Chapter 1
Introduction

This chapter introduces the research questions that will be addressed in the chapters to follow. Why do people contribute to collective goods? From a sociological and psychological perspective, different answers to this question are described.

1.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In one of the episodes of Monty Python, the famous BBC-series, John Cleese plays a merchant banker, who receives a Mr Ford in his office. Mr Ford, played by Terry Jones, is holding a tin. This is what happens next.

Mr Ford: Oh. I wondered whether you'd like to contribute to the orphan's home. (he rattles the tin) [.....]
Banker: Yes, but you see I don't know what it's for.
Mr Ford: It's for the orphans.
Banker: Yes?
Mr Ford: It's a gift.
Banker: A what?
Mr Ford: A gift.
Banker: Oh a gift!
Mr Ford: Yes.
Banker: A tax dodge.
Mr Ford: No, no, no, no. [.....]
Banker: No? Well, I'm awfully sorry I don't understand. Can you just explain exactly what you want.
Mr Ford: Well, I want you to give me a pound, and then I go away and give it to the orphans.
Banker: Yes?
Mr Ford: Well, that's it.
Banker: No, no, no, I don't follow this at all, I mean, I don't want to seem stupid but it looks to me as though I'm a pound down on the whole deal.
Mr Ford: Well, yes you are.
Banker: I am! Well, what is my incentive to give you the pound?

Mr Ford: Well the incentive is to make the orphans happy.

Banker: (genuinely puzzled) Happy? You quite sure you've got this right?

Mr Ford: Yes, lots of people give me money.

Banker: What, just like that?

Mr Ford: Yes.

Banker: Must be sick!

Merchant bankers and free riders?

The merchant banker in this sketch pretends not to know what giving to charity is all about, because there is no personal gain in giving money to charity. He behaves exactly as a rational choice theory of human behavior, based on a self-interested model of man, would predict. In many cases, orthodox assumptions on self-interest provide an adequate explanation for the things that people do. But for prosocial behavior, the model obviously has drawbacks. Not many people react as the merchant banker do. A completely self-interested *homo economicus* does not contribute to charity, does not hold memberships of voluntary organizations that promote collective interests, and does not volunteer (Archer & Tritter, 2002; Elster, 1989, 1990; Halfpenny, 1999; Heath, 1976). But many people in real life do. The contrast between the self interested model of man in rational choice theory and the apparently non-self interested behavior of real individuals in society has been brought to the fore by Mancur Olson almost 40 years ago (Olson, 1965). This problem has puzzled many social scientists and became known as the 'collective good problem' or the 'participation paradox' (Udéhn, 1993). When people have a choice to contribute to a collective good, their best option usually is not to contribute. In most cases, one extra contribution does not make a noticeable difference for the collective outcome. The personal gain from a contribution does not outweigh the costs involved. The rational actor is a 'free rider'. Whatever the other potential contributors do, he is better off if he does not contribute to the collective good.

However, there are numerous examples of prosocial behavior in real life, which violate this prediction. A good example is blood donation. The blood supply in the Netherlands depends completely on donations from volunteers, who are not paid. Blood collection is organized on a not-for-profit basis by Sanquin, which operates the regional blood banks. In 2002, some 532,000 persons donated blood at least once a

year (Sanquin, 2003). Another example is charitable giving. In 2001, more than 80% of Dutch households donated money to charitable causes and nonprofit organizations. Annual donations totaled an estimated € 1,753 million in 2001, which is about 1.7% of GDP (Schuyt, 2003). The bulk of this money is contributed through direct mail solicitations, which are anonymous in the sense that they are difficult to observe directly by others. They are voluntary in the sense that there is no direct social pressure by a solicitor asking face-to-face for a contribution. Moreover, a considerable portion of philanthropic donations is received by organizations that do not provide services that can be used by the donors. International relief charities and organizations defending human or animal rights are specific examples. These donations are far from trivial. In 2001, € 370 million was donated to international solidarity and € 130 million to environmental organizations, almost 30% of all donations by Dutch households (Gouwenberg, Wiepking, Schuyt, Bekkers & Smit, 2003, p. 39). A third example is membership of voluntary associations. Excluding church membership, which is not voluntary in the sense that many people are born as a church member, more than 60% of the population is a member of at least one voluntary associations supporting some type of collective good, while the average Dutch citizen holds more than 2 memberships (De Hart, 1999). A fourth example is unpaid work for voluntary associations. In 2002, more than 30% of the Dutch population was active as an unpaid volunteer working for a nonprofit organization (Dekker & De Hart, 2003).

Selective incentives and 'other things'

Clearly, many people do not behave as the merchant banker in the Monty Python-sketch. How can these apparently irrational behaviors be explained? The classical explanation offered by Olson (1965) is that voluntary associations provide incentives that make it worthwhile to become a member. Consumer interest groups ("Consumentenbond"), for instance, provide access to test reports of new products to members; the Automobile Association (ANWB) provides on demand repair services at below market prices to members; and many worker unions provide legal assistance and offer insurances at below market prices to members. However, in many cases it is questionable whether the value of these services actually outweighs the membership dues. Furthermore, not all types of voluntary associations offer such services. Many organizations only send magazines to their members, filled with reports on the progress

made in achieving the goals of the organization and requests for (additional) donations. It is hard to imagine how such 'incentives' could convince self-interested free riders to become members. Similar arguments hold for volunteering, donation of money and blood donation: they are not rewarded with money or goods of equal value, reciprocity is impossible, and the act of giving is usually anonymous. But if it is not for personal gain, then why do people contribute to collective goods? This question becomes even more pressing when we consider contributions to organizations working for some abstract ideal such as world peace, human rights, biodiversity, or charities seeking to relieve the needs of others in distant parts of the world. Selective incentives provided by the voluntary association itself generally do not outweigh the costs of contributing to the collective good for an individual actor. There must be other things that people take into account when deciding to contribute time, money, or blood.

What are these 'other things' that people take into account when they decide to contribute to some collective good or not? The chapters in this dissertation consider two types of 'other things' that can make it worth while for an individual to contribute to collective goods: social incentives and psychological characteristics of decision makers. It is definitely possible to model these two 'other things' as additional utility arguments in a rational choice framework (see, e.g., Andreoni, 1989, 1990; Becker, 1974; Duncan, 2004; Soetevent, 2003; Van de Ven, 2003; Weesie, 1994). These models have not addressed the issue how strong the effects of various sources of utility are, whether they interact, and if so, how. This dissertation explores the effects of social conditions generating social incentives, and psychological characteristics generating intrinsic rewards for prosocial behavior. In addition, interactions of psychological characteristics with social and material conditions are investigated, in order to facilitate decisions for model builders which types of utility arguments to focus on in future research and how to model them. There is no good reason to invest a lot of time in formal analyses and mathematical models of the effects of psychological incentives and intrinsic rewards on prosocial behavior when these effects are negligible, or only become apparent in specific conditions.

Social conditions and psychological motives for prosocial behavior

The social environment in which people live determines the social incentives they have for making contributions to collective goods. Many social groups evaluate

such contributions positively, and integration in these groups creates obligations, which have to be realized in order to avoid disapproval. In addition, it should be taken into account that actual prosocial behavior is not only an outcome of a decision making process, but also a function of the exposure to requests for contributions. Some persons are more likely to be asked to become a member of a voluntary association, to donate money or blood, or to volunteer. Before social incentives can come into play, people have to be asked. Therefore, I investigate the effects of social conditions in which people live on their contributions to collective goods in chapters three to seven.

However, differences in the opportunities and social incentives may not fully explain contributions to collective goods. Even when prosocial behavior is anonymous, and approval can hardly be earned, there are still people who contribute. The examples of monetary donations to charitable causes illustrate this. In addition, experimental evidence reviewed below also shows that there must be 'still other things' that make people give besides social rewards. People do not only differ in the exposure to requests for contributions and the social incentives for contributions to collective goods. People also differ in the individual preferences they have for the well being of others. Some types of persons are simply more likely to contribute to collective goods, whatever the circumstances. But who are these Mr Nice guys, the do-gooders? Which psychological characteristics make people have an altruistic personality? And where do these prosocial motives come from? Sociologists and psychologists have given different answers to this question. Sociologists have emphasized the role of parents in setting the right example. Personality and social psychologists have emphasized the role of personality characteristics that people acquire early in life and carry with them from one situation to the next (Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger, & Freifeld, 1995). In addition to social conditions, all chapters consider the effects of personality characteristics on contributions to collective goods. I investigate whether contributions to collective goods can be explained more fully by taking these individual differences into account. In the final two chapters (chapter six and seven) I also investigate the effects of socialization by parents. Putting the arguments together, the research question guiding chapters three to seven is:

P1. To what extent can giving and volunteering behavior be explained by prosocial motives and other psychological characteristics of people and the social conditions in which they live?

Below (see section 1.2) I will present a selective and very brief review of the overwhelming amount of studies on prosocial behavior in sociology and social and personality psychology, in order to make a reasonable choice of which social conditions and psychological characteristics are most likely to be related to contributions to collective goods.

The second research question behind the chapters concerns the interaction between the effects of material and social incentives and psychological characteristics. It would be naïve to assume that there is a class of people called 'saints' and that these 'saints' always display saint-like behavior. 'Good intentions' do not manifest themselves in every situation. When do people act upon their good intentions? A rational choice theorist would say: especially if it does not cost them too much. When people are asked for a small donation for a charity, they can afford themselves to be altruistic. This idea is called the *'low cost-hypothesis'* (Diekmann & Preisendörfer, 1998, 2003; Mensch, 2000). Another idea in this regard originated in personality psychology, and predicts that people act upon their individual preferences when the expectations of others about their behavior are rather unclear. Only when there is no strict social norm that may guide our behavior, we base our decisions upon our own peculiar preferences. This idea is called the *'weak situation-hypothesis'* (Mischel, 1977, 1993; Snyder & Ickes, 1985). Both the low cost-hypothesis as well as the weak situation-hypothesis will be discussed more extensively below (see section 1.3). Testing these hypotheses can give an answer to the second research question:

P2. In which conditions are prosocial motives and other psychological characteristics more strongly related to giving and volunteering?

1.2. SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

1.2.1. Sociology

A sociological answer to the question why people contribute to collective goods is found in the classical theory of Emile Durkheim on norm conformity (Durkheim, 1897). Durkheim was not very clear on the mechanisms that explain the effect of group cohesion on individual norm conformity. His theory has been interpreted in at least two ways, depending on the place where the effect of norms is assumed to become visible. In the first interpretation, social norms reside outside the individual, and become visible through the actions of other persons in the intermediary groups and social networks that the individual is a part of. In the second interpretation, social norms reside inside the individual, in his beliefs and internalized value system. According to the first interpretation, individuals are more likely to obey social norms when they are more strongly integrated in intermediary social groups such as the church, the family, or the village. This interpretation is sometimes labeled as a 'structural' interpretation, because it emphasizes the role of group structure, assuming that there are no differences in the strength of these norms between social groups. According to the second interpretation, individuals are more likely to obey social norms when they have internalized these norms through socialization in intermediary social groups, also when they are no longer part of these groups (Ultee, Arts & Flap, 2003). This interpretation is sometimes labeled the 'cultural' interpretation, because it assumes that individuals carry the beliefs and values that they have acquired through socialization with them throughout their life. 'Culture' and 'structure' are often used terms for competing paradigms in the social sciences (De Graaf, 2002). Although the two interpretations lead to different predictions on the conditions in which social norms affect behavior, they are complementary. The 'cultural' interpretation is an addition to the 'structural' interpretation, claiming that social norms affect behavior in a larger class of situations. The work of social scientists such as George Homans, Peter Blau, Robert Axelrod, and James Coleman can be seen as reinventions and specifications of the 'structural' interpretation of Durkheims theory of norm conformity. The 'cultural' interpretation has been advocated by Talcott Parsons (Ultee, 1976). I will discuss the mechanisms that are related to norm conformity identified by various social scientists according to the 'method of decreasing abstraction'

(Lindenberg, 1992), starting with the model of man as a strictly rational actor caring only about his own material well being, and adding more complex assumptions later.

Group size - The assumption of purely self-interested actors, caring only for their own monetary pay-offs in a social dilemma situation, predicts that the likelihood of contributions to collective goods increases as groups become smaller (Olson, 1965, p. 35): the more people with whom the contribution has to be shared, the smaller the private benefit. Experiments with social dilemmas have confirmed that the higher the number of actors benefiting from cooperation, the lower the rate of cooperation (Komorita & Parks, 1994; Stroebe & Frey, 1982; Van Lange, Liebrand, Messick & Wilke, 1992, p. 18). But the effect of group size is more than this. In small groups, individuals are more likely to encounter the same partners in future social dilemmas.

Direct reciprocity - The work of Robert Axelrod (1984) on cooperation in prisoner's dilemmas (PDs) suggests that even completely egoistic rational actors may achieve collectively optimal outcomes when the probability of repeated interaction in the future is high enough. Cooperation may require (even substantial) investments in the short run, but it may be beneficial in the long run, when it evokes cooperative responses from other players in the game. Unconditional defection elicits uncooperative counter-strategies. The converse strategy, unconditional cooperation, however, is too naive: it will give the other player the opportunity to exploit the cooperator. The most successful strategy in repeated PD-games is a simple rule of reciprocity, also known as 'tit for tat' (Axelrod, 1984). As long as people can be sure that they will deal with the same partner(s) in future interactions, they have a stake in maintaining good relations with these partners, and they will be careful not to 'lock themselves in' a series of mutual defections. The work of Axelrod and later sociologists and game theorists studying social dilemmas shows how self-interest leads to norm conformity in the kind of groups that Durkheim studied. The 'shadow of the future', the expectation of repeated interaction, can account for prosocial behavior towards family members, neighbors, friends and even business partners. If there is the possibility of a repeated interaction or a series of repeated interactions with the recipient, helping behavior may pay off in the long run. In this case, the puzzle why people help each other is not very difficult: helping may be motivated by the expectation of future rewards. Coleman (1990) has explained this kind of prosocial behavior as the distribution of 'credit slips', a new metaphor in the study of the well known mechanism of social exchange

(Homans, 1958, 1974; Blau, 1964). When you help your neighbor or colleague, she will feel obliged to return your favor sometime in the future. Research on trust has shown that the expectation of interaction in the future is positively related to trustworthy behavior both among students as well as business partners when it is profitable for them to abuse trust (Buskens, 1999; Gautschi, 2002).

Generalized reciprocity - In many social dilemma situations in the real world in which we observe prosocial behavior there is no mechanism of direct reciprocity. Very often, the beneficiaries do not give something back to the donors. For instance, the people who make use of the services of a voluntary association usually do not compensate the volunteers who are working for the association, either with money or with services. Charitable giving, blood donation and post mortem organ donation are even stronger examples. Beneficiaries of charities in distant countries often cannot compensate the donors because they lack the resources to do so. Patients who receive blood do not know the donors because blood donation is anonymous. Post mortem organ donors cannot know the beneficiaries because the gift is made when they have died. In these examples, repeated interaction with the beneficiary is not possible. However, there are other forms of reciprocity that may give an adequate explanation for some types of prosocial behavior. Some of these examples of prosocial behavior may be explained by the principle of *generalized reciprocity*, which relaxes the assumption that the beneficiary compensates the donor (Gouldner, 1960). Generalized reciprocity occurs when help provided to someone in the community is compensated by another member of the community, even if this person did not receive help directly from the original helper. Person A helps B, B helps C, and C helps A. Generalized exchange emerges more easily in more cohesive groups because denser networks contain more connections between the individuals. Experimental research has corroborated that past help received from a third party increases the amount of help given (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1968). The principle of generalized reciprocity may explain some examples of volunteering: if person A volunteers for association X, and person B makes use of the services of X, person B may reciprocate by volunteering for association Y, which provides services that person C uses; person C in turn volunteers for association Z, which provides services for person A. This example seems to be far-fetched. However, if the assumption that the service returned to person A must be of the same type as the service rendered by person A is relaxed, this example becomes

more realistic. Person C may not volunteer for Z, but may donate money, which enables Z to perform the service for A by hiring paid workers. Or person C may reward person A directly, with a form of practical support (e.g., by borrowing tools or money).

Social incentives – In the social dilemma paradigm, decision makers can only punish defection by other players by defecting themselves in the next round of the game. Sociologists have stressed that in the real world, sanctioning often takes on more subtle forms. People do not only care for their own monetary pay-offs in future games, they also care about their reputation and social status in the group. When prosocial behavior is visible to others, it may produce social approval. Not only is interpersonal helping often in line with the (long term) material interests of the helper, it is also a way to build up a good reputation, to gain social approval or to avoid a bad reputation and avoid disapproval (Becker, 1974; Soetevent, 2003; Van de Ven, 2003).

The effects of visibility and social approval are in line with both common sense intuition and classical ideas about maintenance of norms in social networks: when others can see whether you contribute or not, you may be subject to sanctioning (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Sometimes, social norms lead the individual in the same direction as self-interest. For instance, providing help to others who are able to reciprocate is not only in the long term interests of the helper, but is also prescribed by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). In interpersonal helping and gift-giving, the norm of reciprocity creates a 'Matthew-effect' (Komter, 2003): those who have more financial resources can afford to give away more, and will receive more in return. In these cases, 'helping others' is another way of 'helping yourself'. However, it should be noted that visibility also increases helping behavior that is not in line with some (long term) material self-interest. This is the case, for instance, when the recipient is a third person, and not the person giving approval (Deutsch & Lamberti, 1986). The effect of fear of disapproval by third parties has also been found in laboratory experiments on cooperation (Fox & Guyer, 1978), charitable donations (Satow, 1975), and participating equally in group tasks (Williams, Harkins & Latané, 1981). Recent experiments with have shown that the visibility of prosocial behavior for third parties increases altruistic behavior. These experiments used a very specific type of social dilemma: the dictator game. The dictator game is a 'give some'-dilemma that is not repeated and involves only one player (Camerer, 2003). The player decides about the

division of an amount of money between him/herself and 'another person'. This 'other person' is not involved in the game and has no power to refuse the amount allocated by the dictator. The player does not know the other person and will not meet this person after the experiment. The design of the dictator game resembles the situation in which people decide about donations to charitable causes. Surprisingly, the empirical results of these games reject the prediction based on a completely self-interested model of man that dictators keep all money for themselves (Eckel & Grossman, 1996). The amount allocated to the 'other' decreases as the decisions of the dictator become more anonymous for third parties such as the experimenters (Eichenberger & Oberholzer-Gee, 1998), which indicates that fear of disapproval motivates a fair division of resources in a dictator game.

How do social incentives influence actual prosocial behavior? In voluntary associations, motivation to continue participation is largely embedded in social networks even when the recruitment phase is passed (Pearce, 1993). Participants receive social approval from fellow participants, the people they help, and possibly also non-participants. Involvement in political protest has also been related to such social incentives (Opp, 1996; Visser & Klandermans, 1993). Even economists recognize the strong effects of social incentives on volunteering (Freeman, 1997). Finally, a field study of donations to charitable causes (Long, 1976) has shown that fear of disapproval also motivates actual giving.

Exposure to requests - Furthermore, social networks are the main channels through which individuals get acquainted with the existence of prosocial goals and activities in the first place. Personal networks of family and friends are crucial for recruitment of volunteers (Pearce, 1993; Brady, Schlozman & Verba, 1999) and new members of social movements (Snow, Zurcher & Ekland-Olson, 1980). Social networks appear to have been crucial even for hazardous acts of helping such as the rescue of Jews in World War II (Varese & Yaish, 2000), which are commonly considered to be prime examples of altruistic behavior (Oliner & Oliner, 1988).

Internalized values – The arguments made above implied that self-interest alone can explain prosocial behavior in specific conditions (in small groups where the likelihood of repeated interaction in the future is high enough), and that this set of conditions may be expanded by including a concern for social approval in the explanation. When people are asked for a contribution directly, norm conformity can

be observed and can be rewarded with social approval. However, the game-theoretic interpretation of Durkheim's theory on norm-conformity, focusing on the opportunities for social control, cannot explain norm-conform behavior in anonymous situations. Theories relying on social norms have a hard time explaining anonymous giving. If people would only obey norms if their behavior can be observed, they would not give money to charitable causes through bank transfers or give blood. Thus, social norms seem to operate not only when they are supported by sanctions from others, but also as 'internal forces' (Elster, 1989; Lindenberg, 2000). Psychologists agree with sociologists on the point that people seem to punish themselves with feelings of guilt for a failure to help others (Batson, 1998; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio & Piliavin, 1995). Norms of fairness for example influence choice behavior in 'one shot' resource dilemmas even when participants do not know each other, cannot observe the other's choice, and do not expect repeated interaction in the future (De Vries, 1991). In dictator games with a double blind procedure, in which the experimenter has absolutely no way to infer the decisions of dictators, still 12% gives away more than 30% of a $10 endowment (Hoffman, McCabe & Smith, 1996). A replication revealed similar results when the recipient of the money is a randomly chosen person from the population instead of a student participating in the experiment (Johanneson & Persson, 2000). When the decision is to split the amount between oneself and a charity, 40% gives away more than 30% of the money (Eckel & Grossman, 1996). Because reciprocity or social approval cannot motivate this type of giving, it is likely that altruistic preferences are the explanation. Other experiments with dictator games have given rise to another interesting conclusion: reciprocity is often generalized to strangers. In these experiments, people are playing several dictator games, each time with different players. The results indicated that generosity of player A towards player B in a first game leads player B to be generous to player C in a next game, 'even if this player is and will remain unknown' to player B, when there is no prospect of ongoing exchange, and when the interaction is zero-sum in nature (Ben-Ner, Putterman, Kong & Magan, 2004; Cason & Mui, 1998). In this case, prosocial behavior occurs despite the fact that there are no immediate social incentives. These results suggest that generalized reciprocity does not only occur within a specific community, but may also be a norm that leads to contributions to collective goods outside the community. Survey research on the exceptional generosity of orthodox Calvinists to secular causes

shows that it cannot be explained by mechanisms of social control, but are rooted in internalized altruistic values (Bekkers, 2003a). The mechanism for charitable donations is different than for volunteering, probably because charitable giving is less observable to others.

Socialization – Anonymous giving can be explained by internalized values. The introduction of values in explanations of prosocial behavior have worried rational choice scholars for various reasons, one of them being that it is unclear where values come from (Hechter, 1992). The classical answer to this question in sociology is that social values are socialized early in life (Parsons, 1956; Inglehart, 1997). In the socialization period people internalize societal norms: thus, the moral system that exists on a macro-level enters the individual. Once internalized, people take these social values with them from one situation to another. Sociologists assume that conditions in youth and adolescence affect the internalization of norms. Of course, this is not a real solution to the problem of the origin of social norms because it merely shifts the problem to the generation before the present generation, ultimately regressing to the question how prehistoric man developed a conscience. Furthermore, one might wonder why parents want their children to internalize social norms. These questions are beyond the scope of this dissertation. For our research problem, focusing on the backgrounds of giving and volunteering behaviors of a specific group of individuals, it suffices to assume that a set of social norms prescribing prosocial behavior exists, which parents want to instill in their children.

Studies of the effects of childhood conditions on the internalization of prosocial values are scarce. Most of the research in this area is focused on negative behavioral outcomes (problem behavior, aggression, conflicts with peers, and maladjustment) and found negative effects of parental disharmony and conflict - which often precede and follow divorce (Grusec & Lytton, 1998, p. 200), poverty in childhood (Hao & Matsueda, 2000) and a lack of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Parcel & Menaghan, 1993, 1994). A few studies of socialization antecedents of prosocial behavior have been conducted. Persons who rescued Jews from the Nazis recall their parents as more strongly emphasizing generosity than non-rescuers (Oliner & Oliner, 1988, p. 164). Others have found that parental volunteerism (Janoski & Wilson, 1995) and generosity (Independent Sector, 2002) increase children's volunteerism and generosity. It is unclear to what extent the parental example of prosocial behavior actually instills

prosocial values in children. The effect of volunteering activities by parents on children's volunteering is partly due to the transmission of resources (Janoski & Wilson, 1995). Developmental psychologists have shown with experiments and observations that prosocial behavior among children can be promoted by modeling: showing the 'right example' (Eisenberg & Fabes 1994). However, most of the experiments and field studies in this area are solely concerned with young children. But what happens when children grow up? Is there still a positive effect of the modeling that parents displayed in childhood on giving and volunteering when the children have a life of their own? These questions will be dealt with in chapters six and seven. In addition, chapter seven also touches upon the question how such socialization effects can be explained.

Hypotheses on the effects of social conditions

Based on the review of previous research above, a large number of hypotheses can be formulated about the relationships of social conditions with prosocial behavior. I will discuss only a few of these conditions: current religious involvement, religious socialization, the level of education, and community size.

Religion – Persons with a stronger attachment to religion are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior because they are requested to donate time or money more often, and because they will be confronted with stronger disapproval for non-participation. For long, societal norms regarding prosocial behavior have been embodied almost exclusively by religion. 'Love thy neighbor' is one of the central commandments in Dutch religion. Not only does religion support altruistic behavior in theology, but also by providing opportunities to volunteer and by requesting donations for charitable causes. Therefore it can be expected that religious involvement will be closely related to prosocial behavior. Previous research shows that this social network-mechanism is indeed the main explanation for the overrepresentation of religious persons among volunteers (Becker & Dinghra, 2001; Bekkers, 2000, 2003a; Dekker & De Hart, 2002; Jackson, Bachmeier, Wood & Craft, 1995; Lam, 2002; Wilson & Janoski, 1995). Previous research has also found positive effects of religious involvement on blood donation, but it is unknown how this relation can be explained (Healy, 2000). A study of intentions to register as organ donors among youth did not find an effect of religious affiliation (Reubsaet et al., 2001). This result, however,

should be considered with caution for three reasons: first, it concerns a study of intentions, not behavior; second, it is limited to youth, for whom religious beliefs may have a smaller influence than for older people; third, the study measured affiliation, and not church attendance. Church attendance is a better measure of social integration than religious affiliation because many people are passive church members.

Religious socialization – Next to current religious involvement, religious socialization may also increase the likelihood that people engage in prosocial behavior. A higher frequency of church attendance in youth indicates that people have been exposed to a more intense socialization of altruistic values. The 'cultural' interpretation of Durkheims theory on norm conformity leads to the prediction that religious socialization increases prosocial behavior also for those who have left the church. There are few studies which have investigated the effects of religious socialization on giving and volunteering. One study reported positive relations between religious socialization and giving and volunteering in the US (Independent Sector, 2002), but this study did not control for present religious involvement. Studies of blood and organ donation have not investigated effects of religious socialization.

Level of education – Indeed, many studies have found positive effects of the level of education on charitable giving (Bekkers, 2002a, 2003a) and volunteering (Kraaykamp, 1996; Lindeman, 1995; Wilson, 2000). A study of willingness to register as organ donors among youth also found a positive effect of the level of education (Reubsaet et al., 2001). Previous research on blood donation did not find effects of the level of education (Healy, 2000). Not many studies have tried to find the mechanisms that are mediating the effect of education. Although the nature of these mechanisms need not necessarily be social, the available evidence does point in that direction. The higher educated have larger networks than the lower educated (Lin, 2001), and are more likely to be asked as a volunteer (Brady, Schlozman & Verba, 1999). With regard to charitable giving, the higher income that comes with a higher education is not the explanation: controlling for household income, a higher education is still associated with a higher incidence of donation as well as with a higher amount donated (Bekkers, 2002a, 2003a, 2003c).

Community size - Previous research shows that blood donation, helping and volunteering are more common in smaller communities (Bekkers, 2003a; Oliver, 2001; Putnam, 2000, p. 119; Steblay, 1987). These findings match with the result of

Axelrod's computer tournament that cooperation decreased with group size (Axelrod, 1984). Experiments with helping behavior showed that helping is still more common in smaller communities when the frequency of exposure to requests for help is held constant (Steblay, 1987). This result could indicate that norms on helping behavior in rural areas are different (Foss, 1983). However, the effect of community size can also be explained by differences in the structure of social networks: in smaller communities, networks are more dense and consist of a higher proportion of kin (Van der Poel, 1993), which may lead rural dwellers to expect compensation in the future through generalized reciprocity. Research on charitable giving shows that the incidence of giving is lower in larger communities (Gouwenberg et al., 2003) but that the amount donated does not vary with community size (Bekkers, 2002a, 2003a). This pattern could indicate that exposure to requests for charitable donations is higher in smaller communities.

Together, the relations expected above constitute the hypotheses from a sociological perspective:

H1. The likelihood of prosocial behavior increases with the frequency of church attendance, religious socialization, the level of education, and community size.

1.2.2. Psychology

In experiments, psychologists have identified conditions that affect contributions to collective goods not through social mechanisms, but through cognitive and emotional processes. In addition, psychologists have also identified the personality characteristics of cooperators in social dilemma experiments and the personality characteristics of donors and volunteers in self-report questionnaires.

Conditions for contributions to collective goods

Experiments in two types of research traditions in psychology have contributed to our knowledge of conditions for cooperation in social dilemmas and contributions to collective goods: (a) experiments with social dilemmas; (b) field experiments on helping behavior. I will review a selection of studies from these research traditions that seems most relevant for giving and volunteering behaviors.

Efficacy - Experiments with social dilemmas have shown that the more that an actor perceives his contribution as crucial for collective welfare (Van de Kragt, Orbell & Dawes, 1983), and the higher the returns to the public good (Blackwell & McKee, 2003; Goeree, Holt & Laury, 2002), the higher the likelihood that he will contribute. The effect of perceived efficacy is also found in survey research on membership in voluntary associations such as unions (Chacko, 1985; Visser & Klandermans, 1993), and donations to charitable causes (Bekkers, 2003c): when people perceive the organization they are supporting to be more efficient, they are more likely to contribute. These results match findings of a study showing that civic engagement is correlated positively with a dispositional measure of self-efficacy (Scheufele & Shah, 2000). In addition, there is some evidence that efficacy is also a norm: a more effective contribution is perceived as more appropriate (Horne, 2003). The effect of efficacy is an additional psychological mechanism that explains the negative effect of group size on contributions to collective goods. In large groups, the perceived efficacy of a contribution to a common resource is lower than in small groups, regardless of the objective efficacy (Kerr, 1989; Komorita & Parks, 1994, p. 55-68).

Time lag - The period in which the effect of contribution becomes apparent is not dependent on group size, but also matters. The longer the time lag between a contribution and its effect - the longer it takes before the effect of a contribution appears - the less likely the contribution (Brechner, 1977). The effects of efficacy and time lag are important for charitable giving, because many charities solicit funds for long term objectives such as the development of new drugs through medical research, the conservation of wildlife or the development of disadvantaged regions in the world. Battling these problems is difficult, takes time, and is often not very efficient. Fundraising will be more difficult the less efficient donors estimate their contribution to be, and the longer it takes before the benefits become apparent.

Similarity: identification & empathy - Experiments with helping behavior have shown that people are more likely to provide help when they feel more similar to the recipients (Dovidio, 1984; Schroeder et al., 1995, p. 48), probably because they identify more easily with their needs (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce & Neuberg, 1997). People also feel more empathy for people whom they are more likely to meet in the future (Cialdini et al., 1997). Numerous experiments have shown that manipulations directed at increasing feelings of empathy for the recipient increases the likelihood of

prosocial behavior (Batson, 1991; 1998). A field study of charitable giving, however, did not provide evidence for the effect of induced empathy (Warren & Walker, 1991), but this study used a very weak manipulation. A study of organ donation showed that manipulated feelings of empathy were positively related to intentions to sign an organ donor card (Skumanich & Kinsfather 1997).

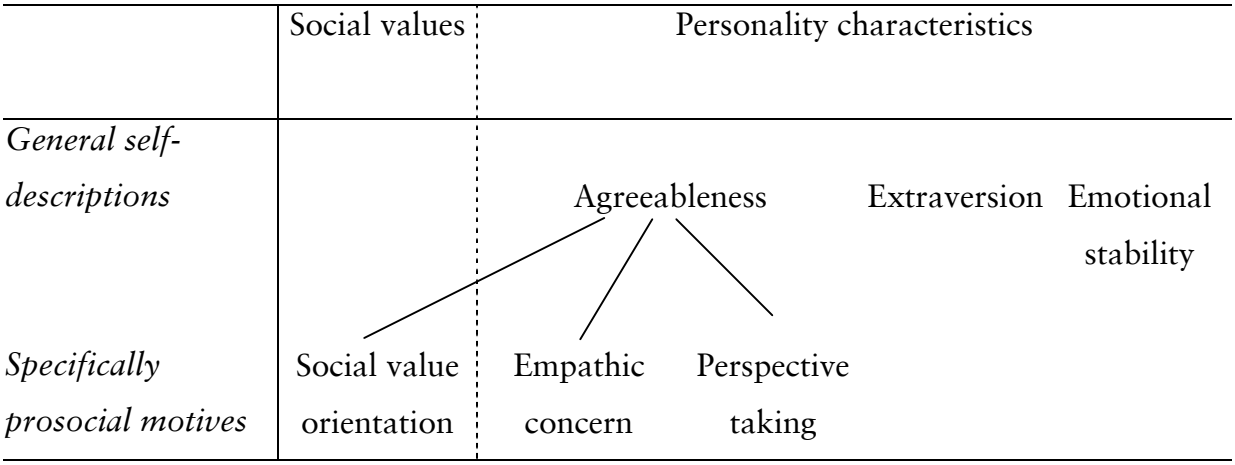
Personality characteristics associated with prosocial behavior

The results obtained in social psychological studies of helping and cooperation discussed above are all concerned with aspects of the choice situation. The experimental methodology used in these studies is perfectly suited to discover in which conditions prosocial behavior thrives, and when it is undermined. However, even in very unfavorable conditions, there are always people who cooperate (Dawes & Thaler, 1988; Ledyard, 1995). Experimental economists have tried to isolate situations in which there are hardly any incentives to cooperate. The results of ultimatum and dictator games are commonly interpreted as evidence for non-instrumental concerns such as fairness or altruism in social dilemma contexts. Even when the choice situation involves no material or social incentives, there are still people who seem to have an eye for the 'other(s)' in a social dilemma. One could assume that across different conditions, some persons are more likely to cooperate than others, and that these persons can be identified most easily when situational incentives are diminished or ruled out by design. Social psychologists have tried to capture these individual differences in the propensity to cooperate in social dilemmas. It is not unreasonable to assume that people may enter a social dilemma with very different goals, and that some people have more prosocial goals, and others have more egoistic concerns. This assumption stands in contrast to the received wisdom in economics that 'de gustibus non est disputandum' (Stigler & Becker, 1977) and to the common view in sociology that 'the desire to do good is more or less evenly distributed, but that the resources to fulfill that desire are not' (Wilson & Musick, 1999, p. 244). I want to treat this issue as an empirical matter (Heath, 1976; Caplan, 2003). Some psychologists assume that there is an 'altruistic personality' (Allen & Rushton, 1983; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Oliner & Oliner, 1988). People with altruistic personalities arguably differ in their preferences for the outcomes of others in social dilemma situations from the rational actors assumed by neo-classical economics and orthodox versions of rational choice

theory. Instead of assuming that all people are alike, I take measures of prosocial motives from personality psychology as measures of these preferences, and investigate their effects on different examples of prosocial behavior.

Which characteristics are distinctive of people with an altruistic personality? Previous research shows that the following psychological characteristics are typical of donors and volunteers: empathic concern, perspective taking, prosocial value orientations, agreeableness, extraversion, emotional stability, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Allen & Rushton, 1983; Cohen, Vigoda & Samorly, 2001; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Smith, 1994). Unfortunately, the latter two cannot be studied because there was only limited space available in the Family Survey of the Dutch Population, the survey that will be used to test the hypotheses. How the remaining psychological characteristics are related to each other is shown in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1. Psychological characteristics of donors and volunteers



First, I distinguish between social values and personality characteristics. Not all of the psychological characteristics in figure 1.1 are stable personality characteristics. Social value orientations appear to be less stable than the other characteristics, and should be understood as cooperative intentions that may change from one situation to the next (Bekkers, 2004b). Second, I distinguish between general self-descriptions and specifically prosocial motives. Agreeableness, extraversion, and emotional stability are very general trait descriptions, while social value orientation, empathic concern, and perspective taking are specific measures of prosocial motives. Below, I will first discuss

agreeableness, then the more specific measures of prosocial motives, and finally the other general trait self-descriptions.

Agreeableness - After a quest of several decades for a universal description of human personality, psychologists today generally believe that five basic traits are sufficient for such a description (John, 1990; Digman, 1990). These five traits are called the 'Big Five'; together, they form the 'Five Factor Model' (FFM). Agreeableness is one of these traits. Extraversion and neuroticism (the opposite of emotional stability) are two other psychological characteristics that are probably related to prosocial behavior, and will be discussed below. The other two, openness and conscientiousness, are not expected to be related to prosocial behavior. The origin and the measurement of the 'Big Five' are discussed in the appendix.

The important point for now is that the FFM relies on general self-descriptions. This is a limitation, because it remains unclear what these self-descriptions mean. To be sure, self-descriptions are not a perfect measure of prosocial motives, because they mix up preferences with past behavior and self-identity. Because agreeableness is simply a trait description of persons who engage in all kinds of prosocial and altruistic behaviors more often than others, it does not give a theoretical explanation of giving and volunteering. Showing an empirical relationship between self-reported agreeableness and prosocial behavior does not really give us an informative idea of why people engage in altruistic behavior. Therefore, we need more specific measures of prosocial motives. Empathy and prosocial value orientations are measures of two specific prosocial motives that may give an explanation of individual differences in prosocial behavior.

Previous research has found that several examples of prosocial behavior are related to agreeableness. Volunteers describe themselves as more agreeable persons than paid workers engaged in the same tasks (Elshaug & Metzer, 2001). Persons who describe themselves as more agreeable are more likely to cooperate in social dilemmas than those who describe themselves as less agreeable (Ben-Ner, Putterman, Kong & Magan, 2004). Agreeableness is positively related to intentions to give money to charity (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001). I am not aware of studies on the relationship of agreeableness to blood and organ donation. However, previous research does indicate that experienced blood donors have a more 'altruistic' self-image than 'rookies' (Piliavin & Callero, 1991) and that post mortem organ donation is considered as

indicative of altruistic concerns (Hessing, 1983). These results suggest that agreeableness will be higher among blood donors and post mortem organ donors than among non-donors.

Social value orientation – In contrast to agreeableness, social value orientations do not refer to a general self-description, but to a specific prosocial motive: the intention to cooperate in a social dilemma situation because of a concern for the joint outcome (Messick & McClintock, 1968; McClintock, 1972; Komorita & Parks, 1994, pp. 110-123; Van Lange, 2000). The social value orientation of a person is a psychological characteristic that may account for the base rate of cooperation in game theory: there is a type of people that is more likely to cooperate in social dilemmas, because they have the tendency to maximize collective welfare. In an ordinary game theoretic framework, actors are assumed to maximize only their own outcomes. In a game theoretic framework including social value orientations, actors are assumed to maximize their own outcomes, and, to some extent, the outcomes for others. Thus, actors are given weights for their own and other's utility, reflecting their social value orientation (Rashevsky, 1950; Sawyer, 1966; Weesie, 1994; Van Lange, 1999).

Social values are commonly considered as stable dispositions with which individuals enter a choice situation (Hulbert, Corrêa da Silva & Adegboyega, 2001; Ligthart, 1995; McClintock & Van Avermaet, 1982; Perugini & Gallucci, 2001; Snijders, 1996; Van Dijk, Sonnemans & Van Winden, 2002; Liebrand & Van Lange, 1989). However, research on the stability of social value orientations has produced disappointing results. Over a period of nineteen months, the stability of the threefold social value orientation typology in a computerized survey among a national sample of the Dutch population was only .19 (Van Lange, 1999, note 6). Correcting for measurement error, and using a linear measure of social value orientation, the stability increased only a little, to .22 (Bekkers, 2004b). These low estimates indicate that social value orientations are not stable personality characteristics. In addition, the classification of subjects in types of social value orientations is sensitive to priming effects (Bekkers, 2004b; Hertel & Fiedler, 1998; Utz, Bovina, Green & Waldzus, 1999).

Tests of the effects of social value orientations on cooperation in experimental social dilemmas have produced mixed results: sometimes, social value orientations allow for significantly better predictions (Van Lange, 1991, p. 20-21; Takács, 2002, p.

90, 95), but sometimes, they do not (Ligthart, 1995; Parks, 1994; Snijders, 1996). Little is known about the external validity of social value orientation. Subjects classified as prosocial in an experiment are reported to be more willing to volunteer for administrative tasks in order to enable future experiments (McClintock & Allison, 1989). Respondents classified as prosocial in surveys more often report gifts to charitable causes (Van Lange, 1997; Bekkers & Weesie, 2003) and higher rates of volunteering (Bekkers, 2004b). A recent observational study confirmed that prosocials actually gave more often to a health charity than competitors (Van Lange, Van Vugt, Bekkers & Schuyt, 2003).

Empathy – Another answer to the question why some people are more likely to give anonymously to strangers than others is that they have a greater tendency to feel empathy for others. While the discussion above focused on manipulated feelings of empathy, induced by experimental stimuli, the present argument is that some people are more likely to feel empathy and experience stronger feelings of empathy than others. Empathy is believed to be the key aspect of the 'altruistic personality' (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Empathy has two dimensions, an affective and a cognitive dimension. Both consist of two subdimensions (Davis, 1994, 55-58). The affective dimension consists of empathic concern (feeling bad when others are hurt) and personal distress (emotional control in emergency situations). The cognitive dimension consists of perspective taking (the ability to take another person's perspective) and fantasy (the tendency to transpose oneself in a fictional situation). Research on the relation between empathy and prosocial behavior indicates that perspective taking and empathic concern are the most important aspects of empathy: the more one is able and used to take the perspective of somebody else, and the more one is concerned with the welfare of others, the higher the chance that one will help another person in need (Batson, 1991, p. 93-96; Davis, 1994, p. 126-152; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). Empathy may be seen as a specific psychological process that provides an interpretation for the relation between prosocial value orientation and prosocial behavior (Romer, Gruder & Lizzadro, 1986).

Studies on the effects of dispositional empathy (for a review, see Davis, 1994) are usually concerned with helping other individuals, mostly strangers (confederates of the experimenters). One should be cautious to relate these results to prosocial behavior in anonymous situations, where there is enough time available to weigh the alternatives

and the beneficiary is not a specific other individual. However, there is some evidence from studies among specific populations that empathy is also important for non-emergency helping. Studies of cooperation among children showed a positive effect of empathic concern (Johnson, 1975a, 1975b). Several studies have shown that volunteers (e.g., for a community mental health organization and a shelter for the homeless) show higher levels of empathic concern than non-volunteers (Allen & Rushton, 1983; Penner et al., 1995; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Penner, 2002). There is also evidence from a survey of random sample of the US population for a weak relation of empathy with an index of prosocial behavior (Smith, 2003). Although direct evidence of a relation between the cognitive aspect of empathy and prosocial behavior in anonymous social dilemma situations is lacking, it seems likely that such a relation exists.

Extraversion – Next to general prosocial self-descriptions and specific prosocial motives, other personality characteristics have also been reported as distinctive of donors and volunteers. Extraversion is one of them. In the personality literature, extraversion is described as 'positive emotionality', comprising a cluster of qualities like energetic, ambitious, socially intelligent and warm (Watson & Clark, 1994). These qualities can be divided into two aspects: activity and sociability. These two qualities are distinctive of people who are engaged in voluntary associations, especially when they participate in activities organized by the association or do voluntary work. Extraverted people may be engaged in civil associations because they 'like to do and organize things', it does not matter what kind of collective action. On the other hand, extraverted people may be also be more likely to be asked to become members or volunteers, because they are more visible to recruiters because of their extraverted behavior. Lindeman (1995, p. 156) has shown in a study of participation in voluntary work that a preference for active stimulation (the activity aspect of extraversion) is related positively to the extent of voluntary activity in societal and recreative associations. This result confirmed older research (Smith, 1966). In contrast to expectations, the sociability aspect of extraversion was not related to voluntary work in general, and even had a negative relation with volunteering in recreative hobby clubs (Lindeman, 1995).

Neuroticism – Neuroticism indicates emotional instability, a greater incidence of negative emotions, and a greater risk to fall prey to depression and psychopathology. Previous research has shown that civic engagement is negatively related to a depression

scale used in epidemiologic studies (Lin, 2000) and positively to feelings of optimism (Whiteley, 1999). On the other hand, field experiments on helping behavior have shown that helping may be not only be more typical of people in a good mood (for instance when they have found cookies in a phone booth), but also a means to alleviate bad moods (Schroeder et al., 1995, pp. 30, 47, 65-66). Because neurotic persons experience more bad moods, they may more often be in the position to alleviate these moods by prosocial behavior. A number of studies provide indications that emotional stability may be related to blood donation and post mortem organ donation. With regard to blood donation, many people are afraid of the medical tests involved (Piliavin & Callero, 1993, p. 19-21). In a study of adolescents, fear was indeed the key factor inhibiting intentions to donate organs after death (Reubsaet et al., 2001). Although these results may simply indicate effects of situational anxiety when people are asked to donate, it seems likely that these effects will be higher for more neurotic people.

Together, the relations expected above constitute the hypotheses from a psychological perspective:

H2. The likelihood of prosocial behavior increases with the level of agreeableness, extraversion, emotional stability, prosocial value orientation, empathic concern and perspective taking.

Limitations of psychological studies of prosocial behavior

Laboratory experiments on behavior in social dilemma situations have identified important mechanisms, which are probably also at work when people decide about giving and volunteering. These results are valuable insights for researchers as well as for practitioners. Studies of the psychological characteristics of donors and volunteers have also provided interesting insights. However, several problems remain.

A first problem with the experimental results is that they are not very often tested in the 'real life': it is usually assumed that the social dilemma situation is paradigmatic for many problems in the real world, but it remains unclear to what extent this is really the case. One should be cautious to generalize results from social dilemma experiments to prosocial behavior in anonymous contexts. The dependent variable in these experiments is cooperation in highly abstract games with a given and clearly described reward structure, a given number of players, and a clear set of

alternatives. Actual decision situations are much more unclear, which gives room for different interpretations, which may be shaped by personality characteristics and social values. For instance, people with prosocial value orientations are more likely to view a social dilemma in terms of morality ('defection is the wrong choice'), while people with 'pro-self' orientations are more likely to view the dilemma in terms of intelligence ('cooperation is stupid') (De Bruin & Van Lange, 1999; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994). In addition, actual decisions about giving time, money, blood or organs do not take place in an abstract 'game' on a computer screen: the recipients are real people with real needs, which may also increase the role of prosocial motives such as empathy. The external validity of social dilemma games played by subjects in a laboratory is often questionable. These are old complaints (Nemeth, 1972; Pruitt & Kimmel, 1977), but they still apply to much of the gaming literature. Although some work has been done outside the laboratory, it is clear that much can still be learned from a survey-investigation of the effects of social value orientations and material and social incentives in real social dilemma-situations.

A second problem is that the experiments are usually conducted with college students. It is unknown to what extent the results hold when 'ordinary people' decide about contributions to nonprofit organizations. A third problem is that experiments do not allow for a manipulation of many independent variables at once. Experimental studies usually investigate effects of only one or two conditions, sometimes in addition to effects of some psychological characteristics of subjects. The relative effects of the large variety of conditions for cooperation is unknown.

The use of surveys in sociological research is a solution to the problems of the lack of external validity, the lack of a heterogeneous population, and the lack of insight into the relative effects of conditions for cooperation and psychological characteristics of subjects in social dilemma research. Random sample surveys have the advantage that respondents from the full range of societal layers report about real examples of prosocial behavior such as the amount of time they volunteered or the amount of money they donated to a variety of nonprofit organizations. Because surveys usually have a large variety of socio-demographic data available, adding questions on psychological characteristics and prosocial behavior allows for a study of many independent variables at once. Therefore, real life examples of social dilemma

situations as reported in a survey by a random sample of the Dutch population are studied in chapters four to seven.

However, surveys also have drawbacks: it is difficult to show causality in the observed relations, and it is difficult to measure the exact incentive structure for potential donors and volunteers. Volunteering and giving can be related to a large number of indicators for the amount of time and money available and the embeddedness in social contexts which are supposed to support giving and volunteering. The outcomes of the decision making processes whether or not to give or volunteer (and if so, how much) are known, but the exact 'input' for these decisions is not. Relying on the theoretical ideas laid out above, I assume that the social rewards of contributions to collective goods will be higher for persons with more social capital, that the material costs will be lower for persons with more financial and human capital, and that intrinsic rewards will be higher for persons with more prosocial motives and personality characteristics. Although these assumptions seem reasonable, direct manipulation of material, social and psychological costs and rewards in an experiment would be better. Therefore, I will combine the advantages of an experiment and a survey in the scenario study of intentions to give money and volunteer labor for a range of voluntary associations reported in chapter three.

1.3. Interactive effects of psychological characteristics and conditions for contributions to collective goods

Above, I have assumed that people with specific psychological characteristics are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors that require a material sacrifice of time or money, also when there are little or no social incentives. However, this in itself is not a very informative step. It would be a more important achievement if it is possible to predict *when* psychological characteristics have an influence. One of the reasons why the search for effects of personality characteristics on social behavior may have produced such disappointing results is that the moderating influence of the social context has been ignored (Krahé, 1992). When can we expect the effects of psychological characteristics and prosocial motives to be strong, and when will they be weak (Carlo, Eisenberg, Troyer, Switzer & Speer, 1991)? In what kind of situations we will be more likely to find effects of psychological characteristics and prosocial motives? Interestingly, economists, sociologists and different types of psychologists

have come up with similar ideas about this question. Economists (Eichenberger & Oberholzer-Gee, 1998; Tullock, 1971), sociologists (Diekmann & Preisendörfer, 1998, 2003; Mensch, 2000), personality psychologists (Mischel, 1977, 1993) and social psychologists (Neuberg, Cialdini, Brown, Luce & Sagarin, 1997; Snyder & Ickes, 1985) assume that psychological characteristics and prosocial motives are more strongly related to prosocial behavior when there hardly any material and social incentives. The idea that the effects of psychological characteristics on behavior are stronger when the material costs are lower is called the 'low cost-hypothesis'. The idea that the effects of psychological characteristics on behavior are stronger when the social incentives are weaker is called the 'weak situation-hypothesis'. However, these ideas have rarely been tested systematically. Chapters three to six contain different types of tests of these hypotheses, each time for different types of prosocial behavior: for intentions to give and volunteer (chapter three), for gifts of money, blood, and organs (chapter four), voluntary association membership (chapter five), and membership and volunteering (chapter six).

1.3.1. The low cost-hypothesis

In its most general form, the *low cost-hypothesis* states that values, attitudes, and other 'soft incentives' are more important for behaviors that entail smaller costs. The basic idea of this hypothesis is very old and occurs in many theories across different disciplines of the social sciences. In sociology, the low cost-hypothesis gained popularity in German speaking countries in discussions on the explanatory power of rational choice theory (Zintl, 1989, Kirchgässner & Pommerehne, 1993). It seemed that hypotheses derived from rational choice theory have limited value for predicting behaviors with small opportunity costs (Mensch, 2000). For instance, when recycling behavior costs little time and money, it is related to environmental attitudes, but not when environmental behavior entails higher costs (Diekmann, 1996; Diekmann & Preisendörfer, 1998). Another well-known example is voting behavior. Because one single vote does not affect the outcome of a general election, the opportunity costs of voting for one political party or another can be influenced by non-material concerns (Green & Shapiro, 1994; Tullock, 1971).

A similar logic is followed in social psychology. In the polarized debate on the altruistic nature of empathy, one article asked the rhetorical question: 'Does empathy

lead to anything more than superficial helping?'. The authors concluded their review and reanalysis of previous research as follows: "The ability of empathic concern to predict helping is limited to deciding between providing either relatively costless help or no help at all" and "under conditions of substantial cost to the helper, empathic concern does not facilitate helping" (Neuberg et al., 1997, p. 514-515). Although this conclusion concerned the effects of manipulated feelings of empathy, it can be supposed that it also holds for the effects of dispositional empathic tendencies. The weak power of psychological characteristics may also be the reason why psychologists usually focus on giving trivial amounts of money in their experiments.

The low cost-hypothesis is related to the idea that prosocial behavior is a luxury good (Jencks, 1987; Mansbridge, 1990). The marginal utility of an addition of € 500 to the monthly income – or: the marginal disutility of foregoing € 500 – is much lower for the wealthy than for the average person. When a charitable donation of € 500 is not similar to the monthly rent for the apartment but to a second digital home cinema set, people can afford themselves to act upon their concern for others. It should be noted, however, that the low cost-hypothesis argues that prosocial motivation for prosocial behavior is a luxury good, not prosocial behavior itself. A test of the hypothesis that there are declining marginal costs of altruism requires nothing more than a detailed plot of the effect of income on charitable giving. A test of the low cost-hypothesis, however, requires a detailed plot of the effect of prosocial motives and personality characteristics for different levels of income.

The low cost-hypothesis – although it is not always labeled as such – is often used to explain anomalies to rational choice models of human behavior. For instance, the absence or weakness of effects of material self-interest on voting is often explained by saying that voting involves no or little material costs (Eichenberger & Oberholzer-Gee, 1998; Green & Shapiro, 1994; Tullock, 1971). Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1996), which also formed the basis for Inglehart's (1977) theory of the rise of postmaterialism, reflects the same idea: once basic needs such as safety, food and reproduction are fulfilled, people start worrying about less urgent goals in life, such as social standing, and ultimately self-realization. The decreasing marginal utility of income is often discussed in the literature on happiness: it seems that above a certain level of income, subjective well being is not served by an even higher income but by satisfying 'higher needs' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

The low cost-hypothesis also occurs in the general statement that in human behavior, self-interested choices are the rule, and altruistic choices are the exception, especially when the stakes are high (Lenski, 1966, p. 30). Lenski also argued that at the macro-level, ideologies are more strongly related to social behavior in more advanced societies (Lenski, Lenski & Nolan, 1991). In economics, North (1981) is often credited for inventing a similar hypothesis. An application of the general formulation of the low cost-hypothesis to our research question yields the following expectation:

H3. The stronger the material incentives for prosocial behavior, the smaller the effects of psychological characteristics on prosocial behavior.

If the conclusions about experimental research can be generalized to examples of prosocial behavior outside the laboratory, it follows that psychological characteristics will be related more strongly to examples of prosocial behavior that are demanding smaller sacrifices. This argument is reflected in the order of the examples of prosocial behavior studied in chapters three to seven. In chapter three, intentions to give money and volunteer time are studied with a scenario study. In chapters four to seven, examples of actual prosocial behavior are investigated. Because intentions do not require an actual sacrifice of time or money, the effects of psychological characteristics are expected to be stronger in chapter three than in the other chapters. In chapter four, I study donations of money, blood and organs, which do not take much time either. According to the low cost-hypothesis, the effects of psychological characteristics are smallest for volunteering, which requires a frequent sacrifice of leisure time for some collective good. Volunteering is studied in chapters six and seven.

Another way to test this hypothesis is to compare the impact of individual differences on the decision to participate with the impact on the amount of time and money invested. The low cost-hypothesis would predict that individual differences matter more for the decision to participate, but less for the amount of time and money invested. With regard to the effect of political interest on political participation, this pattern has indeed been found (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). A comparison of effects of psychological characteristics on decisions to donate versus the decision how much to donate is made in chapters four and six.

A third way to test the low cost-hypothesis is to compare the effects of individual differences in prosocial motives for groups of respondents with varying opportunity costs for giving time or money. Giving to charity, for example, is often considered as a luxury good (Bekkers & Weesie, 2003; Jencks, 1987; Mansbridge, 1990). For people with high incomes, a gift represents a smaller loss than for people with a lower income. The rich can afford themselves more easily to translate prosocial values into action. Similar arguments can be made for the effects of psychological characteristics among persons with higher or lower hourly wages. This strategy will be followed in chapter three, four and six.

Finally, the scenario experiment in chapter three contains a fourth way to test the low cost-hypothesis: by varying the amount of money requested in hypothetical situations, and comparing the effects of psychological characteristics in these conditions.

1.3.2. The weak situation-hypothesis

The weak situation-hypothesis states that psychological characteristics are only relevant in 'weak situations': social contexts that do not involve clear-cut expectations on how to behave (Mischel, 1977; 1993; Snyder & Ickes, 1985, p. 904-906). In contrast, when strong social norms or salient cues guide behavior, there is little room for the expression of individuality. The classical example of a strong situation is a funeral. In this situation, clear and strong expectations are present on how to behave, and individual differences in personality will not have observable effects on behavior.

The weak situation-hypothesis originated in the debate in social and personality psychology on the consistency in social behavior and the effects of 'the person' and 'the situation' (Zanna, Higgins & Herman, 1982; Krahé, 1992). Originally, the basic idea was that situational constraints often inhibit the translation of personality characteristics into behavior. 'Situational constraints' included many things, for instance the presence of experimenters and explicit instructions (Block, 1977; Snyder & Ickes, 1985, p. 905) and high monetary incentives (Monson, Hesley & Chernick, 1982). In this dissertation, I test a specific version of the weak situation-hypothesis, referring to the moderating effects of social incentives. Moderating effects of monetary incentives concern the low cost-hypothesis. Potential moderating effects of experimental methods are not studied; all hypotheses are tested with self-report data,

which should increase the chance that significant effects of personality characteristics emerge.

On a macro level, the weak situation-hypothesis resembles the argument in sociology that modern societies grant the individual more room for expressing his individual preferences and interests because social norms on how to behave have become less strict than in traditional societies (e.g., Van der Loo & Van Rijen, 1990). Movie pictures such as 'The Truman Show' (Niccol, 1998) illustrate the popularity of the idea that modernity has liberated the individual from the strong pressures to conformity. The weak situation-hypothesis resembles this idea: personalities are most clearly visible when there is no social pressure.

Although the weak situation-hypothesis is very well known in personality psychology, empirical tests of this hypothesis are very scarce. A study that is often cited as supporting the weak situation-hypothesis did in fact test the low cost-hypothesis, because it compared the incidence of introvert or extravert behaviour under conditions of high or low monetary incentives (Monson, Hesley & Chernick, 1982). Participants in the weak incentive condition behaved more often according to their dispositional extraversion than participants in the strong incentive condition. Another 'test' of the weak situation-hypothesis compared the effects of prosocial motives on helping when leaving the experiment was made easy or difficult (Carlo et al., 1991). Again, this experiment did not compare weak and strong situations, but low and high cost situations. Nevertheless, the results supported the expectations: when escape was made easy, prosocial motives correlated more strongly with prosocial behavior. In sum, there is no convincing evidence for the weak situation-hypothesis because it has not been tested properly. This makes it worthwhile to conduct such a test. Applied to our research question, the weak situation-hypothesis predicts:

H4. The stronger the social incentives for prosocial behavior, the weaker the effects of psychological characteristics.

The weak situation-hypothesis can be tested with the same strategies that are used to test the low cost-hypothesis. First: by comparing effects of psychological characteristics on different types of prosocial behavior, which differ in the extent to which social incentives play a role. Examples of prosocial behavior that are more

visible for others such as volunteering should be less strongly related to psychological characteristics than more anonymous types of giving such as charitable donations of money. The weak situation-hypothesis is also reflected in the order of the chapters. In chapter four I analyze donations of money, blood, and organs, which are more anonymous than the types of civic engagement investigated in the remaining chapters. A second way to test the weak situation-hypothesis is to compare the effects of individual differences for religious and non-religious people and for citizens in urban and rural areas. Religious people and rural dwellers are more likely to be asked to volunteer and to donate money, and are integrated in denser networks. This means that religious people and rural dwellers face stronger social incentives for prosocial behavior. According to the weak situation-hypothesis, the effects of psychological characteristics should be weaker for religious people and for rural dwellers. Finally, a third way to test the weak situation-hypothesis is to compare the effects of psychological characteristics on intentions to give and volunteer in hypothetical situations that differ systematically in the strength of social incentives for prosocial behavior. This strategy will be used in chapter three.

1.4. The structure of the dissertation

After this introduction, I will present a description of the extent and variety of giving and volunteering in the Netherlands in chapter two. In chapters three to seven, I present detailed descriptions of the persons who are active in different types of giving and volunteering. What are the psychological characteristics of donors and volunteers? What are the social conditions that they live in? Do data on psychological characteristics allow for a more accurate prediction of giving and volunteering when social incentives are taken into account? As shown above, the types of prosocial behavior investigated in chapters three to seven are ordered according to the predictions of the low cost-hypothesis and the weak situation-hypothesis (see table 1.1).

Table 1.1. Overview of dependent variables and main independent variables in chapters three to seven

Chapter	Dependent variable(s)	Main independent variables
3. Who gives what and why?	Intentions to give and volunteer in a variety of hypothetical situations	Material, social and psychological incentives; income, education, religion, urbanization; social value orientation, agreeableness, empathy
4. Anonymous gifts	Charitable giving, blood donation, post mortem organ donation	Income, education, religion, urbanization; social value orientation, agreeableness, empathy
5. Participation in voluntary associations	Membership of voluntary associations; volunteering	Income, education, religion, urbanization; social value orientation, agreeableness, empathy
6. Shifting backgrounds of participation	Membership of pillarized and secular voluntary associations, selective incentives for membership	Income, education, religion, urbanization; social value orientation, agreeableness, empathy, postmaterialism
7. Intergenerational transmission of volunteerism	Volunteering for religious, pillarized and secular associations	Income, education, religion; parental volunteering; agreeableness, empathy, social value orientation

Chapter three, *"Who gives what and why? The power of social and psychological incentives in social dilemmas"*, is a scenario experiment incorporated in the Family Survey of the Dutch Population 2000 (De Graaf, De Graaf, Kraaykamp & Ultee, 2000; henceforth abbreviated as FSDP2000). The respondents answered a questions like "What would you do if your neighbor asked you to help him with something?" The answers to these questions reveal their intentions to contribute to collective goods in hypothetical situations. The characteristics of the situations were varied systematically. Because the respondents indicated their intentions to give and volunteer, they may mirror their psychological characteristics more closely than the self-reports on actual giving and volunteering behaviors, which are restricted by material costs and social rewards.

In chapters four to seven I focus on self-reports of actual behavior instead of giving intentions. In chapter four, *"Anonymous gifts: personal decisions, social backgrounds"*, I investigate examples of prosocial behavior that are relatively anonymous, and are commonly regarded as reflecting altruistic motives, such as blood donation, post mortem organ donation, and charitable giving. The question answered in this chapter is to what extent donations are related to social conditions an psychological characteristics of people. The low cost-hypothesis and the weak situation-hypothesis predict that psychological characteristics will be related more strongly to these examples than to examples of prosocial behavior that may provide material and social rewards such as membership of voluntary associations and volunteering.

Chapter five, *"Participation in voluntary associations: personality, resources, or both?"* is similar to chapter four and investigates the relationship of social conditions and psychological characteristics on membership and unpaid work in voluntary associations.

Chapter six, *"Shifting backgrounds of participation in voluntary associations"*, investigates why membership of voluntary associations has not declined despite the massive secularisation of the Netherlands. If church attendance is declining, and religion is an important factor in participation in voluntary associations, then why did membership rates not decline? It is often assumed that the social process of individualization increases the effects of individual preferences on social behavior. Therefore, chapter six compares the effects of social conditions and psychological

characteristics on participation in organizations that emerged since World War II to the effects on participation in organizations that already existed in the pillarized civil society. In addition, effects of postmaterialistic value orientations and selective incentives for membership are considered.

Chapter seven, *"The transmission of volunteerism"*, investigates how volunteerism is transmitted from one generation to the next. Are children of parents who volunteered more likely to volunteer because they have been subject to parental modeling, or because they have inherited personality characteristics or financial resources and human capital?

Finally, chapter eight, *"Conclusion and discussion"*, gives answers to the two main research questions, discusses limitations of chapters three to seven, and gives some clues for further research.