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27. CONDITIONALITY OF SOLIDARITY IN THE NETHERLANDS:

AN ANALYSIS OF THREE WAVES OF THE
EUROPEAN VALUES STUDY

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Abstract

Since the introduction of the ‘solidarity items’ in the European Values Study in 1999 and their subsequent analyses, it is a well-known fact in the field of welfare attitudes research that people differentiate in their solidarity towards vulnerable groups in their societies. The EVS items show that in all European countries, people are more solidaristic with elderly people and with people who are sick and disabled, than with unemployed people; solidarity with migrants is weakest. Although this solidarity rank-order is evident, less is known about the degree to which people make a difference between vulnerable groups at all. People who make less of a difference between various groups are less conditional in their solidarity, than people who make stronger differences. This chapter focuses on analyzing the degree of Dutch people’s solidarity conditionality over time (across three waves of the EVS: 1999, 2008, 2017), and on understanding its socio-structural and cultural determinants. We find that, as expected, conditionality was highest in 2008, corroborating the general idea that public solidarity is under strain in economically more critical time periods. Additionally, conditionality is higher among people who are more vulnerable economically, with less trust in society and its institutions, and with a more rightist political stance.

27.1 Introduction

As the all-time coordinator of the European Values Study (EVS), Loek Halman has been of immense importance for the development of international comparative studies on the values, ideologies, opinions and attitudes of (European) people regarding a range of social institutions and behaviours. As such, he had a substantial influence on the careers of numerous scholars in the field, opening research prospects for them that would not have been possible without the EVS data delivered with regular intervals and coordinated by Loek.

A case in point regards the ‘solidarity items’ that were introduced in the EVS wave 1999 and repeated in subsequent waves of 2008 and 2017. These items ask about two solidarity dimensions: a socio-spatial and a socio-economic dimension. It was especially the items regarding the socio-economic solidarity dimension that played a crucial role in opening up opportunities for the cross-national analyses of solidarity (van Oorschot, 2006). People were asked about their concern with the living conditions of four socio-economic vulnerable groups in their society: elderly people, sick or disabled people, unemployed people, and immigrants. The answers were interpreted as signalling the degree to which people are solidaristic towards various groups in society. That is, the more one is solidaristic towards a social group, the more one will say to be concerned about the group’s living conditions. In other words, differences in people’s answers to the four EVS survey-items were supposed to reflect differences in social solidarity towards the four groups.

This is an interesting perspective, since it reminds us of the observation that in modern welfare states, social protection for some groups is more extended and of better quality than that for other groups (Flora, 1986). Could there be a link between popular solidarity attitudes and how social policies allocate welfare rights among groups of citizens? Could these attitudes tell us something about how people think about the welfare deservingness of social groups?

In previous work (van Oorschot, 2000; 2006) it was suggested that people apply specific criteria to assess whether a person or group is seen as deserving of

welfare, by now known as the CARIN-criteria.¹ Usually, groups are seen as more deserving to the degree that they are considered not to be in Control of their neediness, they have a grateful Attitude, are able to, or already have Reciprocated, have an Identity closer to ‘us’, and are in Need. It was with these criteria in mind that we hypothesized that popular solidarity would be highest with elderly, closely followed by sick and disabled people, in turn followed by unemployed people, and that solidarity would be lowest with the group of migrants. Now, this rank order of solidarity, or welfare deservingness, was exactly what was found when analysing the EVS 1999 data (van Oorschot, 2006). The pattern turned out to be rather universal, since it showed in all countries included in the EVS 1999 wave, and it showed among all social categories as distinguished by age, gender, work status, religion, educational level and income level.²

These results, as published in van Oorschot (2006), have inspired other researchers to focus on popular welfare deservingness, thereby extending our knowledge by analyzing questions like: is the rank order really universal and dominant?; which of the criteria is usually most important?; do the criteria predict welfare deservingness with other than the four groups mentioned in the EVS survey?; do they apply in different domains of the allocation of social rights and care?; do they show up in qualitative research with in-depth interviews and forum groups, or in vignette studies with more elaborate sketches of vulnerable groups?; do welfare professionals and policymaker have the same deservingness opinions as the general population?; how is deservingness of vulnerable groups framed in the media?; how are deservingness opinions affected by national contexts?; how deserving are the rich?; is the allocation of welfare obligations also subjected to a deservingness heuristic?; what are the structural, cultural and psychological determinants of people’s deservingness attitudes?; do people’s general worldview affect their deservingness opinions, etc.³

¹ It is Cees Boos, former assistant professor of social security at Tilburg University, who coined the acronym while editing our book on popular deservingness attitudes (van Oorschot, Roosma, Meuleman and Reeskens, 2017).

² On top of this, it was found to be stable in time, since in all countries participating in the EVS wave 2017 the rank order again showed up as predicted (Halman and Sieben, 2021). See also Figure 27.1 of this chapter.

³ For an overview of studies on questions like these, and for related further literature references, see van Oorschot, Roosma, Meuleman and Reeskens (2017), *The social legitimacy of targeted welfare: Attitudes to*

27.2 Conditionality of Solidarity

However, and now we come to the focus of our chapter, the article of 2006, in which analysis of the EVS 1999 solidarity items were firstly reported, was not only on the solidarity rank order issue, but also on the issue of the conditionality of solidarity (van Oorschot, 2006). That is, not only about which differences people make between their solidarity with different groups, but also about the degree to which they make a difference between groups at all. This is an interesting issue, given that in comparative welfare state research a distinction is usually made between more universalistic approaches to welfare provision, where less distinction is made between various social risks and social groups (with the Scandinavian countries as examples), and more selectivist approaches, where the allocation of welfare is much more confined to specific groups of poor people only (exemplified by the Anglo-Saxon countries). People whose solidarity with various groups is not, or not so much differentiated, can be seen as being more ‘universalistic’ in their welfare attitudes, while people who do make distinctions are more ‘selectivist’. Seen like this, the EVS solidarity items can tell us something about the popularity of a universal vs. a selectivist welfare approach.

In the remainder of our chapter, we will follow the main approach of the Van Oorschot (2006)-article and analyse EVS data from the three waves 1999, 2008 and 2017 to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of solidarity conditionality in the Netherlands in the three EVS years?

RQ2: What are the structural and cultural characteristics that influence people’s degree of conditionality?

Since popular solidarity conditionality is as yet an under-researched subject, there are not so many clues in the literature to argue for specific hypotheses. However, on the basis of what we found in a 1995 Dutch study (van Oorschot, 2000) and in the 2006 study with the EVS 1999 data (van Oorschot, 2006) we do have some suggestions.

welfare deservingness. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

The 2006 study found that national levels of conditionality at the time were higher in poorer countries of the EU. We therefore expect that conditionality in the Netherlands is at a higher level in 2008, the year of the financial crisis with a strong economic downturn surrounding it, than in the years 1999 and 2017. The basic understanding is that peoples’ solidarity is put under strain in times with greater economic uncertainty (Uunk and van Oorschot, 2017).

As for cultural determinants of solidarity conditionality we expect that conditionality will be higher among groups that are known to be more critical about welfare provision and the welfare state generally: like people who are more rightist, more non-egalitarian, have a more negative welfare sentiment, have less trust in government and fellow citizens, and are more negative about migrants in their society.

Regarding structural determinants, we might expect that conditionality follows the general pattern of the determinants of welfare support, being that people in a more vulnerable social position are more supportive, c.q. less conditional, than people who are in a better situation. This would then imply that conditionality is lower among unemployed people, elderly people, people with lower income, and with a lower educational level. On the other hand, however, it could also be that such groups are more conditional in case they would see provision of welfare among groups in society as a zero-sum game. That is, if more unconditional provision would be seen as limiting the degree of provision for them. So, we do not specify a concrete hypothesis regarding the structural determinants, but see what the analyses points out.

27.3 Data and methods

Our data sources are the 1999, 2008 and 2017 rounds of the European Values Study (EVS), from which we select the data on the Netherlands. The dataset has a valid N of 3724 cases across three waves, with 25% missing values (mostly due to declining to disclose income).

Our dependent variable is constructed from respondents’ answers to the fol-

lowing solidarity 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)

The degree of conditionality is measured by the sum of absolute differences between respondents' answer to the four items above. People who are concerned with the living conditions of all four groups equally, 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. Or in other words, people with higher scores are more 'selectivist' in their approach to welfare provision, while those with lower scores are more 'universalistic'. The conditionality variable thus constructed has a range of 0 to 16.

Our independent variables are as follows: 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 deciles 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. Egalitarianism is measured by people's opinion on whether incomes should be made more equal or whether we need larger income differences as incentives. Work ethic is measured by a summative scale of five items that tap people's attitudes towards the importance of work for their personal lives and for society: to develop talents you need to have a job, its humiliating to receive money without having to work for it, people who don't work turn lazy, work is a duty towards society, work should come first even if it means less spare

time (alpha reliability=.71). Welfare sentiment is measured by two separate items: whether individuals should be more responsible for providing for themselves, or that the state should take more responsibility (1-10 scale) and whether unemployed people should have to take any job or should be able to refuse a job they do not want (1-10 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=.79). Attitudes towards immigrants are measured by a measure of feelings towards immigrants combining answers to the questions whether people would not like to have immigrants as neighbours (mentioned/not mentioned) and whether they agree that in scarce times employers should give priority to nationals over immigrants (agree, disagree or neither). The resulting three-point scale attributes one point for agreement with each question.

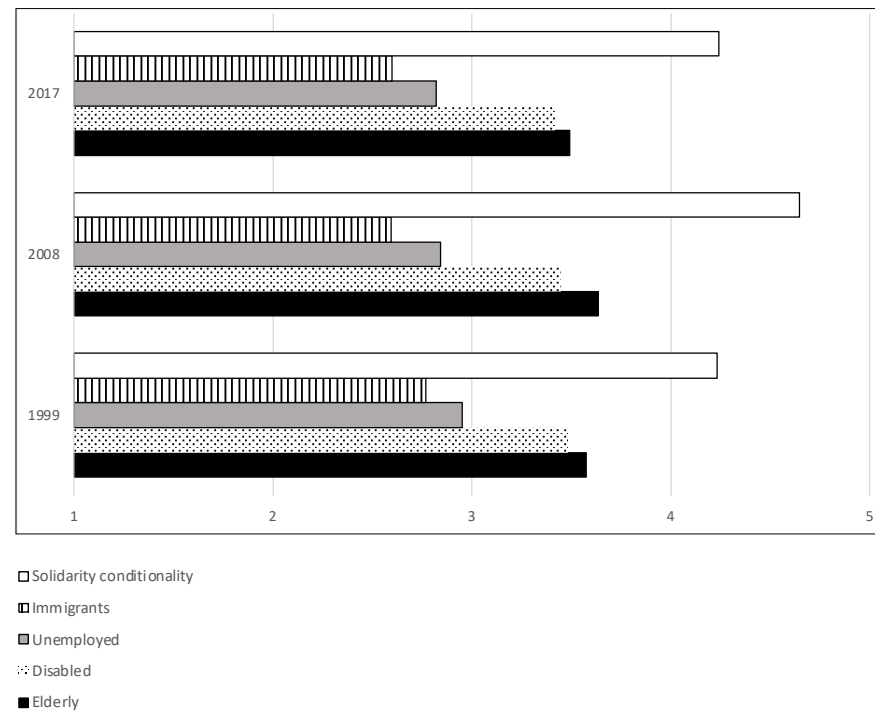
27.4 Results

Before we answer our first research question on the basis of figure 27.1, we would like to direct attention to the fact that, as figure 27.1 also shows, the popular deservingness of the vulnerable groups of elderly, sick and disabled, unemployed and immigrants in all three years shows the by now well-known order: deservingness of elderly is highest, followed by that of disabled and sick people, then followed by unemployed, and immigrants are seen as the least deserving group. Where we earlier concluded that this rank order seems to have a rather universal nature because it showed up in all countries of the ESS wave 1999, and among all social categories of citizens (Van Oorschot, 2006), we here see that it also seems to be universal over time.

Now, as to our first research question, regarding the levels of conditionality in the three EVS years, the answer is shown in Figure 27.1. We find that the level of solidarity conditionality is higher in 2008 (4.54) compared to 1999 (4.14) and 2017 (4.20), with both mean differences being significant at $p < .01$, which con-

firmly our hypothesis 1. We interpret this finding as showing that in the economic and fiscal crisis surrounding the banking crisis of 2008 (fall of Lehman Brothers) the public became less universalistic, or more conditional, in their solidarity towards others. The effect is temporary, cancelling out in the restoration period that followed: the mean level of solidarity conditionality does not differ significantly between 1999 and 2017.

Figure 27.1 Mean solidarity conditionality between timepoints



The answer to our second research question regarding the structural and cultural correlates of people's conditionality is revealed in Table 27.1. A general observation is that there is a close similarity in the (non-)effects of the various variables across the three survey years, suggesting that the determinant structure of conditionality, c.q. of being more selectivist or universalist, is stable over time.

Table 27.1 OLS regression of the conditionality of solidarity on structural and cultural indicators

	1999		2008		2017	
	Structural	Cultural	Structural	Cultural	Structural	Cultural
Intercept	4.179 ***	5.159 ***	4.544 ***	4.104 ***	2.967 ***	2.521 ***
Female	.013	-.074	.242	-.403 *	.124	-.197
Age	.020 *	.024 **	.018 *	.015 +	.014 *	.027 ***
Educational level	-.478 ***	-.245 **	-.357 ***	-.164 *	-.286 ***	-.091
Household income (deciles)	.057	.049	-.092 +	-.044	-.068 *	-.018
Political l-r placement	.130 *	.017	.113 *	-.018	.320 ***	.111 **
Atheist	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Buddhist	-.092	.130	-3.272	-3.659 +		
Free church	-.190	.004	-.105	-.073		
Hindu	3.211	2.842	2.400	1.873	-.025	.098
Jewish	2.605 +	2.924 *	3.529	4.492		
Muslim	2.327 *	2.468 *	-.071	-.138	-.671	-.544
Other	-.646	-.511	.394	.627	-.361	-.646
Protestant	-.168	-.112	.562 +	.479	-.181	-.125
Roman Catholic	-.013	-.080	.174	.066	.363	.284
Church attendance	.004	-.006	.018	-.025	.032	-.007
Full time	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Part time	-.005	.070	.107	.123	.466 +	.445 +
Self-employed	.254	.234	-.209	-.258	.146	.367
Retired	.214	-.070	.341	.398	.193	-.023
Housewife	.277	.161	-.384	-.270	.494	.181
Student	-.026	.017	.862	1.212	.131	.833 *
Unemployed	-.714	-.060	.957	1.269	-.195	-.176
Egalitarianism		.037		.016		.014
Work ethic		.009		.129 ***		.069 **

Welfare gov. responsibility	.072		.057		.091	**
Welfare job taking requirement	-.205	***	-.181	***	-.109	***
Most people can be trusted	-.583	**	-.499	*	-.895	***
Institutional trust	-.094	*	-.055	+	-.073	**
Immigrant attitude	.876	***	.549	***	1.164	***
N	885	885	1148	1148	1691	1691
R-sq	.088	***	.161	***	.106	***
			.176	*	.102	***
					.224	***

Note: some religious groups (Buddhist, Free church, Jewish) are not represented in the 2017 wave

Note: total valid N = 3724, no sampling weights applied

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

In all three years we see that conditionality is (somewhat) higher among elderly people, people with a lower educational level, people with a more rightist political stance, people who are more welfare critical generally, who have less trust in institutions and less trust in other people, and people who have a more negative attitude to immigrants. In all three survey years we see no effects of gender, degree of church attendance, work status and egalitarianism.

These findings tend to corroborate our expectations regarding the cultural determinants. People identifying with the political right, and with low social and institutional trust are likely to prefer higher levels of welfare conditionality. We find no direct effect of economic egalitarianism on welfare conditionality. This is rather surprising, since low conditionality can be seen as a cornerstone of a more egalitarian approach to welfare provision. Additional analyses show that the total effect of egalitarianism is cancelled out by the inclusion of more proximal predictors in the model, with the notable exception of the wave 2008, where egalitarianism has no effect at all on solidarity conditionality. These results point to the importance of analytically distinguishing between support

for economic redistribution ('social rights') and welfare conditionality ('social obligations').

As for the structural determinants, for which we did not specify specific hypotheses, we see that conditionality is higher among older people and people with a lower educational level, suggesting that they may see welfare provision more as a zero-sum game. We see no direct effects of income level and work status. The effects of religiosity should be interpreted with caution, as the sample sizes for some of these subgroups are very small.

27.5 Conclusion

Data from the three EVS waves of 1999, 2008 and 2017 show that the solidarity of the Dutch population was more conditional in 2008, than in 1999 and 2017. We suggested that this finding corroborates the general idea that public solidarity is under strain in economically more critical time periods. The data also show that, despite this difference in conditionality levels, the structure of determinants of solidarity is stable over time. A picture can be sketched of a more conditional, c.q. more selective person as somebody who is older, lower educated, rightist, more welfare critical generally, low-trusting, and with a more negative view on migrants. However, one should interpret these findings with the necessary care, since our data only cover a period of 18 years, and only one country, the Netherlands.

As regards the first, there does not seem to be a possibility to extend the time scale of analysis within the EVS framework, which we feel is a great pity. But, as regards the second, our analyses could be extended into a cross-national study rather easily by including not only the Netherlands, but all countries for which data for the three years is available. Such a cross-national analyses was beyond the scope of our contribution here, yet, it would be a very interesting endeavour since it would allow to learn about possible effects that differences in national contexts may have on people's solidarity conditionality. For sure, one interesting question would then be whether differences in the degree to which countries' welfare systems are closer to a universal or a selectivist approach are

reflected in people's attitudes. In other words, as always, we need new studies to further our understanding of society. For many years, the EVS has created a sound and fruitful context and data base for advancing such understanding.

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