Explaining welfare attitudes: general moral principles, issue framing and survey design – Research plan *(max 10 pages+references)*

Aims and scope

The aim of the project is to investigate the effects of general moral principles, issue framing and survey design on revealed attitudes towards welfare spending; with a particular focus on poverty assistance. Our point of departure is the assumption that public attitudes in one way or another play a role in how governments and legislators shape institutions, policies and public spending in democratic societies. We hypothesize that revealed attitudes can be linked to fairly stable general values and are subject to influence by peers, but at the same time, also are subject to intended and unintended manipulation by politicians, pundits, journalists and also survey researchers themselves. We investigate the effects of these factors, and analyze how they interact. We use survey-experiments to test our hypotheses.

Motivation. On the one hand, it is the public discourse about the ongoing transformation of the welfare state which drives our interest. Namely, some scholars have suggested that discourses on welfare policies have been reframed in a way which has resulted in a decrease of public support for postwar welfare institutions for poverty assistance across the developed world in the past two decades. These tendencies have also been observed in Hungary in recent years. A key concept in this reframing is 'deservingness.'

On the other hand, our research is motivated by the assumption about increasing mediatization of politics in the 21st century. Mediatization might urge political actors to become more and more aware of the consequences of the nuances of communication and use those nuances to their advantage. This phenomenon has become particularly salient in Hungary in recent years.

Research focus. The issue of poverty assistance is part of the more general issue of redistribution in the welfare state. The issue of redistribution, in turn, is part of the more general issue of social justice. Researches on those issues have strong traditions in sociology in general and Hungarian sociology in particular. We intend to exploit the theoretical and methodological advancements in those research fields. However, we stay focused on the narrow issues of poverty assistance and welfare transfers.

Theoretical approaches. Our team members represent different approaches to political attitudes. Thus, when looking at welfare attitudes, we can adopt insights from major research traditions of political sociology, sociology of values, social-psychology, rational choice political science, behavioral economics, and communication science. Such a mix of approaches is an innovative force that can lead to new answers to old puzzles.

Nonetheless, we use our central concepts, namely 'deservingness' and framing as are indicated by mainstream empirical sociology. Moreover, we elaborate on methods which were developed for sociological research on human judgments. Note also that our insights from economics, social-psychology and communication theory rely on long-standing traditions of Hungarian sociology. Actually, our team members represent major schools of Hungarian sociological research on attitudes and political behavior.

Survey methods. The factors we focus on (general moral principles, issue framing and survey design) are suggested to be investigated by survey experiments which rely on random population samples. Survey experiments used to be costly and complicated instruments of social research. However, recent improvements of the quality of representative online surveys have opened up new opportunities for such experiments. We intend to exploit those new opportunities by relying our empirical research on online surveys which are not only less costly and more flexible tools for experiments, but also are more valid instruments for testing media effects than surveys based on face-to-face interviews. Nonetheless, we also plan to look at questionnaires and data of some large-scale international attitude surveys (e.g. ESS, WVS, Eurobarometer) to support the development and the interpretation of our survey-experiments. In particular, we intend to harmonize questionnaire items in some of our experiments with the current welfare module of the European Social Survey.

Contribution. The key features of our approach are that we view the frames established by peers, political actors, media reports and survey questions from an integrated perspective; and look at them through the

lenses of certain moral principles. To our knowledge, there are hardly any integrated analyses of the interrelated effects of issue-framing, moral principles and questionnaire design in the field of policy attitude research.

A novel feature of our method is the application of vignette-sampling methodology to i) the investigation of interactions between various survey-design effects, and ii) the analysis of conjoint effects of multiple visual cues.

Moreover, we connect our survey-design experiment directly to the current round of the largest European social survey program (ESS). Thus, our future results will be potentially important contributions to the international scholarly literature on welfare attitudes.

We hope that by helping to understand intended and unintended manipulations of attitudes better, our findings could fuel public discourse about voters' vulnerability in the age of mediatized politics in Hungary and elsewhere in the world.

Literature review

Does public opinion matter? Discussions about the findings of the polls have played a prominent role in policy discourses in the past decades. Nonetheless, after decades of research, there is still no consensus about whether public opinion actually shapes policy decisions. A recent analysis by two prominent political sociologists (Brooks and Manza 2008), for instance, presents evidence that the size and characteristics of the American welfare state accurately reflect public attitudes. Some influential political scientists, on the other hand, have argued more recently that political elites often ignore public preferences (Gilens 2012, Gilens & Page 2014). Druckman and Jacobs (2015) present an integrated model in their new book: political leaders tend to refer to public attitudes, but at the same time, often successfully manipulate them. Our research is grounded on this latter approach. Note, however, that our project does not directly address issues related to the links between policies and public opinion.

Accounting for welfare attitudes: the role of self-interest. Opinions related to public policies could include a wide range of social and political attitudes. In this review, we concentrate on attitudes towards welfare spending in general, and poverty assistance in particular. Note that issues related to poverty are at the forefront of the research on policy attitudes. Note also that attitudes towards welfare and poverty assistance are the major issues we intend to investigate in our research project.

Systematic investigations of the determinants of welfare attitudes have been carried out at least since the 1980s. The classical models of welfare attitudes distinguished between the effects of self-interest, ideology and demographic factors (Hasenfeld & Rafferty 1989, Svallfors 1991, Blekesaune & Quadagno 2003). They conclude that self-interest does influence attitudes but only to a limited degree. Nonetheless, some economists exerted successful efforts to capture the effect of self-interest on general redistributive preferences better (Alesina & Giuliano 2009, c.f. Tóth 2008). On the other hand, some studies into the specific attitudes towards poverty assistance conclude that self-interest has a fairly limited role in shaping preferences (Gilens 1999). Anyway, an important lesson learned from these lines of research that even if self-interest has a significant effect, other factors could also play an important role.

Moral considerations. In many policy areas (e.g. equal opportunity legislation, immigration issues, criminal policies and environmental protection), attitudes can partly be accounted for by beliefs and values strongly related to cultural capital (e.g. Brint 1984, Werfhorst & Graaf 2004). It is a general tendency that educated people are more sensitive to the interests of marginalized groups than less educated ones (Federico 2004). When it comes to welfare attitudes, the situation is more complex, and individuals with high cultural capital have ambiguous attitudes towards welfare transfers (Federico 2004). To understand this ambiguity one has to look into the roots of non-selfish/ideological considerations behind attitudes.

Judging the poor: The key role of the concept of 'deservingness.' Researches on justice beliefs in sociology have explored the structure of moral considerations in recent decades (Jasso 1979, 2006, Örkény & Székelyi 2010). However, it is an age-old question that where do non-selfish, or ideological considerations in welfare preferences come from? A recent line of research points to 'deservingness' as a key concept in voters' minds: Individuals support policies which compensate for hardship due to bad luck, but oppose measures which, as they perceive, relieve distress stemming from lack of effort (Fong et al.

2005, Slothuus 2007, Petersen et al. 2011, Petersen et al. 2012). A great many findings of polls also indicate the explicit concern for deservingness (e.g., Gilens 1999, Lepianka et al. 2009).

Some of the most prominent analyses using this concept focus on the issues of poverty assistance and *intra*generational redistribution (Gilens 1999, Fong et al. 2005). Note, however, that deservingness is also used to interpret attitudes towards transfers inducing *inter*generational redistribution (Lepianka et al. 2009). Nonetheless, there are limits to generalization. For instance, theories focusing on deservingness are still to be reconciled with some sociological theories on moral considerations behind justice beliefs (c.f. Jasso 1979, Örkény & Székelyi 2010).

Deservingness and general theories about human action. On the one hand, the concept of deservingness builds upon models about social preferences, which assume that humans have a general tendency to pursue fairness and reciprocity in their interactions with other humans (Fehr & Schmidt 1999, Gintis 2000). Principles of fairness and reciprocity indicate that welfare transfers are judged not only on recipients' needs but also their efforts to minimize their dependency on public assistance (Fong et al. 2005). Those assumptions can be used to account for other types of policy preferences as well, but have been cited mainly in relation with attitudes towards poverty assistance so far.

On the other hand, the concept of deservingness also builds upon the logic of attribution theory, a psychological model which assumes that individuals always seek for responsibility before deciding about the right action to take (Weiner 1995). This model predicts that before forming opinions on welfare transfers, individuals have to update their beliefs about the responsibility for recipients' material distress. The key question is whether the locus of control is external or internal. In other words, whether the poor persons have had any opportunity to escape poverty. Note that attribution theory, similarly to the models of social preferences, is a general theory about human actions and could be applied to any domain of social life (Weiner 1995).

What is framing? What is issue-framing? In political research, the concept of framing refers to a process in which presentation of issues in elite discourse and media coverage influence public opinion. Communication theorists prefer to use the term in a narrow sense in studies into political attitudes. In this narrow sense, "framing effects refer to behavioral or attitudinal outcomes that are not due to differences in *what* is being communicated, but rather to variations in *how* a given piece of information is being presented (or framed) in public discourse." (Scheufele & Iyengar 2012, p.1). This interpretation can be traced back to psychological researches on the limits of rationality (Tversky& Kahneman 1981). On the other hand, sociologists prefer to use a more encompassing definition, according which the frame is "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson & Modigliani 1987, p. 143) by highlighting certain aspects of an issue rather than some other aspects. In our research, we apply the latter definition, and follow the tradition which refers to this process as 'issue-framing' (Slothuus 2008).

Media framing of the perception of deservingness. It is a widely held view among students of welfare state that media-reports on poverty tend to negatively influence the public perception of the deservingness of the poor (see Kendall 2011 for a review). The essentialist media portrayal of the poor has already been investigated in Hungary as well. Hammer (2006, 2008) provides a detailed account of media practices which could erode solidarity towards the poor. Note that tendencies for stigmatizing the poor as undeserving had existed much before the modern media age (Geremek 1997); and continue to exist even in such societal contexts in which producers and consumers of media contents are sensitive to the interests of marginalized groups (e.g. Tyler 2013).

Most scholars of media-effects agree that images of deep poverty erode solidarity because they regularly include references to antisocial behavior. Janky et al. (2014), on the other hand, analyze the potential effects of 'pure' distress signals. They are 'pure' because there are no direct references to antisocial behavior embedded in those signals. They (we) show in a survey experiment on a student sample that such pure status signals could moderate the impacts of ethnic cues on welfare attitudes.

Ethnic cues and deservingness in media-reports. Some American scholars detect racial bias in poverty related reports, and they connect welfare stigma to racial attitudes (Gilens 1999, Clawson and Trice 2000, Kellstedt 2003). In America, in particular, Blacks are stereotyped as lazy, and if poverty-reports over-represent African-Americans among the poor, many voters tend to see welfare recipients as 'undeserving'

(Gilens 1999). Experimental research on media effects have supported the hypothesis on the causal link from ethnic cues in media portrayals of poverty to attitudes towards public assistance for the poor (e.g. Iyengar 1990, Valentino et al. 2002, White 2007). Nonetheless, Dyck and Hussey (2008) argue that racialization of welfare attitudes has survived the de-racialization of poverty-reports in America. Now, there are already similar findings on the effects of ethnic cues for other ethnic groups, also from outside the United States (Harell et al. 2014, Harell et al. ?) and also from Hungary (Janky et al. 2014).

Institutions, political discourse and framing. Albrekt Larsen (2008) argues that the role of ethnicity might have been overplayed in the (US dominated) literature (c.f. Taylor-Gooby 2005). He emphasizes the influence of welfare institutions on public image of the poor; and suggests that liberal welfare regimes put the issue of deservingness at the forefront of public discourse on poverty: Means-tested benefits are preferred to universal welfare provision in liberal regimes, and means testing inevitably sheds light on the question whether recipients have really deserved what they would get. A media-analysis by Albrekt Larsen and Dejgaard (2013) shows that in a liberal welfare regime (UK), mass media over-represents the most 'problematic' groups of the poor (those who seem to free ride on welfare) without any significant racial bias; while the media-reports in two social-democratic regimes (Denmark and Sweden) lack this tendency. A comprehensive new study by Brady and Bostic (2015) provides a more refined view on the links between welfare regime characteristics and public opinion. Nonetheless, they also conclude that the targeting of welfare benefits is negatively associated with public support for poverty assistance. Note that in postcommunist societies in general and Hungary in particular, beliefs on justice and poverty attributions tend to fit less well into the above theories (c.f. Örkény Székelyi 2000).

Since new data can come from a single country in our research, findings about changes in discourse and policies in a given institutional framework are more directly connected to our analyses than the ones about cross-country differences in institutions and discourses. Indeed, a number of scholars of social policy argue that such changes of discourses have occurred in some countries, including Hungary (Cox 2001, Béland & Petersen 2014, and see Aczél et al 2014 in particular for Hungary in the latter volume). Some of them argue that those changes have affected how voters might perceive deservingness of certain groups of welfare recipients.

Decoding of messages: Limits of elite influence. The way people belonging to various social groups gather information and express their opinions on matters relating to public life or politics, features a specific structure. The interpretation and decoding of messages from the political elite or the mass media reflect the individual's social position, with a wide leeway for interpretations significantly different from the intended messages (Hall 1980). A multitude of different ways of decoding of messages ensues from structural changes in the social environment in which the various milieu groups no longer find their way around in a hierarchic way but on the basis of the social semantics of their own specific milieus (Schulze 2005). The significance of the varied decoding of meanings is greatly enhanced by an increase in people's distrust in politics observed during the recent decades (Hetherington 2005), enabling an even wider room for the creation of meanings that are substantially different from those understood by the elites.

One can find some experimental studies into the limits of elite influence in the American context (Druckman 2001, Druckman et al. 2013). However, this phenomenon appears especially markedly in the Central and Eastern European region where the lack of confidence in the political elites has even been proven empirically (Rose-Ackerman 2001, Campbell 2004, Boda & Medve-Bálint 2014). This distrust is not independent of the particular social history of the region and the role played by politics here – which is different from the role of politics in West Europe – as is also reflected by the interpretation of the elites' messages often producing quite the opposite of their intended meanings (Bognár 2014). Yet, experimental studies into the limits of elite influence in the postcommunist context are still missing.

Studying framing effects: survey experiments. Population based survey experiments, or shortly survey experiments are 'normal' experiments which are based on population samples – unlike laboratory experiments which usually are based on student samples (Mutz 2011). Many social scientists believe that population samples can add external validity to experiments. Some recent studies have raised doubts about the necessity of representative samples in survey experiments (Weinberg et al. 2014, Mullinix et al. 2015), but their conclusions rest on fairly simplistic comparisons.

Actually, there is a decades-long tradition of using experiments to investigate survey design effects in sociology (Schuman & Presser 1981, Schuman 2008). Moreover, sociologists have used very sophisticated experimental techniques to measure justice beliefs since the 1970's (Jasso 1978, Rossi 1979;

for further applications in sociology see Wallander 2009). And it was used to investigate attitudes towards poverty assistance early on (Iyengar 1990) and more recently as well (Fong et al. 2005, Slothuus 2007, Petersen et al. 2011, Petersen et al. 2012).

Nonetheless, the increasing attention to the mediatization of politics (Corner & Pels 2003, Strömback 2008) brought the resurgence of the method around the turn of the century, especially in political science and communication research. Political scientists have tended to focus on media-framing (Scheufele 1999), and have increasingly used online surveys (Mutz 2011; note that student samples also are going online, see Clifford & Jerit 2014). Such kinds of experiments are often used to test the effects of ethnic cues on respondent's attitudes, including welfare attitudes (Iyengar 1990, Valentino et al. 2002, White 2007, Harell et al. 2014). A particularly popular research topic is the media representation of immigrants in these days (Iyengar et al. 2013, Blinder & Jeannet 2014, Hainmueller & Hopkins 2015, Hainmueller et al. 2015, Turper et al. 2015, Ostfeld 2016; see also Bognár & Janky 2015). This survey-technology also has brought about new ways of scholarly cooperation (Mutz 2011, Ansolabehere & Rivers 2013).

Vignettes and vignette samples. The so-called vignette technique is generally a survey experiment method, although it is possible to apply the design on non-survey (e.g. photo analyzing) data. A vignette typically contains the description of a hypothetical situation, and is followed by questions about this situation. Respondents have to evaluate those hypothetical situations that contain different pieces of information, which are based on underlying factors, created by the researcher. The creation of the situations is similar to the typical experimental design processes, and usually uses factorial design. In some cases all the combinations of the factor-values are used in the data collection process, in other cases only a specifically sampled part of the combinations are used. Sometimes it is a very brief, structured characterization of a person or an event, but it could also be a relatively long (typically fictitious) media-report. The manipulation could also affect visual cues (Iyengar 1990, Havekes et al. 2013, Janky et al. 2014). It was already used in the 1970's (e.g. Jasso 1978, Rossi 1979), but later it was improved and its analysis was developed for more complex data (e.g. Hox et al. 1991, Jasso 2006). Recent findings indicate that vignette-based choices closely resemble real-world behavior (Hainmueller et al. 2015). We will apply this technique in its typical forms in our research, but as an innovation, will also use the vignette technique as a meta-framework for the examination of the interaction of different survey design-effects.

Survey framing of welfare issues. Some students of welfare attitudes warned about the importance of question format early on: Smith (1987), for instance, found significant difference between the American voters' attitudes towards 'poverty assistance' on the one hand, and 'people on welfare' on the other (c.f. Federico 2004). This particular finding also points to the inseparability of substantive and methodological issues: to take account of the above difference, one should understand the role of the concept of deservingness in preferences on poverty assistance, the stereotypes about various social groups of the poor and the group cues connected to specific expressions.

In Hungary, Csontos et al. (1998) raised the issues of questionnaire design in relation with welfare attitudes. Their study shows that the average citizen is uninformed and sees welfare provision as a 'free lunch'. They suggest the use of specific techniques to elicit informed opinions.

Notes on the wider context: Discourse, media and political attitudes. The social and network embeddedness of opinion preferences is a well-known sociological phenomenon. The early media-reception theories (see Lazarsfeld-Katz 2007, Noelle-Neumann 2007) have already emphasised the role of socio-cultural environment. The intensity of structural effect is partly depends on the topic (valance or issue position questions), partly depends on the social and political distances behind the conception of the question. A consensus theme in a balanced society is less affected by any framing than a polarized question in a polarized society. To be more clear, in a polarized society it is easier to polarize a theme than in a balanced society. The Hungarian society is quite polarized compare with other European countries, and the financial crisis has strengthened this tendency further (Kmetty-Tardos 2014). The closeness of opinion milieus also could strength further this polarization process. The structural cleavages formed principally along the political field in Hungary, and the roles of cultural attitudes are become weaker in the previous years (Enyedi-Kmetty 2015). The phenomenon of partisanship is not a problem, but if the partisanship goes beyond a level it could cause dysfunctions in the society (Tóka 2005). The process of partisanship goes hand in hand with the block like organization of the voters in Hungary. This block like embeddedness assumes a politically homophilous network structure, where the in-group interactions are denser than the

out-group interactions (Blau-Schwartz 1997, Angleusz-Tardos 2005). This cleavages and block-borders don't mean necessarily a closed communication field, but in Hungary if we examine the strong networks it is obvious that the frequency of political homophilous networks have grown in the last ten years (Kmetty 2015). The level of political homophily was much higher than the level of gender, age, education or religious homophily (Angelusz-Tardos 2009, 2011). The block like differentiation and the weak interaction level between these sides supported by a one-sided media reception result a structural environment where the political framing could easily works

Hypotheses, methods and organization

Beyond deservingness, framing and survey design. As far as the basic considerations behind welfare attitudes are concerned, our research concentrates on certain specific moral principles. Those principles are important influencing factors of welfare attitudes but other factors also are at work. One of them is self-interest which should not be ignored and we control for it in our experiments. Another one is the perspective of efficiency which also could significantly influence attitudes towards institutions and policies. Moreover, there are different approaches to political attitudes, some of them structure the problem of attitude generation in a different way we do. We take account of those approaches and try to control for factors outside of our interest but unable to incorporate and test all kinds of models in one research program.

Note that we assume that judgments based on moral considerations which are particularly sensitive to issue framing. This is because frames of elite discourse are less likely to alter opinions if only the ego matters and personal experiences are crucial than when unrelated people's well-being is at stake and the public discourse itself is the main source of information.

We adopt a model of survey response which assumes that any survey question regarding the right level or form of any type of welfare provision tends to raise another question about the deservingness of potential beneficiaries of the welfare institution in case; and respondents (partly) base their answers to the survey question on their judgments about deservingness.

As we assume, there are two major types of sources of information about those potential beneficiaries.

I.   First, our question itself could outline the behavioral traits of the recipient(s) directly. The use of this source by the respondent could be dominant if
   o   we present a vignette which describes a concrete individual, incorporating relevant information about her/his behavior and circumstances; and
   o   we ask a question referring to this concrete but abstract individual and avoid cues which refer to common images of real-word recipients.
   The red line in Figure 1 represents this way of information processing.

II. Second, respondents themselves can recall stereotypic images of supposed recipients from memory. The urge to do so is stronger if the survey question lacks pieces of relevant individuating information about beneficiaries. There could be competing images in memory, which are shaped by personal experience, peers, opinion leaders and media reports. The question and the questionnaire context could help to activate some of those images in explicit and subtle ways. The black lines in Figure 1 represent these ways of information processing.

An integrated view on issue-framing. An important corollary of our approach is that when it comes to the process II, survey questions and questionnaire context typically are not independent influencing sources but rather tend to mediate the effects of outside sources by helping to activate images from memory. When survey researchers depart from a purely abstract vignette; and process II. comes into the picture, there are no 'right' or 'innocent' questions.

Streams. To deal with the complexity induced by the multiple framing processes, the project is partitioned into several research streams.

A.   Stream A focuses on the (more or less direct) effects of general moral principles on revealed welfare attitudes (block A and the red line in Figure 1). Activities include reviewing and discussing existing theories and empirical findings, but also the organization and analysis of a survey experiment dedicated to the research questions of this stream.

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B. Stream B investigates how political discourse (including elite discourse and peer-communication) in certain social milieus reframes media messages and competing discourses (centered around block B). Activities of the stream include reviewing and discussing classical and contemporary theories and empirical results. Moreover we also intend to carry out in-depth interviews to understand how certain specific social groups decode and reinterpret the contents of mainstream media outlets. In addition, this stream uses secondary data on media use and trust from international attitude surveys. Finally, it uses sociodemographic variables and data on media use in our survey experiments in order to refine conclusions about the effects of experimental manipulations.

C. Stream C aims at carrying out media-effect experiments, while accounting for the complexity of frames outlined above (block C). This stream also reviews and discusses existing theories and empirical findings. We have a special focus on visual effects. Focus group interviews and qualitative content analysis is used to develop appropriate (photo and/or video) vignettes, which are to be used in a series of survey experiments.

D. Stream D is a research program on questionnaire-design effects, with the ambition to address the interactions between various design effects (block D). We intend to harmonize our questionnaire with the welfare module of the 2016-17 round of the European Social Survey. Our aim is to design a special, innovative methodological experiment. This adopts some statistical techniques developed for vignette studies, and makes it possible to investigate the various aspects of questionnaire design simultaneously while avoiding the use of full factorial design.

E. Stream E intends to investigate the interactions between moral principles, discourse, media coverage and questionnaire design, by exploiting outputs provided by Streams A-D. Its aim is to refine the experimental design of the surveys carried out in streams A-D.
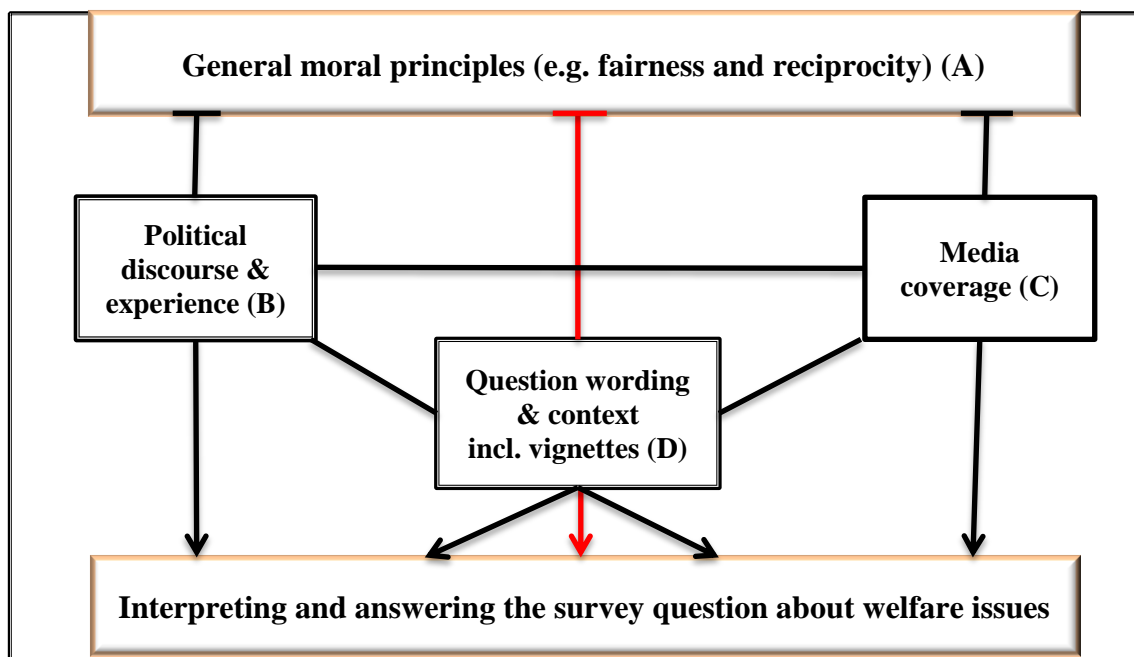

Figure 1. A simple survey response model of framing of the use of general moral principles to form welfare attitudes

Hypotheses and contribution. Below, we outline some hypotheses whose testing could provide new contributions to the literature on policy attitudes in general and welfare attitudes in particular.

General moral principles vs. issue framing. *(Interaction between the effects of moral principles and public discourse.)* We hypothesize that are no significant differences between social groups in the application of the general moral principles and the logic of attribution to their judgments on recipients. On the other hand, we also hypothesize that there are significant differences between social groups in a) the typical images of beneficiaries stored in memory, b) the sources they use to build up those images, and c) the way they recall them from memory or revise them. We are likely to find differences in the

answers across sociodemographic groups, if the policy question is linked to current or recent discourses or old-age stereotypes about potential recipients in any way (including wording nuances).

Discourse strategies. (*Interaction between the effects of moral principles and public discourse.*) Manipulative discursive strategies tend to be more successful when they manipulate beliefs about target groups characteristics than when try to popularize less prevalent general moral principles. To our knowledge, the explicit distinction of these types of manipulative efforts could be new contributions to the literature about framing effects on policy-attitudes.

Manipulation of media contents I. (*Interaction between the effects of discourse and media coverage.*) We also expect, however, that it is easier to shape voters' beliefs about the ethnicity or the physical and social environment of typical recipients than to alter judgments about recipients' behavioral traits. As a corollary, the concentration on extreme exemplars of distress in media reports on poverty may erode solidarity towards the poor ('poverty-assistance paradox', see Janky &Varga 2013).

Manipulation of media contents II. (*Interaction between the effects of discourse and media coverage.*) We expect that the same visual or verbal stimulus can evoke radically different reactions in different social groups. We suspect that in some cases, there are diverging opinions behind seemingly weak experimental media-effects. It is a common sense that the same content could be decoded in different ways in different social milieus. But we go further to investigate diverging effects of specific stimuli (e.g. indicators of material distress).

'Media noise' and media effect experiments. (*Interaction between the effects of media coverage and survey design.*) The so called pretreatment effect is hard to be eliminated from any media effect experiment. However, it can and should be controlled for by using data on media consumption and longitudinal surveys. Full effects of real-world media coverage can be measured only in exceptional situations allowing for natural experiments (Ladd & Lenz 2009, Chiang & Knight 2011). However, changes in respondents' sensitivity to the salience of an issue in the questionnaire can be measured.

Design effects. (*Interactions between design effects*) There are several questionnaire design effects that were detected and researched in the last decades. We can talk about the context-effect, the way of questioning, the direction of the answer-scale, the position within the questionnaire, the openness of the question, the phrasing, etc. But the interactions of these effects are not very well known. In our research, we plan to study the interaction of these effects with a special vignette-sampling method. To our knowledge, it will be the first such application of this method. The items come from the current wave of the welfare model of the European Social Survey so our results will directly contribute to the interpretation of the findings from the largest European survey program.

Research methods. Our research project is centered on a series of survey-experiments, but it also includes other methods (see Table 1).

THEORY & REVIEW. a) Theoretical work, including literature review is an important part of every research streams. The discussion of existing knowledge should be built into the design of the experiments. b) Participants of Stream B and C look at data of international attitudes surveys. Those surveys also are important inputs for the design of the methodological experiments (Stream D). However, we do not carry out new statistical analyses of those data.

QUALITATIVE. To understand decoding of mainstream media messages better, in-depth interviews are to be carried out (Stream B). This could support the design and analysis of experimental data. Moreover, the design of media effect experiments (Stream C) also requires some qualitative work to develop visual vignettes for the online surveys.

SURVEY EXPERIMENTS. Most of the resources we applied for are devoted to online survey experiments. First, we intend to carry out a survey design effect experiment on sample of about 3600-4000 respondents. Second we aim to conduct a specific experiment devoted to the questions of Stream A, on a sample of about 800-1000 respondents. Third, we plan to carry out a series of visual and verbal vignette experiments, about 2700-3000 individuals participating in them altogether. All of the online surveys are preceded by pilot studies with 100-500 participants, carried out in classroom settings or online, using convenience samples.

In most of our experiments related to Stream A, B and C, we adopt full factorial design. Not all of the surveys use vignettes in the narrow sense, but all of them manipulate the framing of an issue (distinguishing 6-24 versions in an experiment). Vignettes present a potential recipient or a fictitious media-report. In one experiment, however, we intend to apply Jasso's (2006) method of vignette-sampling (see below). In this experiment, we investigate the effects of visual cues. Questionnaires last about 15-20 minutes, and include usual controls and detailed data on media-consumption. Controls are important for subgroup analyses, and it is to be decided whether to use them in our tests of experimental treatments (Freedman 2008, Lin 2013). Our intention to carry out one experiment in media noise. In this experiment, questions are linked to a welfare-related issue which attracts media attention during the days/weeks of (a part of) the survey (c.f. Druckman & Leeper 2012, Slothuus 2015). If we succeed, we will attach data on media presence of the issue to our survey data. We will always use attention checks in our questionnaires (Berinsky et al 2014).

In the questionnaire-design effect experiment (Stream D), we address the joint effects of design characteristics. After the literature review we will create a matrix that contains all the combinations of the examined design effects and with a technique, which is based on a vignette-selection methodology (Jasso 2006), we choose some of these combinations. Based on the special selection mechanism, we will be able to examine the interaction of the different design-effects. We will study the cross-design effect on several parts of the data (e.g. distribution [structure of the answers], means, standard deviation, ratio of missing answers, etc.). The testing of these cross-effects will be administered on online nationwide subsamples. About the content of these questions: we plan to prepare questions about valence issues, as well as (politically) position issues, because we assume, that the different design-effects will affect more on questions about position issues.

Table 1. Research streams, methods and researchers in the project

	A Moral principles	B Discourse, peers & experience	C Media effects	D Questionnaire design	E Integrated investigation of framing
1. Theory & secondary data	Gulyás A. Janky B. Szakadát I.	Bognár B. Kmetty Z. Lakatos Z.	Bognár B. Janky B.	Kmetty Z. Koltai J. Ságvári B.	*Project team*
2. Qualitative research		Bognár A.	Rajkó A. Janky B.		
3. Survey experiments	Gulyás A. Janky B.	Bognár A. Janky B. Lakatos Z.	Janky B.	Kmetty Z. Koltai J. Ságvári B.	*Project team*

Organization. The project is structured along thematic and methodological lines, but it is not divided by them. Our surveys will be carried out regularly, and our hypotheses will be updated and refined in accordance of our findings and the discussions of them in order to design the upcoming surveys. Regular public meetings at the Institute for Sociology and university departments are planned to discuss literature, hypotheses, design and findings (see work plan). Table 1 summarizes the structure of the project and the participants' positions in this structure.

Dissemination. We intend to complete, disseminate and discuss publicly (see work plan) at least five papers which aim for international readership (and thus are written in English) by the end of the project term (see work plan). At least three of them will be submitted to relevant high prestige scholarly journals (ranked as Q1 or Q2 by Scopus/MTMT) by the end of the project term (note that the project lasts for 24 months only). In the meantime, we publish a couple of Hungarian articles to promote scholarly and public discourse on framing issues and methodological questions. At least three of the papers are intended to be presented at important international conferences, and we intend to present our findings at the general conferences of the Hungarian Sociological Association during the project term. The project concludes with a full day long workshop at the Institute for Sociology.

The team. The research program of the project builds upon the expertise and earlier findings of our team members.

BOGNÁR Adrienn is a postdoctoral researcher who is interested in the role of family in shaping political attitudes. She is an experienced pollster and has carried out qualitative and quantitative analyses in recent years. Organized and analyzed several vignette-experiments in recent years, and has published her findings in Hungarian and international journals (Janky et al. 2014, Bognár & Janky 2015).

BOGNÁR Bulcsú is a social theorist who has been particularly interested in the role of media in modern societies, especially in postcommunist societies. He has published international journal articles about the theory of social structure in general and communication systems in particular in recent years (Bognár 2013, 2014).

GULYÁS Attila holds two PhDs, one in engineering, and another in sociology. He conducted experiments testing his models of fairness motivations in his doctoral work (written in English). He also has publications on fairness theories and on political attitudes (Gulyás 2007, 2012). He has just returned to basic research recently.

JANKY Béla, the principal investigator participated as a junior researcher in the seminal 'State and citizen' (Állam és polgárai) research program in the late nineties (Csontos et al. 1998, Janky & Tóth 1999, see also Janky & Kopasz 2000). In this project, he not only investigated welfare attitudes but also studied questionnaire design effects. Later, in his dissertation (Solidarity and welfare preferences, 2003), he studied the role of moral considerations in shaping welfare attitudes. In the meantime, he published a book and several articles about the situation of the Roma of Hungary. In the past five years, he has started to connect his fields of research, namely the issues of poverty assistance, ethnicity and issue-framing. He developed theoretical models and conducted experiments using vignettes, and has published papers in international field journals in recent years (Janky & Varga 2013, Horváth & Janky 2014, Janky et al. 2014, Csepeli et al. 2014).

KMETTY Zoltán is a postdoctoral researcher, a survey statistician but already one of the leading scholars of political sociology in Hungary, who works mostly within the framework of the Angelusz-Tardos tradition of attitude research. He has published extensively on the determinants of political behavior in Hungarian and international journals in recent years (e.g. Kmetty & Tardos 2014, Kmetty 2015).

KOLTAI Julia is a postdoctoral researcher, and an eminent survey statistician in Hungary. She participated in a research program led by Székelyi Mária which was among the first projects using special vignette techniques in Hungary (Koltai 2010, 2011). Her dissertation is the first systematic review of this method in Hungary, and an application of this method to attitudes toward certain welfare issues (Koltai 2013, 2014).

LAKATOS Zoltán is an experienced pollster, who completed his Ph.D. in the field of sociology of values recently. He is particularly interested in connections between survey methods, theories and policy conclusions. The major analysis of his dissertation was published in the prestigious journal *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Lakatos 2015).

RAJKÓ Andrea is a doctoral candidate who is expected to join the team after defending her dissertation on taboos in society. She is particularly interested in visual sociology and sociology of visual arts. She intends to participate in the development of visual vignettes designed for media framing analyses.

SÁGVÁRI Bence has conducted projects on several issues in recent years –including measurement problems of social attitudes (Messing et al. 2014). He is particularly interested in new ways of social measurement. He is a postdoctoral researcher but already can be considered as an experienced researcher of attitudes and has publications in prestigious international scholarly journals (Lengyel et al. 2015). He is the Hungarian national coordinator of the European Social Survey program which is the largest survey-research project in Europe.

SZAKADÁT István, a senior researcher with research experience related to social theory, political science, information science and media studies, has published a book and several journal articles on the theory of action, and moral considerations in recent years (Szakadát 2008, Syi 2014). He is particularly interested in the theory of reciprocity norms. His own model of reciprocity norms was published in the highly prestigious *Journal of Theoretical Biology* recently (Syi 2014).

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