

## Tilburg University

### Making the difference in social Europe

van Oorschot, W.J.H.

*Published in:*  
Journal of European Social Policy

*Publication date:*  
2006

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
van Oorschot, W. J. H. (2006). Making the difference in social Europe: Deservingness perceptions among citizens of European welfare states. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 16(1), 23-42.

#### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

#### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

# Journal of European Social Policy

<http://esp.sagepub.com>

---

## **Making the difference in social Europe: deservingness perceptions among citizens of European welfare states**

Wim van Oorschot

*Journal of European Social Policy* 2006; 16; 23

DOI: 10.1177/0958928706059829

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<http://esp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/16/1/23>

---

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

**Additional services and information for *Journal of European Social Policy* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://esp.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://esp.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations** (this article cites 32 articles hosted on the SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):  
<http://esp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/16/1/23>

## Article

---

# Making the difference in social Europe: deservingness perceptions among citizens of European welfare states

Wim van Oorschot\*, *Tilburg University, The Netherlands*

**Summary** Welfare states treat different groups of needy people differently. Such differential rationing may reflect various considerations of policymakers, who act in economic, political and cultural contexts. This article aims at contributing to a theoretical and empirical understanding of the popular cultural context of welfare rationing. It examines European public perceptions of the relative deservingness of four needy groups (elderly people, sick and disabled people, unemployed people, and immigrants). Hypotheses, deduced from a literature review, are tested against data from the 1999/2000 European Values Study survey. It is found that Europeans share a common and fundamental deservingness culture: across countries and social categories there is a consistent pattern that elderly people are seen as most deserving, closely followed by sick and disabled people; unemployed people are seen as less deserving still, and immigrants as least deserving of all. Conditionality is greater in poorer countries, in countries with lower unemployment, and in countries where people have less trust in fellow citizens and in state institutions. At the national level there is no relation with welfare regime type or welfare spending. Individual differences in conditionality are determined by several socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics, as well as by certain features of the country people live in.

**Key words** culture, deservingness, Europe, public opinion, welfare state

---

Social welfare policy cannot be fully understood without recognizing that it is fundamentally a set of symbols that try to differentiate between the deserving and undeserving poor.

(Handler and Hasenfeld, 1991: 11)

### Introduction

Early poor laws, such as the British Poor Law of 1834, distinguished between those categories of poor people who were seen to be deserving of relief – aged, sick and infirm people, children – and those who were regarded as undeserving – unemployed people, idle paupers, those capable of work (Golding and Middleton, 1982; Waxman, 1983; Katz, 1989; Geremek, 1997). Still, present-day welfare states, with their protection schemes and

services going way beyond the early poor-law systems in terms of coverage and generosity, treat different groups of needy people differently. For some groups, social protection is more easily accessible, more generous, longer lasting, and/or less subject to reciprocal obligations, than for other groups. Just a few examples make this clear: it is usually the case that elderly people and disabled people can rely more strongly on less stigmatizing benefits than, for instance, unemployed people; in many countries widows are better protected by national benefit schemes than are divorced women; mostly, core workers can rely on more generous and comprehensive social-insurance schemes than can peripheral workers; and job-seeking obligations attached to benefit receipt are usually more relaxed for older people and single parents.

\* Author to whom correspondence should be sent: Wim van Oorschot, Cultural Studies Department, Tilburg University, PO Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands. [email: w.v.oorschot@uvt.nl]

Such differential treatment in social policy may reflect various considerations of policymakers. These may be economic (less protection for less productive groups, Holliday, 2000); political (better protection for groups with stronger lobbies, Baldwin, 1990); and they may be cultural (better protection for 'our kind of' people, or for 'well-behaving' people, Deacon, 2002). Obviously, policy-makers who are rationing welfare rights and obligations act in an economic, political and cultural context. A large academic literature now exists on the economic and political factors affecting welfare policy making (e.g., Barr, 1992; Esping-Andersen, 1996; Pierson, 2001), but only recently has the analysis of cultural influences received more attention (Chamberlayne et al., 1999; Lockhart, 2001; Pfau-Effinger, 2002).

This article aims at contributing to an understanding of the popular cultural context of welfare rationing, by examining European public perceptions of the relative deservingness of needy groups, as well as variations in conditionality among Europeans. This is not to suggest that public perceptions and opinions would always have a direct effect upon policy making, if at all. The growing literature on this issue suggests that there are some examples of direct effects of public opinion on social policy making, but mostly effects are indirect, through a 'median voter' mechanism, media debates, or lobby group activities. In these ways public opinion may set and limit political agendas, and offer or withhold legitimizing support for policies (Page and Shapiro, 1983; Burstein, 1998; Manza et al., 2002). In order to form a longer-term cultural context for policy making, public opinions, perceptions and attitudes must be rooted rather deeply, be relatively widespread and be stable over time. In this article we find evidence that this is the case regarding European public perceptions of the relative deservingness of needy groups.

The article examines public deservingness perceptions by analysing the degree to which citizens of European welfare states show a different solidaristic attitude towards four different groups of needy people: elderly people, sick and disabled people, unemployed people, and immigrants. Using data from the 1999/2000 European Values Study survey, we set out to answer as a first question what the public's deservingness rank ordering of the four groups is. In other words, to what degree the public

feels an informal solidarity towards each of these groups, and what is each group's relative position on the solidarity scale. A second question is: How fundamental is the rank ordering? Does it differ (much) between European countries, or between various social categories of their populations, or not? Apart from the rank order itself, it is interesting to analyse to what degree people actually do make a difference between the four groups. The solidarity of those people who do apparently attach greater importance to making a distinction is more conditional than that of those who are more equally solidaristic towards all four groups, and who are more relaxed about deservingness differences. Finally, how could individual differences in conditionality be explained? Does people's structural position makes a difference here, or their cultural values and attitudes, and does it matter in which type of country and welfare state they live?<sup>1</sup>

However, before analysing these questions we will review the literature on how and why the public at large makes distinctions of deservingness, and we will formulate some hypotheses about what we may expect as outcomes of our analyses.

## Making the difference . . .

### *How and why?*

The fact that the public at large makes distinctions between (support for) various groups of needy people is well documented, especially regarding differential public support for schemes directed at different target groups. Coughlin (1980) was the first to carry out an international review of public opinion studies on this issue, and found remarkable stability over time, and similarity across countries. All over modern, Western welfare states, in various decades, the public was found to be most in favour of social protection for old people, closely followed by protection for sick and disabled people, while the public supports schemes for needy families with children less, schemes for unemployed people less still, and supports social assistance schemes least of all. More recent studies corroborate this 'universal dimension of support', whether they use cross-sectional data from different European countries (Pettersen, 1995; Ullrich, 2000; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003) or (time-series) data from single countries, as for instance, the UK (Taylor-Gooby,

1985b; Hills, 2002), Finland and Denmark (Forma, 1997; Larsen, 2002), The Netherlands (van Oorschot, 1998), Belgium (Debusscher and Elchardus, 2003) and the Czech Republic (Rabusic and Sirovatka, 1999). In some recent studies, support for the social protection of immigrants is also analysed, and found to be at the lower end of the support dimension (van Oorschot, 1998; Appelbaum, 2002). Apparently, the support dimension found by Coughlin is a truly universal element in the popular welfare culture of present Western welfare states. This culture may have a longer history, because the support dimension coincides strongly with the chronological order in which different types of schemes have been introduced in these welfare states from the end of the 19th century onwards: first the schemes for the most deserving categories of old, sick and disabled people, then family benefits and unemployment compensation, and last (if at all) social assistance for the least deserving (Kangas, 2000).

In order to understand differences in support, some point to institutional factors, and others to cultural factors, such as public images of target groups and popular deservingness perceptions.

The institutional character of schemes seems to play a role, since it is consistently found that universal schemes have higher support than selective schemes (which even matters within the category of highly supported pension schemes, Forma and Kangas, 1997). Also, contributory insurance schemes usually have higher support than tax-financed schemes (Coleman, 1982; Ullrich, 2002). These facts may be explained by people's perceived self-interest, because more people benefit from universal than from selective schemes (Wilson, 1987; Skocpol, 1991; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003), and paying contributions is associated more strongly with building up a personal entitlement to benefits than with paying general taxes. Instead of, or in addition to, self-interest, trust may play a role, because the public usually has less trust in the fair operation of selective, means-tested schemes, than in that of universal and contributory schemes. Selective schemes tend to give more opportunity for abuse (Alston and Dean, 1972; Overbye, 1999; Ullrich, 2002), and their administrative practice may be seen as less impartial (Rothstein, 2001). Furthermore, support for a scheme may depend upon people's perceptions of its fiscal burden,

which is related to perceptions of the scheme's generosity and its numbers of claimants (Kuklinski and Quirk, 1997; Hills, 2002).

As for target groups, especially in the USA, various studies have provided evidence that normative images of categories of poor people play an important role in the support for welfare and social-security schemes. Programmes targeted at groups with a negative public image are less supported by the public, and they more easily fall victim to cutback measures, as is shown by Bendix Jensen (2004) in his comparison of UK and Danish welfare change of the last decade. There is very low support for the highly selective American 'welfare' scheme (now TANF), because people perceive that it is mainly used by teen and single mothers ('welfare queens'), who are morally looked down upon, and by those people who are assumed to be lazy, unreliable, and/or addicted to drugs and alcohol (Gordon, 2001; Rein, 2001). Programmes targeted at groups with no negative images – such as widows, elderly people, and physically disabled people – are well supported by the American public (Williamson, 1974; Katz, 1989; Appelbaum, 2001; Huddy et al., 2001). Gilens (1999) convincingly shows that there is a strong racial element in 'why Americans hate welfare': Americans tend to think that blacks are more lazy and less responsible than whites, and that therefore welfare is taken up mostly by black people (see also Feagin, 1975; Nelson, 1999; Neubeck and Casenave, 2001). Racial stereotyping is a central element in the difference between American and European public images of social-policy target groups (Alesina and Glaeser, 2004). Instead of images of the (black) poor, European studies have concentrated more on public images of unemployed people. (This may reflect the different outcomes of the American versus the European social models: the first generates more poverty, the second more unemployment.) What is consistently found is that images tend to be negative. There is rather widespread doubt about unemployed people's willingness to work and about proper use of benefits (Furnham, 1982; Golding and Middleton, 1982; Halvorsen, 2002), even in a universalistic welfare state such as Sweden (Furaker and Blomsterberg, 2002). And when people are asked to compare unemployed people to disabled people (Maassen and Goede, 1989), or to employed people (Ester and Dekker, 1986), the unemployed are seen as

having less 'character', less self-responsibility, less perseverance, and less trustworthiness. Among those who have more negative images of unemployed people, support for unemployment benefits is usually lower.

Why images of target groups are related to programme support can often be understood by recognizing that they are linked to more basic criteria that people use to assess a person's or a group's deservingness. People tend to support more those schemes which are targeted at groups they perceive as more deserving. Van Oorschot (2000) arrived at the existence of five central deservingness criteria based on the findings of several studies on the issue (Cook, 1979; De Swaan, 1988; Cook and Barrett, 1992; Will, 1993). A first criterion is 'control over neediness', that is, people who are seen as being personally responsible for their neediness are seen as less deserving (if at all). A second criterion is 'level of need', that is, people with greater need are seen as more deserving. Third, there is 'identity': needy people who are closer to 'us' are seen as more deserving. A fourth criterion is 'attitude': more deserving are those needy people who are likeable, grateful, compliant and conforming to our standards. And finally, there is the criterion of 'reciprocity': more deserving are those needy people who have contributed to our group before (who have 'earned' our support), or who may be expected to be able to contribute in future.<sup>2</sup> Of these criteria, control seems to be most important, closely followed by identity. De Swaan (1988) regards 'disability', or lack of control, even as a necessary condition for deservingness, implying that once the public feels that a person can be fully blamed for his or her neediness, other criteria become irrelevant. A fact is that in all empirical deservingness studies on the topic, perceived personal responsibility or control stands out as the most important determinant of people's attitudes towards poor or otherwise needy people.<sup>3</sup> The criterion of identity seems to play an important role, too, especially in cases where neediness is related to ethnic or national minorities. There is the strong racial element in American welfare support mentioned earlier, while in Europe, Appelbaum (2002) found that the degree to which the German public perceived various groups of minorities to be deserving of social benefits depended almost exclusively on how 'German' the groups were seen to be, and a Dutch study

showed that migrants were seen as least deserving among a series of 29 different groups of needy people (van Oorschot, 2000).

In many cases where the public makes a difference between (support for) needy groups, it will be difficult to assess which of the three main factors discussed will be decisive. There may be more explanatory variables involved (such as aspects of scheme coverage, generosity, claimant numbers, institutional character, target group images, perceptions of deservingness and/or of procedural justice), than there may be schemes to be compared (Gilens, 1996), and factors are sometimes interrelated.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, in our view, deservingness perceptions are often crucial. Mostly they form the base of negative images of target groups: as we have seen, the reluctance of Americans to support welfare is based on their view that welfare is mostly used by black people, who are regarded as more lazy than whites and can therefore be blamed for their neediness, while in Europe the relatively negative image of unemployed people is also connected to doubts about whether they can be blamed for being unemployed. Deservingness criteria may explain differentiation in people's attitudes towards certain segments in a category of needy people. For instance, usually, older unemployed people and disabled unemployed people are seen more as deserving than unemployed people as a group, because they will be less blamed personally for their neediness, and because their situation concerns social risks we can all be confronted with (van Oorschot, 1998; Saunders, 2002). In addition, changes in target group images and related scheme support may be explained by deservingness criteria: for instance, in times of high unemployment, the public at large perceives unemployed people as more deserving of benefits, and supports unemployment benefit more, because then unemployed people can be less blamed personally for being unemployed, and more 'people like us' will be unemployed (Gallie and Paugam, 2002). And, as Rein (2001) shows, 20th-century American welfare policies for single mothers changed for the worse due to changing normative perceptions of lone mothering: from the deserving widow to the undeserving unmarried single parent or 'welfare queen'.

Clearly, regarding our first research question it seems safe to expect that the overall rank order of solidarity towards the four groups analysed here

will be, in declining order: elderly people, sick and disabled people, unemployed people and immigrants. Given its universal character we also expect that the rank order as such will not differ much, if at all, between European countries. A question is whether there will be country differences in 'distances' between the four groups which might reflect differences in the degree to which specific groups are seen as more strongly or more weakly deserving in a particular country. Our comparative survey is the first which allows an examination of this issue. We do not expect such differences regarding the positions of the 'elderly' and 'the sick and disabled'. We expect both groups to be relatively close to each other on the rank ordering in all countries, because both are seen as strongly deserving on the basis of the criteria of control (not personally responsible) and identity (can happen to us all). We also expect that the rank order will not differ much between various social categories. This was found to be the case in the UK (Taylor-Gooby, 1985a), and might be the case in other European countries as well, given the universal character of the rank ordering.

#### *To what degree?*

The fact that the public draws a distinction between social-policy schemes and target groups, and on what grounds, is rather well documented. This is not the case, however, regarding the degree to which people make a distinction between groups. Apart from a study conducted on Dutch opinion data (van Oorschot, 2000), very little is known about the question of whether some people's solidarity is more conditional than others' upon characteristics of needy groups concerned. That is, whether some people tend to differentiate more strictly between the deservingness or undeservingness of groups, than others. In this article we address this issue of conditionality in detail and analyse how differences in conditionality are related to characteristics of people and of the country they live in.

In van Oorschot's Dutch study it was found that more conditional people tend to be older, less educated, have a lower socio-economic position, and be politically more right-wing. In addition, they are persons with a stronger anti-welfare sentiment; that is, they believe more strongly that benefits are too high and widely misused, and that social security makes people more lazy and less caring. Clearly, as

is so often found in welfare opinion research, opinions appear to depend upon a mixture of interest-related factors and factors concerning values, beliefs and ideology.<sup>5</sup> The Dutch findings regarding age, educational level and socio-economic position were interpreted as interest-related. That is, older people, people with a lower education and with a lower socio-economic position can be regarded as being in a more risky social position generally, which might induce them to prefer stricter conditionality in rationing welfare in order to prevent social protection they might need in future being available to people who do not really need it. The fact that rightist people tend to be more conditional may be related to the more meritocratic and less egalitarian character of right-wing ideology. That conditionality is related to an anti-welfare sentiment does not come as a surprise. Many studies have shown that explaining poverty in individualistic terms, holding needy people personally responsible for their need, is associated with a reluctance to support welfare (Alston and Dean, 1972; Feather, 1974; Furnham, 1982; Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Kluegel et al., 1995; van Oorschot and Halman, 2000).

In this paper we will test these relations to see whether they also hold for other European countries. Regarding age, educational level, welfare sentiment and political preference, our hypotheses will be in line with the Dutch findings. Compared to the Dutch study our data contain less extended measures of welfare sentiment, but there are some items regarding personal responsibility for social protection, welfare rights and duties of unemployed people, and the alleged effects of welfare on work ethic which tap people's beliefs in this respect. Our data also allow the inclusion of some extra explanatory variables, which may be of interest for understanding differences in conditionality. First, there is people's attitudes towards immigrants. We expect that the more negative this attitude is, the more people may want immigrants to be treated less generously than other groups of needy people, and the more conditional they will turn out on our measure. Second, we would like to explore the effect of trust. Our data allow us to measure three types of trust: people's interpersonal trust in other people, people's trust in (welfare) state institutions, and people's trust in democracy as an overarching political system. Our hypothesis is that people with less trust will be more conditional, because they could regard

a strict and selective welfare system as a means to control and regulate untrustworthy people (who would otherwise misuse welfare), as well as untrustworthy politicians and state (which would otherwise respond too generously to lobby and voter pressure). Third, religion will be included. Regarding the effect of religion on welfare opinions and solidarity there are the issues of being religious or not, of denomination and of church attendance. It is often found that religious, Christian people are more solidaristic towards needy people than non-religious persons (because of the Christian dogma about 'loving thy neighbour') (Hoge and Yang, 1994; Bekkers, 2003); that Protestants are more solidaristic than Catholics (Regnerus et al., 1998; Bekkers, 2003); and that, within the group of religious people, frequent church-goers are more solidaristic than people who attend church less frequently, because they would be more subjected to peer group pressure (Arts et al., 2003; Bekkers, 2003). Our data allow us to include these variables, and to see what their relative effect is. Our hypothesis is that religious people and frequent church-goers will be less conditional. We explore differences between Catholics, Protestants, and people with other religions. Fourth, we include meritocracy as a possible determinant of people's conditionality. We expect that people who are more strongly in favour of a society which rewards those with highest merits most will be more conditional.

The Dutch study did not find an effect of gender on conditionality, but we shall include the variable here. Neither were effects found of people's work status (employed, on benefit, pensioner, other) and people's income level on their conditionality. This corroborated other findings in welfare opinion studies and was seen as fitting the idea of a fading-away of class boundaries, as well as the idea that the dynamics of employment and unemployment might mean that there is no large attitudinal difference to be expected between unemployed and employed people. Over time there is a substantial movement of people entering and leaving these groups (Walker, 1994; Leisering and Walker, 1998). In our analysis here, we will include income and work status, and see whether in a wider European context they lack an effect as well. Regarding values and attitudes, the Dutch study found no effect of work ethic, nor of equality ethic. Apparently, Dutch people's condi-

tionality regarding supporting needy people does not depend on their work ethic, nor on whether they favour social equality less or more. However, these findings could be particular to the Dutch, who are a European people with a high work ethic and strong egalitarian attitudes. We include both types of ethic in our analysis and see whether this interpretation of Dutch exceptionalism will hold.

In addition to personal characteristics, we will explore the influence of some contextual factors on people's conditionality. Such factors are often overlooked in welfare opinion research, but they may be important (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; van Oorschot and Arts, 2005). The leading question here is whether what kind of welfare state Europeans live in makes a difference. In Europe there are quantitative differences in welfare states in terms of welfare spending (relative to GDP), and qualitative differences, in terms of regime types. We include both in our analysis. The hypotheses are difficult to specify, because they depend on what one assumes influences people's opinions. If people in higher-spending welfare states would want their fiscal burden to be relieved, one would expect higher conditionality among them. However, lesser conditionality could be expected if high spending reflects a national culture of solidarity towards the needy, or on the contrary, popular deservingness attitudes reflect national policies. Regarding regime type, a likely hypothesis could be that the public's average level of conditionality is higher in more residual welfare states, like those of the liberal and Central and Eastern European type. However, in a European context one should be wary of simply including welfare state characteristics as variables in the analyses. One has to control for other variables, such as wealth and religious composition, because they tend to co-vary with welfare-state characteristics, especially on a North–South axis. For instance, high welfare spending in the Scandinavian countries goes hand in hand with a relatively high level of wealth, a relatively small income inequality and a large majority of Protestants in the population. Low welfare spending in the Mediterranean countries goes together with a lower level of wealth, a larger income inequality and, with the exception of Greece, a Catholic majority (see for details van Oorschot and Arts, 2005).



## Data and methods

### Data

Our data source is the 1999/2000 round of the European Values Study (EVS) survey that provides unique data from national representative samples of almost all European societies. The EVS questionnaire contains standardized cross-national measures of people's attitudes and beliefs in a broad range of important societal domains. The survey was fielded in 33 countries throughout Europe ([www.europeanvalues.nl](http://www.europeanvalues.nl)). We confine our analysis to those 23 countries for which we have adequate data at the time of analyses: France, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovenia. The country samples consisted of at least one thousand and at most two thousand respondents each. Our pooled dataset contains 28,894 cases.

### Dependent variables

Our central dependent variables consist of respondents' informal solidarity towards four groups of needy people, operationalized by the EVS survey question:

To what extent do you feel concerned about the living conditions of:

- elderly people in your country
- unemployed people in your country
- immigrants in your country
- sick and disabled people in your country?

(1 = not at all, 2 = not so much, 3 = to a certain extent, 4 = much, 5 = very much)

Our assumption is that respondents' felt concern reflects their perception of the deservingness of the four groups involved. The rank order of felt concern thus reflects the rank order of deservingness.

An alternative interpretation is that the expressed concern reflects the degree to which people perceive the living conditions of Group A as problematic, which problem awareness may be related to the perceived or actual level of social protection for Group A offered by the state. This 'problem awareness' interpretation assumes that if in a country the social protection of Group A is less than that for other

groups, more people will claim to be (more) concerned with the living conditions of Group A relative to the other groups, and Group A will get a higher score on the variable. However, what this study will show is that this is not the case: informal solidarity is consistently highest towards elderly people and sick and disabled people (which are the groups all European welfare states offer better protection to) than to the groups of unemployed and immigrants. The degree of conditionality is measured by the sum of absolute differences between respondents' answers to the four questions above. People who are concerned with the living conditions of all four groups equally (either at a high, or at a low level), have a zero score on conditionality. If people's solidarity differs for the groups concerned, their conditionality score is some figure above zero. The higher the score, the more conditional people are, that is, the more they differentiate their solidarity among the needy groups. The conditionality variable thus constructed has a range of 0 to 16, a mean of 4.8 and a standard deviation of 3.5.

### Independent variables

#### Personal characteristics

Gender is a dummy variable (0 = male, 1 = female); age is measured in years passed since birth; level of education is measured by the highest level of education reached (8 categories); household income is measured by a self-rating in the decile categories of a net household income scale; political stance is measured through self-placement on a 10-point left-right scale; religion is indicated by denomination (Catholic, Protestant/Evangelical, other – Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, none) – and frequency of church attendance; work status distinguishes between employed, retired, housewife, unemployed, other. Meritocracy is measured by people's opinion on whether, for having a just society, it is important to recognize people on their merits. Egalitarianism is measured by their opinion on whether it is important for society that big income inequalities between citizens be eliminated. Work ethic is measured by a summative scale of five items which tap people's attitudes towards the importance of work for their personal lives and for society (alpha reliability = .70). Welfare sentiment is measured by three separate items: whether individuals should be more responsible for providing for

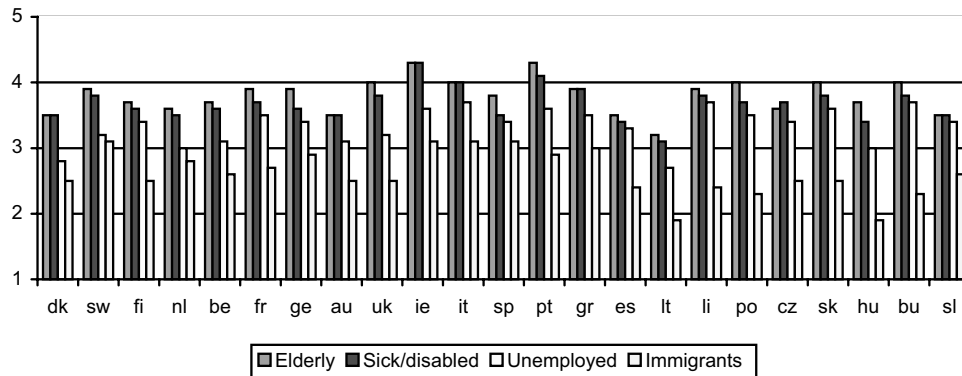


Figure 1 Informal solidarity (national averages)

themselves, or whether the state should take more responsibility (1–10 scale); whether unemployed people should have to take any job or should be able to refuse a job they do not want (1–10 scale); and, whether they feel that people who do not work become lazy (1–5 scale). Interpersonal trust is measured as respondents' answers to the question: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?' (no–yes). Institutional trust is measured by a summative scale measuring people's confidence in the (welfare) state institutions of 'the police', 'the social security system', 'the health-care system', 'parliament', 'the civil service' 'the justice system' (alpha reliability = .80). Trust in democracy is measured by a summative scale on people's opinions on the economic effects of democracy, its effectiveness in maintaining order, its decisiveness and its overall quality relative to other political systems (alpha reliability = .79). Attitudes towards immigrants are measured, first, by a measure of feelings towards immigrants combining answers to the questions of whether people would not like to have immigrants as neighbours and whether they agree that in scarce times employers should give priority to nationals over immigrants. A second measure is whether people would like to restrict the inflow of new immigrants strongly, or not at all.

#### Country characteristics

We will use welfare regime type and welfare effort as indicators for welfare-state characteristics. Concerning Western European countries, welfare

regime type is measured with a modified Esping-Andersen typology which includes the four ideal types of the social-democratic Scandinavian, the liberal Anglo-Saxon, the conservative-corporatist Continental and the budding Mediterranean welfare regimes (Arts and Gelissen, 2002). To this we add a group of former communist Eastern and Central European countries.<sup>6</sup> Welfare effort is measured by a country's total social spending as a percentage of GDP. Social spending includes expenditure on old-age cash benefits, disability, sickness, occupational injury and disease benefits, unemployment cash benefits and active labour-market programmes, and health. To average out some of the difference in GDP development between countries, which has a direct effect on the welfare effort percentage, we took the arithmetic means of welfare effort over a certain period. For the Western European countries this period ranges from 1990 to 1998, and data are from the OECD Social Expenditure Database 2001. For the Eastern and Central European countries data are less readily available, which is why we had to confine ourselves to the averaging out of the figures for 1996 and 1998, which we obtained from GVG (2002). The OECD data and the GVG data have been calculated in different ways, which is why they are not directly comparable. However, they still reflect that social spending is much less in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe than in Western European countries. We measure a country's level of wealth by its 1994–99 average GDP relative to the yearly EU15 index in PPS (Purchasing Power Standards) (source: Eurostat

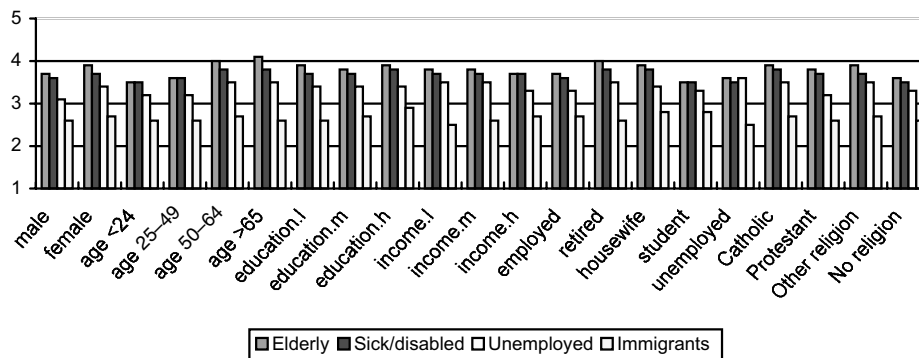


Figure 2 Informal solidarity (average scores)

website, 12.9.2003). Unemployment rates are for 1998 (source: Human Development Report 2000: 241). Religious composition is measured by the percentage of respondents reporting to be Protestant, Catholic, other, or 'none'.

## Results

### *Deservingness rank order by country and social categories*

Our hypothesis was that the public would be most solidaristic towards elderly people, closely followed by sick and disabled people, next there would be the solidarity towards unemployed people, and solidarity towards immigrants would be lowest. As Figure 1 shows, this is exactly what is found in 17 of our 23 European countries. In all six other countries (Denmark, Austria, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Slovenia) the difference with the universal rank order is that the solidarity towards elderly and to sick and disabled people is at an equally high level. This is not a substantial, but a marginal deviance from the general pattern.

Between the countries there is quite some variation in the relative positions of the groups of needy people. In some countries, in the highly developed welfare states of Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, solidarity mainly seems to be differentiated along two groups: elderly, sick and disabled people on the one hand, and unemployed people and immigrants on the other. But in most other Western and Southern European countries elderly, sick and disabled still score quite close, but

there are larger differences between the solidarity towards unemployed people and immigrants. A typical pattern for the Central and Eastern European countries seems to be that the scale distance between immigrants and the other groups is relatively large, while the distances among the other three needy groups are relatively small. How these differences can be explained is uncertain. One could speculate that where national resources for social protection are low, as is the case in the Central and Eastern European countries, people tend to differentiate more strongly along the criterion of identity in terms of 'us' versus 'them' (in order to preserve the little there is for 'ourselves'), while in a context of affluence people tend to differentiate more along lines of incapacity, i.e. the control criterion.

The fact that the solidarity rank order is basically the same for all European countries indicates that the underlying logic of deservingness has deep roots. This is supported by our findings regarding the rank ordering by different social categories. Figure 2 shows that the deservingness rank order is the same among men and women, among different categories of age, educational level and income, among people with different social positions, and among people from different religious denominations. These findings are in line with Taylor-Gooby (1985a), who found no differences between the opinions of various categories of UK citizens on how they favoured benefits for pensioners, disabled people, widow's, unemployed people and lone parents. However, in our data there is one exception. Unemployed people's solidarity towards unemployed people is a bit higher than their solidarity towards disabled people.

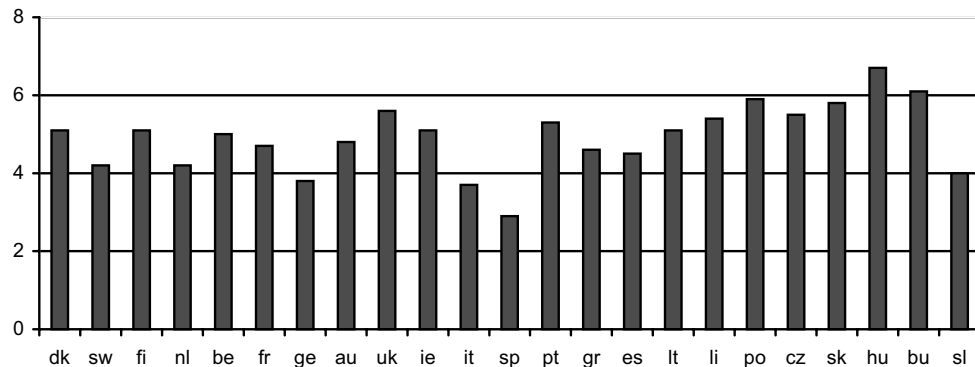


Figure 3 Conditional solidarity by country (national average)

#### *Conditionality of solidarity: country level*

Between countries, the degree to which people make a difference between the deservingness of needy groups varies more than the deservingness rank order. Figure 3 shows that national averages in conditionality vary between 2.9 in Spain and 6.7 in Hungary. The figure does not show clear interpretable patterns, but it seems that conditionality is on average somewhat higher in the Central and Eastern European countries, except for Slovenia. This is related to the fact that in these countries there is a larger difference between the perceived deservingness of immigrants and that of other groups of needy people.

How national differences in conditionality can be explained is a question to which there are no answers yet to be found in the literature. To explore possible factors we analysed the bi-variate correlations between aggregate conditionality and the national averages of our independent variables. (Due to the small number of countries multi-variate analyses are not meaningful.) The results in Table 1 show that conditionality tends to be higher among the populations of countries that are poorer, where unemployment is lower, where there is a stronger work ethic, a more negative attitude towards immigrants, less interpersonal trust, less trust in democracy, and in countries where people tend to favour a meritocratic society more strongly.

The fact that conditionality is higher in poorer countries might point to a 'national burden' or 'fiscal burden' effect, which we found to play a role

in another study on the European public's solidarity towards needy groups (van Oorschot et al., 2005; see also Hills, 2002). In general terms, the effect holds that people's support for welfare programmes or needy groups is lower when the (perceived) related welfare costs are, or could be, higher. In the present case one could imagine that in poorer countries people are more conditional because they perceive more unconditional support for needy groups as less affordable and viable than people in richer countries. Based on the national burden effect one would expect that conditionality is higher in countries with higher unemployment, but the opposite is the case. A possible explanation could be that here the image of target groups, and underlying deservingness perceptions, play a role. As we pointed out earlier, the popular image of unemployed people tends to be more positive when unemployment is high, leading to lesser conditionality. In line with this reasoning is the fact, shown in Table 1, that a more negative image of immigrants is associated with a higher level of conditionality in a country's population. The findings regarding work ethic, trust and meritocracy reflect the relationships we predicted at the individual level. Whether they will show up in our individual level analyses remains to be seen.

As for welfare state characteristics our findings point to little or no differences in conditionality at the aggregate level. Table 1 shows that in the populations of countries with a higher level of social spending conditionality tends to be a bit higher, but the relationship is not statistically significant.

**Table 1** Pearson correlations of country characteristics with conditional solidarity (aggregate level, correlations between national averages)

	<i>Conditionality of solidarity</i>
<b>Composition</b>	
Age	.188
Educational level	.056
<b>Structure</b>	
Wealth (GDP)	-.453 <sup>c</sup>
Welfare spending (as % GDP)	-.301
Income inequality	-.041
Unemployment rate	-.363 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Culture</b>	
Work ethic	.364 <sup>a</sup>
Attitude towards immigrants	-.531 <sup>b</sup>
Interpersonal trust	-.357 <sup>a</sup>
Trust in (welfare) state institutions	-.272
Trust in democracy	-.382 <sup>b</sup>
Welfare responsibility	.055
Welfare rights and duties	.236
No work makes lazy	.297
Political stance (Left-Right)	.292
Percentage Catholics	-.124
Percentage Protestants	.005
Frequency of church attendance	-.014
Meritocratism	.484 <sup>c</sup>
Egalitarianism	.155

Note: <sup>a</sup>  $p < .01$  <sup>b</sup>  $p < .05$  <sup>c</sup>  $p < .1$ .

**Table 2** Conditionality of solidarity by regime type

<i>Welfare regime type</i>	<i>Mean conditionality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Scandinavian	4.7822	3	.54409
Continental	4.5343	5	.49262
Anglo-Saxon	5.3219	2	.35693
Southern European	4.1114	4	1.03745
Central and Eastern European	5.4377	9	.79814
Total	4.9151	23	.85720

**Notes:**

Between groups sum of squares: 6.150.

Within groups: 10.015.

F: 2.763.

Sign: .059.

Regarding regime type, our findings in Table 2 show that differences in national conditionality levels are very small, but as expected, tend to be higher in the more residual Anglo-Saxon and Central and Eastern European welfare states. But again, the differences are not statistically significant, and the variance within the types is larger than the variance between the types. For the time

being, our conclusion is that for national levels of conditionality welfare state characteristics do not play a decisive role. It could be that on a global, instead of only on a European scale, the degree and character of countries' 'welfare stateness' are important factors, but testing this would require data from many more countries than are available to us now.

### *Conditionality of solidarity: individual level*

To analyse why some people's solidarity towards needy groups is more conditional than that of others, we carried out regression analyses, the results of which are shown in Table 3. Model 1 analyses the effects of personal characteristics in the pooled dataset of all European countries; in model 2, country characteristics are added. A first important point to make is that the directions and sizes of the effects of all personal characteristics do not essentially differ between both models (except for one, the effect of Protestantism, which we will discuss shortly.) This means that the pattern of explanatory personal variables is to a large extent equal all over Europe. Irrespective of where in Europe people live, or in what kind of country or welfare state, the effects of socio-demographic variables, as well as of the ideological and attitudinal variables we analysed, are to a large extent the same. (This was confirmed by additional analyses of model 1 for four regions separately: North, West, South, and Central and East of Europe.)

What then is the common pattern? Regarding people's socio-demographic characteristics Table 3 shows that conditionality is a bit higher among women, and is higher among older people, and among people with less education. There is no difference between employed or unemployed people, or between people with higher or lower incomes. Except for gender, these results are the same as those of an earlier study with Dutch opinion data (van Oorschot, 2000). As suggested earlier, older people and people with less education can be seen as being in more risky social positions, and might therefore be more critical towards allocating support which they themselves might need in future. In addition to this self-interest-related argument of competition, images of needy groups may play a role. It is often found that those in lower socio-economic positions have more negative views of, e.g. of unemployed people and, people on benefit (Golding and Middleton, 1982; Schneider and Ingram, 1993), which might lead to stronger conditionality. That unemployed people do not differ in conditionality from employed people might have to do with the fact that, due to the dynamics of entering and leaving either category, the attitudinal differences between the two are not that large generally. In case of income, the lack of an effect might be the

outcome of two counteracting trends. On the one hand, assuming that it is easier to be unconditional when having larger resources, people with higher incomes could be expected to be less conditional. On the other hand, however, if richer people regard social protection as being less in their strictly personal interest, they would like to contribute less, and as a result be in favour of a more restrictive, conditional approach towards other people's neediness.

Regarding ideological characteristics, Table 3 shows that, as in the Dutch study, rightist people are more conditional, and people's work ethic makes no difference. Apparently, the effect of left-right political stance is not important for peoples' attitudes towards equality, since egalitarianism has an independent effect. People who are more in favour of social equality are less conditional, regardless of whether they are more leftist or rightist. The fact that work ethic and meritocracy have no effect is harder to understand. One would expect that people with a stronger work ethic and who favour society rewarding merit, would be more strict and conditional towards needy people (for instance, because they could have more doubts about whether needy people try hard enough to provide for themselves). Additional analyses indicated that both variables are positively correlated with conditionality bi-variately. Apparently, these relations are suppressed by other variables in the multi-variate models. In any case, there is no Dutch exceptionalism involved here, as we suggested earlier.

Regarding attitudinal characteristics, Table 3 shows rather strong effects. As expected, people with more negative attitudes towards state welfare, welfare dependency and welfare dependants are more conditional. The same is found for people with less trust in others, in (welfare) state institutions, and in democracy. Particularly strong are the negative effects of attitudes towards immigrants. Clearly, leaving out immigrants in our conditionality scale would lead to different results, but we have not opted for this, since to an increasing degree populations of immigrants are among the core poverty groups of poor in European countries.

With regard to variables of religion, Table 3 shows that, against expectation, people with no religion are not more conditional than people who say they belong to the Catholic, Protestant or other

Table 3 Factors explaining European people's conditionality of solidarity

	Europe <i>Model 1</i>	Europe <i>Model 2</i>
Gender (male–female)	.022	.020
Age	.040	.045
Educational level	–.034	–.036
Household income	ns	ns
<b>Work status</b>		
– retired	.052	.042
– housewife	ns	ns
– student	ns	ns
– unemployed	ns	ns
– other	ns	ns
(ref. cat. = employed)		
<b>Religion</b>		
– Catholic	ns	ns
– Protestant	.039	ns
– other	ns	ns
(ref. cat. = none)		
<b>Church attendance</b>	ns	–.022
Political stance (Left–Right)	.042	.039
Meritocratism	ns	ns
Egalitarianism	–.027	–.019
Work ethic	ns	ns
<b>Welfare sentiment</b>		
– responsibility (individual–state)	.024	.028
– unemployed accept any job (no–yes)	.028	.038
– no work makes lazy (no–yes)	.031	.040
<b>Trust</b>		
– interpersonal trust	–.048	–.052
– trust in institutions	–.055	–.063
– trust in democracy	–.090	–.076
<b>Attitude to immigrants</b>		
– feelings (negative–positive)	–.139	–.142
– inflow immigrants ok? (no–yes)	–.155	–.143
<b>Wealth</b>		–.201
<b>Welfare regime</b>		
– Scandinavian		.081
– Continental		–.058
– Southern		–.196
– East-Central European		–.238
(ref. cat. = Anglo-Saxon)		
<b>Welfare effort</b>		.081
% Protestants		–.130
Unemployment rate		–.094
Average work ethic		ns
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.126	.152

Notes:

p &lt; .05; ns = not significant.

churches. What was expected, and what is found to be the case, is that people who attend church more frequently are less conditional. Interesting to note is that the higher conditionality of Protestants in model 1 disappears in model 2. This suggests that the effect in model 1 reflects differences between European regions and countries, rather than between individuals. Where, as we explained earlier, it is usually found that Protestants are more solidaristic toward needy groups, we find that they make distinctions between needy groups to the same degree as Catholics.

The results of model 2, where country characteristics are included, show that European people's conditionality of solidarity does depend on where they live. Focusing on welfare state characteristics first, Table 3 shows that there is a difference between people living in different types of welfare state, and that there is an independent effect of the degree of social spending. Compared to living in the UK and Ireland, which fall under the Anglo-Saxon regime type, living in the Scandinavian welfare states makes people a bit more conditional, while living in the Continental welfare states makes them a bit less conditional. However, living in the Southern, and especially in the Eastern and Central European welfare states, has the strongest diminishing effect on conditionality. These results clearly do not reflect the rank ordering of national levels of conditionality shown in Table 2, the reason simply being that here other factors are controlled for. As we assumed, holding constant for other country variables is necessary to get an idea of the direct effects of regime type. Independently of regime type, the table shows that social spending has a positive effect on conditionality. That is, people who live in high-spending welfare states tend to be more conditional. This effect runs counter to the regime effect, but it is relatively small. Of the other factors, a country's wealth is most influential. Living in a more wealthy European country makes people less conditional towards supporting needy groups in society. Apparently, living in a more affluent context makes people more easygoing when it comes to sharing with those who are less fortunate. A second relatively strong effect is that living in a country where Protestantism plays a larger role makes people less conditional. Finally, a higher unemployment rate is associated with lower conditionality and a country's average work ethic has no effect.

At this stage, which is essentially exploratory, it is rather difficult to interpret these findings. As for regime types, it is hard to tell what it is exactly that accounts for the effects found. The types differ on various aspects, and the qualitative difference between types may not be that decisive when a broad conception of welfare (including benefits, services, housing, health, etc.) is considered (e.g. the UK is of the Anglo-Saxon type with regard to benefits, but it has a social-democratic character regarding health provision). The effects certainly do not reflect differences in wealth or social spending, because these factors are controlled for. The divide seems to lie basically between the welfare states of the North and the West of Europe on the one hand, and those of the South, the East and Central Europe on the other. Seen like this, it might be that regime type's effect on people's conditionality stems from people's feeling of whether one can trust in state welfare generally, or not. If one does, it might be easier to be conditional towards needy groups, since one could trust that they may be taken care of by the state sometime anyway. The effect of wealth, which would make people more easygoing on conditionality, runs counter to such a welfare state effect, since the more encompassing welfare states are present in the richer countries of Europe. The fact that higher social spending makes people more reserved may reflect worries about national or fiscal burden. The effect of unemployment rate may be explained, as we discussed earlier, by its effects on the image of target groups and the underlying perceptions of the deservingness of unemployed people. As regards Protestantism, Table 3 shows that, in a European context, it does not matter for people's conditionality whether they themselves are Protestant or not, but that it does matter whether they live in a country where there is a weaker or stronger Protestant culture. The stronger the Protestant culture, the less conditional people are. This is not based on a stronger work-ethic, since this variable is controlled for, both at individual and aggregate level.

## Conclusions and discussion

This article aimed at contributing to an understanding of the popular cultural context of welfare rationing by examining European public perceptions of the relative deservingness of four different



needy groups, as well as variations in conditionality among Europeans. Based on data from the 1999/2000 European Values Study survey we found as a common pattern for all 23 European countries involved that informal solidarity is highest towards elderly people, closely followed by sick and disabled people, next there is the solidarity towards unemployed people, and solidarity towards immigrants is lowest. This pattern is exactly what was expected from earlier empirical studies on popular support for types of welfare schemes, on popular images of target groups, and on popular deservingness criteria. Between countries we found some variation in the relative positions of the groups of needy people. We speculated that in countries where national resources for social protection are low, as is the case in the Central and Eastern European countries, people tend to differentiate more strongly along the deservingness criterion of identity in terms of 'us' versus 'them' (in order to preserve the little there is for 'ourselves'), while in a context of affluence, such as in the Netherlands and in the Scandinavian countries, people tend to differentiate more along lines of incapacity, that is, the deservingness criterion of control. The fact that the solidarity rank order is basically the same for all European countries indicates that the underlying logic of deservingness has deep roots in popular welfare culture. This was supported by our finding that the deservingness rank order is the same among men and women, among different categories of age, educational level and income, among people with different social positions, and among people from different religious denominations.

Clearly, regarding the rank ordering, the results of our study confirm those of other studies. However, our study is among the very first to pay explicit attention to the conditionality of solidarity, that is, the degree to which people make a distinction in their solidarity towards different groups of needy people. We explored conditionality and its covariates at the aggregate and at the individual level.

At the aggregate level there is variation in national levels of conditionality, which is associated bi-variately with various factors. Average conditionality is higher, for instance, in the poorer countries of Europe (reflecting perhaps a 'national burden' effect); in countries with lower unemployment (possibly reflecting a more negative image of unemployed people); where people put less trust in

other people, and in (welfare) state institutions (perhaps reflecting worries about overuse and over-expenditure); and where immigrants are looked upon more negatively. The two important welfare-state characteristics of regime type and degree of social spending are not significantly related to national levels of conditionality. However, the number of 23 countries is too small to carry out any deeper multi-variate analyses at the aggregate level.

At the individual level, where we analysed the factors which influence why some people are more conditional in their solidarity towards needy groups than others, we found that the directions and sizes of the effects do not essentially differ between countries and regions of Europe. In other words, the pattern of explanatory personal variables is to a large extent equal all over Europe. This is another indication that popular deservingness thinking has deep roots. For socio-demographic and socio-economic variables we found that conditionality is a bit higher among women, higher among older people, and among people with lesser education. There is no difference between employed or unemployed people, or between people with higher or lower income. Except for gender, these results are the same as those of an earlier study on conditionality with Dutch opinion data. Regarding ideological characteristics, it showed that, as in the Dutch study, right-wing people are more conditional, while people's work ethic makes no difference. Additionally, it was found that people who are more in favour of social equality are less conditional, regardless of whether they are more left-wing or right-wing. Regarding attitudinal characteristics, it showed that people with more negative attitudes towards state welfare, welfare dependency and welfare dependants are more conditional. The same is found for people with less trust in others, in (welfare) state institutions, and in democracy. Particularly strong are the negative effects of attitudes towards immigrants. Finally, as in studies on solidarity and donation behaviour, religion played a role. The issue is not whether people say they are religious or not, or what denomination they belong to, but it is church attendance which makes a difference: people who attend church more frequently are less conditional in their solidarity towards needy groups.

In addition to people's personal characteristics, it is of importance in what kind of country they

live. People living in the Southern, Central and Eastern European welfare states tend to be less conditional, which is further supported by these countries' lower social spending, but which is counteracted by the fact that these countries are less wealthy than their Western and Northern counterparts, and that the proportion of Protestants among their populations is (very) low. In addition, people living in countries with higher unemployment tend to be less conditional.

In the text we speculated on some meaningful interpretations of our results regarding conditionality, but we would like to stress that they need further testing in future research, since our study is only one among two on the issue of conditionality which we know of. The fact that some of our results (e.g. regarding the effect of age and educational level, and the absence of effects of income and work status) are the same as in a previous Dutch study, as well as the fact that the overall pattern of influences from personal variables is largely the same across Europe, makes us believe that we have found some basic elements of a European popular culture relevant to welfare rationing. To this can be added our findings concerning European uniformity regarding the deservingness rank ordering of groups of needy people.

What is noteworthy in both the findings on rank order and on conditionality is the role played by the immigration factor. Immigrant needy people are at the bottom of the deservingness rank order, and negative views on immigrants and their numbers are associated with higher conditionality of support. This may be of significance for the popular support of European welfare states in future. One important question in this respect is whether, and to what degree, immigrants will take in a position as underserving poor, comparable to the position of black people in the USA. Gilens (1999), but also others, showed that the reluctance of the American public to legitimize welfare policies is strongly based on an 'Us versus Them' mechanism, that is, on the public's negative images of black people, and the common perception that welfare recipients are mostly black. In Europe there is presently a strong debate on the question of whether welfare benefits and services should be provided to immigrants to the same degree and on the same conditions as to non-immigrants (e.g. Boeri et al., 2002) In the Netherlands, for instance, there is talk of the need for a 'migra-

tion proof' welfare state (Entzinger and Van der Meer, 2004). There may be a risk that this kind of discussion and ensuing policy measures ultimately puts ever more pressure on the solidarity towards immigrants, since it stimulates thinking in terms of 'Us versus Them'. Measures might easily create poverty traps from which immigrants would have difficulty escaping, which in turn might enforce negative public images about immigrants. Going even further, as Alesina and Glaeser (2004) speculate, if in Europe welfare should become negatively associated with 'immigrants', as it is with 'blacks' in the USA, the legitimacy of the total welfare system might be affected, with, as a likely longer-term outcome, a reduction of its level of generosity. In our view, the future legitimacy of state welfare in European countries does not revolve solely around the deservingness criterion of identity. There is also a trend visible in Europe related to the criterion of control. That is, in neo-liberal and communitarian thinking about welfare, which is popular among policy elites at European and national levels, individual responsibility of citizens is strongly stressed (George, 1996; Taylor-Gooby, 1997; Forma, 1999; Schmidt, 2000). Citizens are nowadays even more expected to be active and to provide for themselves. This is a message which in our view may quite easily form a basis for the general idea that apparently those who are in need do not take up their responsibility well, and can therefore be blamed for their neediness. If blamed, there is no deserving of support, and no need for a comprehensive welfare state. Here also, the future legitimacy and character of the European welfare states might be recognized in the present-day US welfare state.

Finally, and open for discussion, there is the interesting question of why deservingness patterns are the same all over Europe, that is, why deservingness opinions and attitudes are apparently so deeply rooted in popular culture. Our speculation is that this is an example of a cultural pattern which finds its origin in its functionality for the survival of social groups. The deservingness criterion of identity protects the group against burdensome support claims from outside the group, while the criterion of control protects against such claims from inside the group. If true, the deservingness rank order should also be found in all other non-European countries.

## Notes

- 1 Please note that the analysis of determinants does not regard people's informal solidarity towards any of the four groups separately. This kind of analysis is presented in van Oorschot and Arts (2005).
- 2 These popular deservingness criteria for needy social groups resemble quite closely the criteria found in social-psychological studies on the conditions under which individuals are perceived to deserve certain outcomes. For instance, Feather's (1974) influential model says that a person's judgement of the deservingness of the outcome of another's actions depends on: (1) the person's perception of the other's personal responsibility for the outcome; (2) the person's subjective values assigned to actions and outcomes (positive actions deserve positive outcomes, negative actions deserve negative outcomes); (3) the other's likeability; (4) whether the other is a member of the person's in-group.
- 3 In line with this, studies of popular explanations of poverty yield consistently that people who explain poverty in individualistic terms tend to be less in favour of, or more strongly against, socialsecurity spending, and social protection policies, than people who explain it in societal terms (Alston and Dean, 1972; Feather, 1974; Furnham, 1982; Kluegel et al., 1995; van Oorschot and Halman, 2000). Or, as Kluegel and Smith (1986: 164) put it briefly: 'Anti-welfare sentiment seems to be linked to a "victim blaming" view of the poor as lazy, lacking thrift and good morals, etc.'
- 4 For instance, this may be the case with pensions: usually national pension schemes are universal in character, they are targeted at a group towards which no particular negative public images exist, being of pensionable age is not regarded as something people can be blamed for, the neediness of elderly people is rarely doubted, they are seen as a category of people who have delivered their contribution to society, and they are seen as belonging to 'us', since they are our parents and grandparents and we ourselves will eventually become pensioners. Interrelatedness of factors also exists in the case of social assistance: this regards means-tested schemes, usually aimed at the poorest people, some of whom are usually regarded as scroungers, as lazy, as immoral. This casts doubts about their being personally responsible for being needy, or about being needy at all. The poor, then, are mostly not seen as 'people like us'.
- 5 In theoretical work on pro-social behaviour, altruism and welfare support, there is a broad consensus that both types of factor play a role (Elster, 1990; Lindenberg, 1990; Mansbridge, 1990; Therborn, 1991; Taylor-Gooby, 1998; Chong et al., 2001; Kangas, 2002). Their simultaneous influence is often found in empirical studies on attitudes and opinions regarding equality, solidarity and social justice in a welfare-state context (Hasenfeld and Rafferty, 1989; Groskind, 1994; Pettersen, 2001; van Oorschot, 2002; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003).

## References

- Alesina, A. and Glaeser, E. (2004) *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: a World of Difference*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Alston, J. P. and Dean, K. I. (1972) 'Socioeconomic Factors Associated with Attitudes Toward Welfare Recipients and the Causes of Poverty', *Social Service Review* 46 (1): 13–22.
- Appelbaum, L. (2001) 'The Influence of Perceived Deservingness on Policy Decisions Regarding Aid to the Poor', *Political Psychology* 22 (3): 419–42.
- Appelbaum, L. (2002) 'Who Deserves Help? Opinions About the Deservingness of Different Groups Living in Germany to Receive Aid', *Social Justice Research* 15 (3): 201–25.
- Arts, W. and Gelissen, J. (2002) 'Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism or More? A State-of-the-art Report', *Journal of European Social Policy* 12 (2): 137–58.
- Arts, W., Halman, L. and van Oorschot, W. (2003) 'The Welfare State: Villain or Hero of the Piece?', in W. Arts, J. Hageaars and L. Halman (eds) *The Cultural Diversity of European Unity*. Leiden: Brill.
- Baldwin, P. (1990) *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare States, 1875–1975*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barr, N. (1992) 'Economic Theory and the Welfare State: a Survey and Interpretation', *Journal of Economic Literature* 30: 741–803.
- Bekkers, R. (2003) 'De bijdragen der kerckelijken', in T. Schuyt (ed.) *Geven in Nederland 2003*, pp. 141–72. Houten: Bohn Stafleu van Logum.
- Bendix Jensen, J. (2004) *Targeting Social Security: Who Gets What, Why? An Analysis of Measures that Target Danish and British Unemployment Benefits, Social Assistance, Retirement Pension and Family Allowances, 1990–2002*. Aalborg: Aalborg University.
- Blekesaune, M. and Quadagno, J. (2003) 'Public Attitudes toward Welfare State Politics: a Comparative Analysis of 24 Nations', paper presented at the First Annual Conference of ESPAnet (Nov.), Copenhagen.
- Boeri, T., Hanson, G. and McCormick, B. (eds) (2002) *Immigration Policy and the Welfare System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burstein, P. (1998) 'Bringing the Public Back In: Should Sociologists Consider the Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy?', *Social Forces* 77 (1): 27–62.
- Chamberlayne, P., Cooper, A., Freeman, R. and Rustin, M. (1999) *Welfare and Culture in Europe: Towards a New Paradigm in Social Policy*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Chong, D., Citrin, J. and Conley, P. (2001) 'When Self-interest Matters', *Political Psychology* 22 (3): 541–70.
- Coleman, J. (1982) 'Income Testing and Social Cohesion', in I. Garfinkel (ed.) *Income Tested Transfer Programs: the Case For and Against*. New York: Academic Press.
- Cook, F. L. (1979) *Who Should be Helped: Public Support for Social Services*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Cook, F. L. and Barrett, E. (1992) *Support for the American Welfare State*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Coughlin, R. (1980) *Ideology, Public Opinion and Welfare Policy: Attitudes towards Taxes and Spending in Industrial Societies*. Berkely: Institute of International Studies, University of California.
- Deacon, A. (2002) *Perspectives on Welfare*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Debusscher, M. and Elchardus, M. (2003) *Het draagvlak van de solidariteit: Deelrapport 4: De steun voor de sociale zekerheid*. Brussels: Vrije Universiteit Brussel.
- De Swaan, A. (1988) *In Care of the State: State Formation and Collectivization of Health Care, Education and Welfare in Europe and America in the Modern Era*. Oxford: The Polity Press.
- Elster, J. (1990) 'Selfishness and Altruism', in J. Mansbridge (ed.) *Beyond Self-interest*, pp. 44–52. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Entzinger, H. and Van der Meer, J. (eds) (2004) *Grenzeloze solidariteit: naar een migratiebestendige verzorgingsstaat*. Amsterdam: De Balie.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (ed.) (1996) *Welfare States in Transition: National Adaptations in Global Economies*. London: Sage.
- Ester, P. and Dekker, P. (1986) Werkloosheid en beeldvorming: werkloosheidsverwachtingen, subjective welvaartsprognose en stereotypering van werklozen, *Tijdschrift voor Arbeidsvraagstukken* 2 (3): 65–75.
- Feagin, J. (1975) *Subordinating the Poor: Welfare and American Beliefs*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Feather, N. T. (1974) 'Explanations of Poverty in Australian and American Samples', *Australian Journal of Psychology* 26 (3): 199–216.
- Forma, P. (1997) 'The Rational Legitimacy of the Welfare State: Popular Support for Ten Income Transfer Schemes in Finland', *Policy and Politics*, 25(3), 235–49.
- Forma, P. (1999) 'Welfare State Opinions among Citizens, MP-candidates and Elites: Evidence from Finland', in S. Svallfors and P. Taylor-Gooby (eds) *The End of the Welfare State? Responses to State Retrenchment*, pp. 87–105. London: Routledge.
- Forma, P. and Kangas, O. (1997) 'Need, Citizenship or Merit: Public Opinion on Pension Policy in Australia, Finland and Poland', in S. Svallfors and P. Taylor-Gooby (eds) *The End of the Welfare State? Responses to State Retrenchment*, pp. 161–89. London: Routledge.
- Furaker, B. and Blomsterberg, M. (2002) 'Attitudes towards the Unemployed: an Analysis of Swedish Survey Data', paper presented at the COST13 working group II meeting (May/June), Florence.
- Furnham, A. (1982) 'Explanations for Unemployment in Britain', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 12 (4): 335–52.
- Gallie, D. and Paugam, S. (2002) *Social Precarity and Social Integration*. Brussels: European Commission.
- George, V. (1996) 'Elite Opinion in Europe on Employment and Benefit Policies', *Journal of European Social Policy* 6 (3): 191–208.
- Geremek, B. (1997) *Poverty: a History*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gilens, M. (1996) 'Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the American News Media', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60: 515–41.
- Gilens, M. (1999) *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media and the Politics of Anti-poverty Policy*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Golding, P. and Middleton, S. (1982) *Images of Welfare: Press and Public Attitudes to Poverty*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gordon, L. (2001) 'Who Deserves Help? Who Must Provide?', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 577: 12–25.
- Groskind, F. (1994), Ideological Influences on Public Support for Assistance to Poor Families', *Social Work* 39 (1): 81–9.
- GVG (2002) 'Study on the Social Protection Systems in the 13 Applicant Countries: Second Draft'. Koeln: Gesellschaft fuer Versicherungswissenschaft und-gestaltung GVG.
- Halvorsen, K. (2002) 'Solidarity and the Legitimacy of the Welfare State: Attitudes to Abuse of Welfare Benefits in Scandinavian Countries'. Florence: COST13 Working Group II meeting.
- Handler, J. and Hasenfeld, Y. (1991) *The Moral Construction of Poverty: Welfare Reform in America*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hasenfeld, Y. and Rafferty, J. A. (1989) 'The Determinants of Public Attitudes toward the Welfare State', *Social Forces* 67 (4): 1027–48.
- Hills, J. (2002) 'Following or Leading Public Opinion? Social Security Policy and Public Attitudes since 1997', *Fiscal Studies* 23 (4): 539–58.
- Hoge, D. and Yang, F. (1994) 'Determinants of Religious Giving in American Denominations', *Review of Religious Research* 36: 123–48.
- Holliday, I. (2000) 'Productivist Welfare Capitalism: Social Policy in East Asia', *Political Studies*, 48: 706–23.
- Huddy, L., Jones, J. and Chard, R. (2001) 'Compassion v. Self-interest: Support for Old-age Programs Among the Non-elderly', *Political Psychology* 22 (3): 443–71.
- Kangas, O. (2000) *From Workmen's Compensation to Working Women's Insurance: Institutional Development of Work Accident Insurance in OECD Countries*. Bremen: Zentrum fuer Sozialpolitik, Universitaet Bremen.
- Kangas, O. (2002) 'The Grasshopper and the Ants: Popular Opinions of Just Distribution in Australia and Finland', *The Journal of Socio-economics* 31: 721–43.
- Katz, M. (1989) *The Undeserving Poor: from the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Kluegel, J. and Smith, E. (1986) *Beliefs about Inequality: American's Views of What Is and What Ought To Be*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Kluegel, J., Mason, D. and Wegener, B. (eds) (1995) *Social Justice and Political Change: Public Opinion in Capitalist and Post-communist States*. New York: de Gruyter.
- Kuklinski, J. and Quirk, P. (1997) 'Political Facts and Public Opinion', paper presented at the The Future of Fact, University of Philadelphia.

- Larsen, C. (2002) 'Unemployment and Stigmatization: the Dilemma of the Welfare State', in J. G. Andersen and K. Halvorsen (eds) *Unemployment and Citizenship: Marginalisation and Integration in the Nordic Countries*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Leisering, L. and Walker, R. (eds) (1998) *The Dynamics of Modern Society: Poverty, Policy and Welfare*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Lindenberg, S. (1990) 'Homo Socio-economicus: the Emergence of a General Model of Man in the Social Sciences', *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 146: 727–48.
- Lockhart, C. (2001) *Protecting the Elderly: How Culture Shapes Social Policy*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Maassen, G. and Goede, M. D. (1989) 'Public Opinion about Unemployed People in the Period 1975–1985', *The Netherlands' Journal of Social Sciences* 25: 97–113.
- Mansbridge, J. (ed.) (1990) *Beyond Self-interest*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Manza, J., Cook, F. L. and Page, B. (eds) (2002) *Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nelson, T. E. (1999) 'Group Affect and Attribution in Social Policy Opinion', *Journal of Politics* 61 (2): 331–62.
- Neubeck, K. and Casenave, N. (2001) *Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card against America's Poor*. New York: Routledge.
- Overbye, E. (1999) 'Commitment to Welfare: a Question of Trust', paper presented at the 4th European Conference of Sociology (Aug.), Amsterdam.
- Page, B. and Shapiro, R. (1983) 'Effects of Public Opinion on Policy', *American Political Science Review* 77: 175–90.
- Pettersen, P. (1995) 'The Welfare State: the Security Dimension', in O. Borre and E. Scarbrough (eds) *The Scope of Government: Beliefs in Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pettersen, P. (2001) 'Welfare State Legitimacy: Ranking, Rating, Paying: the Popularity and Support for Norwegian Welfare Programmes in the Mid 1990s', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 24 (1): 27–49.
- Pfau-Effinger, B. (2002) 'Culture and Welfare State: Theoretical Framework and Cross-national Comparison', paper presented at the Conference 'Social Values, Social Policies' (Aug.), Tilburg University, The Netherlands.
- Pierson, P. (2001) 'Coping with Permanent Austerity: Welfare State Restructuring in Affluent Democracies', in P. Pierson (ed.) *The New Politics of the Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rabusic, L. and Sirovatka, T. (1999) 'The Czech Welfare State and its Legitimacy', paper presented at the 4th Annual European Conference of Sociology (Aug.), Amsterdam.
- Regnerus, M., Smith, C. and Sikkink, D. (1998) 'Who Gives to the Poor? The Influence of Religious Tradition and Political Location on the Personal Generosity of Americans Toward the Poor', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37 (3): 481–93.
- Rein, M. (2001) 'Dominance, Contest and Reframing', in A. Ben-Arieh and J. Gal (eds) *Into the Promised Land: Issues Facing the Welfare State*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Rothstein, B. (2001) 'The Universal Welfare State as a Social Dilemma', *Rationality and Society* 13 (2): 213–33.
- Saunders, P. (2002) 'Mutual Obligation, Participation and Popularity: Social Security Reform in Australia', *Journal of Social Policy* 31 (1): 21–38.
- Schmidt, V. (2000) 'Values and Discourse in the Politics of Adjustment', in F. Scharp and V. Schmidt (eds) *Welfare and Work in the Open Economy, Volume 1. From Vulnerability to Competitiveness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schneider, A. and Ingram, H. (1993) 'Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy', *American Political Science Review* 87 (2): 334–47.
- Skocpol, T. (1991) 'Targeting Within Universalism: Politically Viable Politics to Combat Poverty in the United States', in C. Jencks and P. Peterson (eds) *The Urban Underclass*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. (1985a) 'Public Opinion and Welfare Issues', in P. Taylor-Gooby (ed.) *Public Opinion, Ideology and State Welfare*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. (1985b) *Public Opinion, Ideology and State Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. (1997) 'European Welfare Futures: the Views of Key Influentials in Six European Countries on Likely Developments in Social Policy', *Social Policy and Administration* 31 (1): 1–19.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. (1998) 'Markets and Motives: Implications for Welfare', Canterbury: CCWS working paper, Darwin College, University of Kent.
- Therborn, G. (1991) 'Cultural Belonging, Structural Location and Human Action. Explanation in Sociology and in Social Science', *Acta Sociologica* 34: 177–91.
- Ullrich, C. (2000) 'Die soziale Akzeptanz des Wohlfahrtsstaates: Ergebnisse, Kritik und Perspektiven einer Forschungsrichtung', *Soziale Welt* 51: 131–52.
- Ullrich, C. (2002) 'The Impact of Institutional Structures on the Acceptance of Welfare Programmes', paper presented at the Conference 'Social Values, Social Policies' (Aug.), Tilburg University, The Netherlands.
- van Oorschot, W. (1998) 'Dutch Public Opinion on Social Security' (CRSP Series). Loughborough: Centre for Research in Social Policy.
- van Oorschot, W. (2000) 'Who Should Get What, and Why? On Deservingness Criteria and the Conditionality of Solidarity among the Public', *Policy and Politics* 28 (1): 33–49.
- van Oorschot, W. (2002) 'Individual Motives for Contributing to Welfare Benefits in the Netherlands', *Policy and Politics* 30 (1): 31–46.
- van Oorschot, W. and Arts, W. (2005) 'The Social Capital of European Welfare States: the Crowding Out Hypothesis Revisited', *Journal of European Social Policy* 15 (1): 5–26.

- van Oorschot, W. and Halman, L. (2000) 'Blame or Fate, Individual or Social? An International Comparison of Popular Explanations of Poverty', *European Societies* 2 (1): 1–28.
- van Oorschot, W., Arts, W. and Halman, L. (2005) 'Welfare State Effects on Social Capital and Informal Solidarity in the European Union: Evidence from the 1999/2000 European Values Study', *Policy and Politics* 33 (1): 35–56.
- Walker, A. (1994) *Poverty Dynamics: Issues and Examples*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Waxman, C. (1983) *The Stigma of Poverty: a Critique of Poverty Theories and Policies*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Will, J. (1993) 'The Dimensions of Poverty: Public Perceptions of the Deserving Poor', *Social Science Research* 22: 312–32.
- Williamson, J. B. (1974) 'Beliefs about the Welfare Poor', *Sociology and Social Research* 58 (2): 163–75.
- Wilson, W. J. (1987) *The Truly Disadvantaged: the Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.