomische kwetsbaarheid. Het *verlies van vertrouwen in het menselijk kunnen* gaat over de beperkingen van beleid en technologische innovaties om verbeteringen te bewerkstelligen, oftewel het verlies van het idee van een maakbare samenleving. Het *verlies van ideologie* ontnemt ons een gevoel van richting waar onze samenleving heen gaat en een perspectief op een betere wereld. Het *verlies van politieke macht* wijst op de afnemende invloed van de nationale politiek, ons instrument tot verbetering. Het *verlies van gemeenschapszin* relateert aan het verlies van gedeelde normen, waarden en solidariteit in het land. De *toenemende sociaaleconomische kwetsbaarheid* slaat op een groeiende instabiliteit van de sociaaleconomische positie van burgers. Aangezien de definitie van maatschappelijk onbehagen betrekking heeft op het functioneren van de liberale democratie, en de gevolgen en achteruitgang van een hoge welvaartstandaard, volgt uit deze definitie dat dit type bezorgdheid kan worden aangetroffen in ontwikkelde, liberaal democratische landen, en dus voornamelijk Westerse landen op dit moment in de geschiedenis.

Zowel maatschappelijk pessimisme als maatschappelijk onbehagen kunnen worden omschreven als een perceptie van onbeheersbare achteruitgang en collectieve machteloosheid om die achteruitgang te stoppen. Deze concepten zijn in hoofdstuk 2 omschreven als individuele houdingen over maatschappelijke problemen. Dit onderscheidt de bezorgdheid over de samenleving van individuele, persoonlijke zorgen, omdat het eerste alleen betrekking heeft op collectieve, publieke problemen. Daarnaast moet de individuele houding, die centraal staat in dit boek, theoretisch (en empirisch) worden onderscheiden van bezorgdheid over de samenleving in collectieve zin, zoals het publieke debat of geaggregeerde houdingen.

Hoofdstuk 2 onderscheidt maatschappelijk pessimisme en maatschappelijk onbehagen van ressentiment en onzekerheid over status, twee houdingen die gaan over de persoonlijke situatie en typisch zijn voor onze tijd. Het tweede concept is nieuw en kan worden omschreven als een onzekerheid van het individu over de eigen positie in de samenleving (bij welke groep je hoort, sociaal en economisch). Het hoofdstuk presenteert een theoretisch model van het boek, en sluit af met een paragraaf die de verschillen en overeenkomsten bespreekt tussen enerzijds maatschappelijk pessimisme

en maatschappelijk onbehagen en anderzijds de bestaande concepten anomie, anomia, alienation (vervreemding) en angst.

Hoofdstuk 3 toetst de theoretische verwachtingen van hoofdstuk 2 met gegevens uit de Nederlandse enquête Continu Onderzoek Burgerperspectieven januari 2012, en gaat na onder welke burgers maatschappelijk onbehaaglijk vaker voorkomt. De analyses laten zien dat in de houdingen van burgers over de vijf elementen van onbehagen inderdaad een gemene deler te bespeuren is, die we als maatschappelijk onbehagen kunnen betitelen. Dit toont aan dat de schaal van maatschappelijk onbehagen goed werkt. Daarnaast blijkt dat houdingen over andere maatschappelijke kwesties – zoals immigratie, het Nederlandse EU-lidmaatschap en strenger straffen – niet tot maatschappelijk onbehagen kunnen worden gerekend. De meetvaliditeit van maatschappelijk onbehagen en maatschappelijk pessimisme blijkt verder uit de bevinding dat deze zeer sterk samenhangen, en empirisch als hetzelfde kunnen worden beschouwd. De meetvaliditeit van beide concepten wordt ook onderstreept door een zwak verband met persoonlijk geluk en een matig verband met anomia. Een derde test van de meetvaliditeit, waarbij ik bestudeer of de schaal voor maatschappelijk onbehagen kan worden gebruikt voor laag-, middelbaar- en hoogopgeleiden burgers afzonderlijk, laat ambivalente resultaten zien. We kunnen dus geen harde conclusies trekken of maatschappelijk onbehagen hetzelfde is voor deze verschillende groepen burgers.

Als we kijken welke burgers relatief vaker maatschappelijk onbehaaglijk zijn, blijkt dat dat mensen zijn van middelbare leeftijd, met een lage opleiding, uit een lagere inkomensgroep, in een lastige financiële situatie, en met een hoge externe locus of control (die zichzelf weinig controle over hun leven toedichten). Ook degenen die vinden dat de kloof tussen rijk en arm te groot is, dat het een EU-lidmaatschap geen goede zaak is, dat de euro niet had moeten worden ingevoerd, dat de eigenheid van Nederland verdwijnt, zijn vaker maatschappelijk onbehaaglijk, evenals hen die hoog scoren op ressentiment, en hen die laag scoren op tevredenheid met de politiek en de economie. Ook onder Telegraaflezers en kiezers van de PVV en de SP is relatief veel maatschappelijk onbehagen. Daartegenover zijn vrijwilligers, lezers van kwaliteitskranten (Volkskrant, NRC, Trouw) en kiezers van de VVD, het CDA, D66 en GroenLinks juist minder vaak maatschappelijk onbehaaglijk.

In Hoofdstuk 4 ga ik na hoe mensen hun negatieve houding over de Nederlandse samenleving uiten. Daartoe heb ik de antwoorden op een open vraag in een enquête geanalyseerd, waarbij mensen in hun eigen woorden kunnen aangeven waarom ze menen dat het de verkeerde kant op gaat met Nederland. Acht thema's domineren deze antwoorden: verlies van gemeenschapszin, sociaaleconomische kwetsbaarheid,

armoede en inkomensongelijkheid, de economische crisis, immigratie en integratie, criminaliteit en onveiligheid, en de EU en buitenlandse zaken. De argumenten waarom het de verkeerde kant op gaat, hebben altijd betrekking op maatschappelijke kwesties, niet persoonlijke problemen. Dit komt overeen met mijn conceptualisatie van maatschappelijke bezorgdheid. Mensen lijken standvastig in hun ongenoegen over de samenleving, ze nuanceren hun standpunt nagenoeg nooit. De toon van de antwoorden komt overeen met de term onbehagen, aangezien de meeste antwoorden blijk geven van een ongerustheid of bezorgdheid maar niet grote ongerustheid of boosheid. Een kleine groep vormt een uitzondering; die kan wel degelijk als (zeer) boos worden bestempeld. Deze respondenten benoemen vaak meerdere problemen, en beschrijven deze problemen ook in relatie tot elkaar. Deze twee bevindingen onderschrijven het idee van maatschappelijk onbehagen als een latente houding. Dit volgt ook uit het feit dat sommige elementen van onbehagen nauwelijks of weinig worden genoemd (zoals het verlies van vertrouwen in menselijk kunnen en verlies van ideologie) en andere juist vaak (verlies van gemeenschapszin en sociaaleconomische kwetsbaarheid). Blijkbaar worden deze thema's niet bewust aan elkaar verbonden, en zijn ze niet allemaal even actueel of prangend voor burgers. Een subgroep van degenen die het verkeerd vinden gaan met Nederland, de groep die zeer hoog scoren op de schaal van maatschappelijk onbehagen uit Hoofdstuk 3, blijken op te vallen met een negatievere toon, en meer woede en ressentiment. Ook benoemen zij meer problemen tegelijk, en vaker problematiek rondom criminaliteit en onveiligheid en armoede en inkomensongelijkheid. Dit wijst er op dat deze groep meest onbehaaglijken politiek kan worden omschreven als cultureel rechts en sociaaleconomisch links. Ten slotte heb ik bekeken welke argumenten worden genoemd door maatschappelijk optimisten, degenen die het de goede kant op vinden gaan met Nederland, om te zien of zij tegengestelde ontwikkelingen zien. Dat blijkt niet het geval, ze belichten vooral andere ontwikkelingen.

Deel II: Oorzaken

In Hoofdstuk 5 ga ik na in hoeverre maatschappelijk pessimisme een cultureel kenmerk is of dat voortkomt uit reële maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen. Daartoe kijk ik of politieke en economische factoren verschillen in maatschappelijk pessimisme verklaren tussen 23 Europese landen. Ook ga ik na of de politieke en economische factoren veranderingen in maatschappelijk pessimisme binnen deze landen verklaren, in de periode 2006-2012. Op het politieke vlak kijk ik naar drie factoren: (i) supranationalisatie (lidmaatschap van de EMU (eurolanden) en bijdrage aan de EU); (ii) politieke instabiliteit (aantal veranderingen binnen een regering en aantal

vervroegde verkiezingen in een land); en (iii) corruptie. Wat betreft de economische factoren kijk ik naar de verandering in de sociale zekerheid, de economische groei, de werkloosheid en de inflatie.

De analyses laten zien dat politieke factoren vooral verschillen tussen landen verklaren, en economische factoren vooral veranderingen binnen landen. Zoals verwacht stimuleren politieke instabiliteit (veranderingen binnen de regering) en corruptie maatschappelijk pessimisme. Vervroegde verkiezingen blijken pessimisme niet te verhogen, maar te verlagen. Mogelijk genereert de val van een slecht functionerende regering maatschappelijk optimisme. En in EMU-landen is het maatschappelijk pessimisme niet hoger dan in landen zonder de euro. Nieuwe eurolanden, die de munt invoerden in de periode 2006-2012, zijn juist optimistischer dan niet-eurolanden. Veranderingen binnen landen worden verklaard door economische groei, werkloosheid, en de netto bijdrage aan de EU. Ook hier zien we dat vervroegde verkiezingen maatschappelijk pessimisme doen afnemen, terwijl reguliere verkiezingen het maatschappelijk pessimisme juist doen stijgen.

Deze resultaten bieden inzicht in de aard van maatschappelijk pessimisme. Ze onderschrijven ze dat maatschappelijk pessimisme in ieder geval deels geworteld is in reële ontwikkelingen. Dit spreekt verschillende auteurs tegen die menen dat het maatschappelijk pessimisme vooral een cultureel kenmerk is. Bovendien laten de analyses zien dat maatschappelijk pessimisme een structurele en een conjuncturele component heeft: het eerste volgt uit de internationale verschillen in maatschappelijk pessimisme, het tweede uit de longitudinale verschillen. Ten slotte betekenen de resultaten het dat het mogelijk is maatschappelijk pessimisme tegen te gaan, namelijk door corruptie en politieke instabiliteit tegen te gaan, de EU-bijdrage te beperken en de economische groei en werkgelegenheid te stimuleren.

Deel III: Correlaties en consequenties

Hoofdstuk 6 onderzoekt in hoeverre maatschappelijk pessimisme een nieuwe verklaring biedt van Populistisch Radicaal Rechts (PRR) stemmen, naast bestaande verklaringen in de literatuur. Het beargumenteert dat maatschappelijk pessimisme onder burgers aansluit bij de ideologie van PRR partijen (zoals onder meer de PVV, Front National, en de Deense Volkspartij). Deze partijen kunnen worden gekenmerkt als nostalgisch ('vroeger was onze samenleving beter') en hebben een pessimistische toekomstverwachting die focust op de risico's van maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen. Door kiezers van PRR partijen te vergelijken met kiezers van radicaal linkse, centrum linkse en centrum rechtse partijen, zien we dat de spreiding van maatschappelijk pessimisme eruit ziet als een gekantelde U-curve, waarin de PRR kiezers het meest

en de centrum rechts kiezers het minst maatschappelijk pessimistisch zijn. Bovendien blijkt maatschappelijk pessimisme inderdaad de kans om PRR te stemmen te vergroten, gecontroleerd voor de gebruikelijke factoren – zoals sociaaleconomische kenmerken, tevredenheid met de democratie, autoritarisme, en weerstand tegen immigratie en Europese integratie. Deze bevindingen komen overeen met de literatuur die stelt dat politieke mobilisatie steeds meer plaatsvindt langs een as van risico versus kans. Maatschappelijk pessimisme vormt een uitbreiding op het type risico's dat in deze theorie wordt beschouwd, aangezien het een sociotropisch type van onzekerheid is. De resultaten betekenen dus dat maatschappelijk pessimisme een houding is die politiek relevant is, en een kenmerk van een belangrijke hedendaagse politieke scheidslijn. Verdere analyses tonen aan dat maatschappelijk pessimisme de enige houding is waarop PRR partijen en centrum rechtse partijen tegengestelde, uiterste posities innemen. Naast een direct effect zijn er indicaties dat maatschappelijk pessimisme geprojecteerd wordt op meer concrete zorgen, zoals tevredenheid met de democratie, en weerstand tegen immigratie en Europese integratie, wat de combinatie van deze houdingen onder PRR kiezers kan verklaren.

Hoofdstuk 7 theoretiseert en test of maatschappelijk pessimisme gerelateerd is aan specifieke typen van participatie, zoals stemmen, campagne voeren, demonstreren, een petitie tekenen, je inzetten voor een actiegroep, of iets organiseren voor je buurt. Bovendien heeft het als doel het inzicht in de verschillen en overeenkomsten tussen verschillende typen participanten te vergroten. Ondanks een omvangrijke literatuur over *waarom* mensen participeren, is er nog weinig bekend over *hoe* mensen participeren. In tegenstelling tot de bekende verklaringen van participatie, waarvan niet kan worden verwacht dat ze participanten van elkaar onderscheiden, stel ik voor om te kijken naar hun maatschappelijke houdingen. Negen hypothesen specificeren of mensen participeren in institutionele, formele participatie versus protest-participatie en binnen of buiten de politieke arena, afhankelijk van hun maatschappelijk pessimisme, politiek vertrouwen en sociaal vertrouwen. In de analyses vergelijk ik groepen participanten met elkaar, en laat ik niet-participanten buiten beschouwing. De resultaten laten zien dat als we de drie groepen participanten vergelijken, institutionele politieke participanten meer vertrouwen hebben in de politiek dan in de medemens; dat protest-participanten maatschappelijk pessimistischer zijn, en meer vertrouwen hebben in de medemens dan in de politiek; en dat participanten in het verenigingsleven maatschappelijk optimistisch zijn en vertrouwen hebben in de medemens. Extra analyses gaan specifiek in op maatschappelijk pessimisme en nemen daarom niet-participanten mee. Hieruit blijkt dat maatschappelijk pessimisme even hoog is onder niet-participanten als onder

protestparticipanten. Alleen onder burgers met veel politiek zelfvertrouwen leidt maatschappelijk pessimisme tot protest-participatie.

In hoofdstuk 8 onderzoek ik of maatschappelijk pessimisme en andere vormen van sociotropische onzekerheid leiden tot een selectievere identificatie met politiek-geografische groepen. Ik heb gekeken naar identificatie met drie groepen: de stad, het land en de EU, en in hoeverre mensen zich identificeren met meerdere van deze gemeenschappen tegelijk. Hiervoor construeerde ik vier typen identificatie: *low identification* (met geen met de drie groepen), *single identification* (één groep), *dual identification* (twee groepen) en *multiple identification* (alle drie de groepen). De hypothese was dat de bevinding uit de *uncertainty-identity* literatuur en de *need-for-closure* literatuur, waarin een effect van persoonlijke onzekerheid op identificatie wordt bewezen, ook van toepassing is op maatschappelijke, sociotropische onzekerheid, en op multiple identificatie. Ik verwachtte dat sociotropische onzekerheid maakt dat mensen veiligheid zoeken bij duidelijke, homogene groepen die betekenis en richting geven. De resultaten bevestigen dat dat inderdaad het geval is: maatschappelijk pessimisme, politiek wantrouwen en economisch negatieve verwachtingen leiden alle drie tot een eenvoudiger patroon van identificatie, waarbij men zich met minder politieke gemeenschappen tegelijk identificeert. De resultaten houden ook stand wanneer ik niet identificatie met drie, maar twee politiek-geografische groepen onderzoek (in elke combinatie). De resultaten betekenen is dat identificatie met meerdere politiek geografische groepen wordt gehinderd door maatschappelijk pessimisme en andere typen van sociotropische onzekerheid. Deze uitkomst portretteert maatschappelijk pessimisten als burgers die geborgenheid zoeken bij één enkele politiek-geografische groep, als ze zich al met dit soort groepen identificeren.

Conclusie

In de conclusie (Hoofdstuk 9) kom ik terug op de onderzoeksvragen van het boek. Het antwoord op eerste vraag, wat is de bezorgdheid over de samenleving, is dat het een perceptie van onbeheersbare verslechtering van de samenleving is, en van collectieve machteloosheid, die op twee manieren geconceptualiseerd kan worden. Op een universele manier, als maatschappelijk pessimisme, en een Westerse manier, die gericht is op economisch ontwikkelde, liberale democratieën, namelijk als maatschappelijk onbehagen. Dit laatste bestaat uit gepercipieerde achteruitgang op vijf aspecten van de samenleving: het verlies van vertrouwen in menselijk kunnen, verlies van ideologie, verlies van politieke macht, verlies van gemeenschapszin en toenemende sociaaleconomische kwetsbaarheid. Naast deze conceptualisaties biedt dit boek ook een schaal van maatschappelijk onbehagen, een operationalisatie van maatschappelijk

pessimisme, en onderscheidt het deze concepten van andere individuele houdingen in de literatuur. Bovendien onderstreept deze studie dat sociotropische houdingen moeten worden onderscheiden van egotropische percepties.

Ten aanzien van de tweede onderzoeksvraag, over de oorzaken van de bezorgdheid over de samenleving, laat deze studie zien dat verschillende politieke en economische factoren invloed hebben op de cross-nationale en longitudinale verschillen in maatschappelijk pessimisme. Wat betreft de derde onderzoeksvraag, naar de correlaten en gevolgen van de maatschappelijke bezorgdheid, laat dit boek zien dat maatschappelijk pessimisme de kans vergroot op Populistisch Radicaal Rechts (PRR) stemmen, en op een selectievere identificatie met politieke gemeenschappen. Bovendien houden de maatschappelijk pessimisten zich afzijdig van de samenleving, en participeren alleen als ze veel politiek zelfvertrouwen hebben. Als maatschappelijk pessimisten participeren is dat in protest-participatie en niet in formele, institutionele vormen van participatie. Als we de resultaten gezamenlijk beschouwen, blijken maatschappelijk pessimistische burgers mensen die vooral risico's zien in de huidige samenleving, die hun wereld minder complex maken door zich te richten op wat dichtbij en bekend voelt, en die zich eerder terugtrekken uit de samenleving dan erin participeren.

In de conclusie bespreek ik ook de beperkingen van deze studie. Zo generaliseer ik de vaststelling dat maatschappelijk onbehagen en maatschappelijk pessimisme hetzelfde zijn naar Westerse landen, maar kan ik dat niet toetsen buiten de Nederlandse context. Daarnaast is het niet duidelijk in hoeverre maatschappelijk pessimisme equivalent is tussen landen, aangezien data ontbreken om dat gedegen te toetsen. De theoretische equivalentie van maatschappelijk pessimisme lijkt echter niet een probleem, aangezien de objecten van maatschappelijk pessimisme niet hetzelfde hoeven zijn. Empirisch is het lastig vast te stellen, al wijzen de beschikbare data voldoende equivalentie tussen landen. Een derde vraag die gesteld kan worden betreft de eenduidigheid van de verschillende maten van maatschappelijk pessimisme die ik in dit boek gebruik. Een cross-nationale vergelijking van deze maten is niet beschikbaar, maar de vergelijking met Nederlandse data wijst erop dat de verschillende maten inderdaad hetzelfde concept meten. Ten slotte kan worden stilgestaan bij de veronderstelde causaliteit in hoofdstuk 5, 6 en 8. Hoewel deze hoofdstukken causale relaties toetsen met cross-sectionale data, beargumenteer ik dat de theoretische veronderstellingen en de resultaten van de analyses voldoende aanleiding geven conclusies te trekken over causaliteit. Hoofdstuk 6 vormt hierop een uitzondering, het zou kunnen dat het stemmen op een PRR partij het maatschappelijk pessimisme vergroot.

In de conclusie wijs ik op verschillende wegen die vervolgonderzoek naar maatschappelijk pessimisme en maatschappelijk onbehagen zou kunnen bewandelen.

Een eerste aandachtspunt is het testen van zowel de schaal voor maatschappelijk onbehagen uit dit boek als de relatie tussen maatschappelijk onbehagen en maatschappelijk pessimisme in andere Westerse landen. Ook onderzoek dat maatschappelijk pessimisme en onbehagen vergelijkt in Westerse en niet-Westerse landen zou interessant zijn. Ten tweede is het belangrijk maatschappelijk pessimisme over een langere tijdsperiode te vergelijken. Hoe maatschappelijk pessimistisch waren mensen in de verschillende decennia van de vorige eeuw en in hoeverre waren het toen dezelfde demografische en sociaaleconomische groepen als nu? En in hoeverre was maatschappelijk pessimisme in vroegere periodes een gepolitiseerde houding, zoals momenteel het geval is?

Ten derde is vervolgonderzoek nodig naar andere macro oorzaken van maatschappelijk pessimisme, zoals de invloed van technologie-gerelateerde problemen en/of rampen (zoals falend beleid, maar ook uitbraken van de MRSA-bacterie of kernrampen), (het gebrek aan) lange termijn visie onder politieke partijen, de invloed van multinationals, de kwetsbaarheid van burgers door bijvoorbeeld flexibilisering van de arbeidsmarkt, toegenomen inkomensongelijkheid, en de invloed van de media. Ook micro oorzaken zijn belangrijk om te onderzoeken, zoals de invloed van persoonlijkheidskenmerken en algemeen pessimisme (glas-is-halfleeg houding), en de invloed van sociaal milieu.

Ten slotte ga ik in op de relevantie van dit boek voor de politiek en beleid. Ik wijs er op dat het belangrijk is dat politici en beleidsmakers maatschappelijk pessimisme serieus nemen. Als zij dit negeren, drijven ze de maatschappelijk pessimistische burger niet alleen richting radicale politieke partijen, maar dragen ze er ook aan bij dat deze burger zich afkeert van de politieke gemeenschappen waartoe hij of zij behoort. Maatschappelijk pessimisme werkt identificatie met meerdere van dergelijke gemeenschappen tegen, terwijl dit soort identificatie belangrijk is voor de democratie. Daarnaast suggereert dit boek dat de tendens naar depolitisering, het als niet-politiek benoemen van maatschappelijke problemen, alsmede het gebrek aan een lange termijn visie in de politiek, het maatschappelijk pessimisme in de hand werken. Ten derde laat dit boek zien dat maatschappelijk pessimisme geworteld is in politieke en economische problemen, en dat er dus tot bepaalde mate iets tegen te doen is. Echter, wanneer beleidsmakers iets aan maatschappelijk pessimisme willen doen door met burgers in gesprek te gaan, zullen ze waarschijnlijk moeite hebben om de maatschappelijk pessimistische burger daarbij te betrekken. Maatschappelijk pessimisten zullen huiverig zijn om te participeren in formele groepen zoals burgerinspraakprocedures. Bovendien wijs ik erop dat maatschappelijk pessimisme een handvat kan vormen om onrust over meer concrete problemen, zoals de recente vluchtelingen crisis, klimaatverandering

of terrorisme te begrijpen. Dergelijke problemen maken mensen ongerust omdat ze de percepties van onbeheersbare verslechtering van de samenleving en collectieve machteloosheid om er iets aan te doen bevestigen. Uiteindelijk is het grootste risico dat nieuwe problemen het maatschappelijk pessimisme verder aanwakkeren en vergroten.

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