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# 13. Popular deservingness perceptions and conditionality of solidarity in Europe

**Wim van Oorschot**

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## INTRODUCTION

In all welfare states social protection is unequally divided, that is, it is more easily accessible, more generous, longer lasting, and/or less subjected to reciprocal obligations for some groups than for other groups. For instance, elderly people and disabled people can usually rely more strongly on less stigmatizing benefits than unemployed people; widows are usually better protected by national benefit schemes than divorced women; core workers can mostly rely on more generous and comprehensive social insurance schemes than peripheral workers, etc. Such differential treatment may reflect various considerations of policy-makers. These may be economic (less protection for less productive groups (Holliday, 2000)), political (better protection for groups with stronger lobbies (Baldwin, 1990)), or cultural (better protection for 'our kind of' people, or for 'well-behaving' people (Deacon, 2002)). Obviously, policy-makers who ration welfare rights and obligations act in an economic, political, and cultural context. By now, a large academic literature exists on the economic and political factors affecting welfare policy-making (Barr, 1992; Pierson, 2001), but the analysis of cultural influences has only recently been given more attention.

Here we aim 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 and variations in conditionality among Europeans.

We examined public deservingness perceptions by analysing the degree to which the citizens of European welfare states show different solidaristic attitudes 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 our first question: what the public's deservingness rank ordering of the four groups

is. In other words, to what degree does the public feel an informal solidarity with each of these groups, and what is each group's relative position on the solidarity scale? Our second question concerned how fundamental the rank ordering is. Does it differ (much) between European countries, or between various social categories of their populations, or not? In addition to the rank order itself, we also analysed to what degree people actually differentiate between the four groups. The solidarity of those who apparently attach greater importance to constituting such a difference is more conditional than that of others who show more equal solidarity with all four groups, and who are more relaxed about deservingness differences. Finally, how can individual differences in conditionality be explained? Are people's structural position, or their cultural values and attitudes, of importance here?<sup>1</sup>

Before analysing these questions, we reviewed the literature on how and why the public at large constitutes differences, and we formulated some hypotheses.

## MAKING THE DIFFERENCE: HOW AND WHY?

That the public at large differentiates between (support for) various groups of needy people is well documented. In particular, differential public support for schemes directed at different target groups has been examined. 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 the sick and disabled, while the public supports schemes for needy families with children less, and schemes for unemployed people even less again, and support is least for social assistance schemes. The findings of more recent studies corroborate this 'universal dimension of support', whether they regard cross-sectional data from different European countries (Pettersen, 1995; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003) or (time-series) data from single countries, for instance, the UK (Hills, 2002), Finland and Denmark (Forma, 1997; Larsen, 2002), the Netherlands (Oorschot, 1998), Belgium (Debusscher and Elchardus, 2003), and the Czech Republic (Rabusic and Sirovatka, 1999). In some recent studies, support for social protection of immigrants was also analysed, and found to be at the bottom end of the support dimension (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 were introduced in these welfare states from the end of the nineteenth century onwards: first the schemes for those considered to be the most deserving categories of old, sick, and disabled people, then family benefits and unemployment compensation, and lastly (if at all) social assistance for those considered to be the least deserving (Kangas, 2000).

In order to explain 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 has consistently been found that universal schemes have greater support than selective schemes (which is true even for the category of highly supported pension schemes (Forma and Kangas, 1997)). Also, contributory insurance schemes usually have greater support than tax-financed schemes (Coleman, 1982). This may be explained by people's perceived self-interest, because more people benefit from universal than from selective schemes (Skocpol, 1991; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003), and paying contributions is associated more strongly with building up a personal entitlement to benefits than paying general taxes. 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 (Overbye, 1999), and their administrative practice may be seen as less impartial (Rothstein, 2001). Furthermore, support for a scheme may depend upon people's perceptions of the fiscal burden of the scheme, which is related to perceptions of the scheme's generosity and its numbers of claimants (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. The public is less supportive of programmes targeted at groups with a negative public image. 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 without a negative image, like widows, elderly people, and the physically disabled, are supported well by the American public (Katz, 1989; 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 lazier and less responsible than whites, and that for that

reason welfare is taken up mostly by black people. Racial stereotyping is a central element in the difference between North 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. (Which may reflect the different outcomes of the American and the European social model: the first generates more poverty, the second more unemployment). What has consistently been found is that images tend to be negative. There is widespread doubt about unemployed people's willingness to work and about proper use of benefits (Golding and Middleton, 1982; Halvorsen, 2002), even in a universalistic welfare state such as Sweden (Furaker and Blomsterberg, 2002). When people were asked to compare unemployed people to disabled people (Maassen and de Goede, 1989), or to employed people (Ester and Dekker, 1986), it was found that the unemployed are more often seen as having less character, less self-responsibility, and less perseverance, and as being less trustworthy. Support for unemployment benefits is usually lower among those who have more negative images of unemployed people.

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 be more supportive of schemes, which are targeted at groups they perceive as more deserving. Based on the findings of several studies on the issue, van Oorschot (2000) concluded that there are five central deservingness criteria. The 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). The second criterion is 'level of need', that is, people with greater need are seen as more deserving. Third is 'identity': needy people who are closer to 'us' are seen as more deserving. The fourth criterion is 'attitude': needy people who are likeable, grateful, compliant, and conforming to our standards are more deserving. Finally, there is the criterion of 'reciprocity': 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, are more deserving. Of these criteria, control seems to be the 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 blamed fully for his or her neediness, other criteria become irrelevant. 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. The criterion of identity seems to play an important role, too, especially where neediness is related



to ethnic or national minorities. There is a strong racial element in American welfare support, as mentioned earlier. 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 the least deserving group among 29 different groups of needy people (Oorschot, 2000).

In many cases in which the public constitutes a difference between support for needy groups, it is difficult to determine which of the three main factors discussed is decisive. There may be more explanatory variables (like aspects of scheme coverage, generosity, claimant numbers, institutional character, target group images, perceptions of deservingness and/or of procedural justice) than schemes to be compared (Gilens, 1996), and factors are sometimes interrelated. Nevertheless, in our view, deservingness perceptions are often crucial. They usually form the basis 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 lazier than whites, and can, therefore, be blamed for their neediness. 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, older unemployed people and disabled unemployed people are usually seen as more deserving than unemployed people as a group, because they are considered less responsible personally for their neediness, and these are social risks we can all be confronted with (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 perceives unemployed people as more deserving of benefits, and supports unemployment benefit more because then unemployed people are seen as having less personal responsibility for their situation, and more 'people like us' will be unemployed (Gallie and Paugam, 2002). As Rein (2001) shows, twentieth-century American welfare policies for single mothers became worse owing to changing normative perceptions of lone mothering: from the deserving widow to the undeserving single parent or 'welfare queen'.

Regarding our first research question, we expected that the overall rank order of solidarity with the four groups analysed here would be, in declining order, elderly people, sick and disabled people, unemployed people, and immigrants. Given its universal character, we also expected that the rank order would not differ much, if at all, between European countries.

A question was whether there would 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 as more weakly, deserving in a particular country. Our comparative survey was the first to look into this issue. We did not expect great differences in the positions of the 'elderly' and 'the sick and disabled'. We expected these groups to be relatively close to each other in the rank ordering in all countries, because we felt that 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 expected that the rank order would not differ much between various social categories. This was found to be the case in the UK (Taylor-Gooby, 1985), and might be the case in other European countries as well, given the universal character of the rank ordering.

### MAKING THE DIFFERENCE: TO WHAT DEGREE?

That the public differentiates between social policy schemes and target groups, and the grounds on which this is done, is well documented. This is not the case, however, for the degree to which people constitute a difference. Apart from the findings of a study conducted on Dutch opinion data (Oorschot, 2000), little is known about whether some people's solidarity is more conditional upon the characteristics of needy groups than other's. That is, it is not clear whether some people differentiate more strictly than others between the deservingness and un-deservingness of groups. We addressed this issue of conditionality in detail and analysed 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, to be less well educated, to have a lower socio-economic position, and to be politically more rightist. In addition, they are persons with a stronger anti-welfare sentiment, that is, they more strongly believe that benefits are too high and widely misused, and that social security makes people lazier 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. The Dutch findings regarding age, educational level, and socio-economic position were interpreted as interest-related. That is, older people, people with a lower level of education, and people 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 the rationing of welfare in order to prevent the social protection they might need in



future from 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 anti-welfare sentiment does not come as a surprise. Many studies have shown that explaining poverty in individualistic terms, and holding needy people personally responsible for their need, is associated with a reluctance to support welfare (Kluegel et al., 1995; Oorschot and Halman, 2000).

We tested these relations to see whether they also hold for other European countries. Regarding age, educational level, views of welfare, and political preference, our hypotheses were in line with the Dutch findings. Our data contained less extended measures of welfare sentiment than did the Dutch study, but there were some items regarding personal responsibility for social protection, welfare rights and duties of unemployed people, and the alleged effects of welfare on work ethic that tapped people's beliefs in this respect. Our data also allowed inclusion of some extra explanatory variables, which may aid understanding of differences in conditionality. First were people's attitudes towards immigrants. We expected that the more negative this attitude, the more people would want immigrants to be treated less generously than other groups of needy people, and the more conditional they would be on our measure. Second, we explored the effect of trust. Our data allowed us to measure three types of trust: people's trust in other people, people's trust in (welfare) state institutions, and people's trust in democracy as an overriding political system. Our hypothesis was that people with less trust would be more conditional, because they would 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 voters' pressure). Third, religion was included. The effects of being religious or not, of denomination, and of church attendance on views of welfare and solidarity were considered. It has often been found that religious, Christian people show more solidarity with 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 churchgoers are more solidaristic than people who attend church less frequently, because they are more subjected to peer group pressure (Arts et al., 2003; Bekkers, 2003). Our data allowed us to include these variables and to see what their relative effects are. Our hypothesis was that religious people and frequent churchgoers would be less conditional. We explored differences between Catholics, Protestants, and people with other religions.



Fourth, we included meritocratism as a possible determinant of people's conditionality. We expected that people who are more strongly in favour of a society that rewards those with the highest merits most would be more conditional.

An effect of gender on conditionality was not found in the Dutch study, but we included 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 (Leisering and Walker, 1998). We included income and work status in our analysis, and examined whether they also lack an effect in a wider European context. Regarding values and attitudes, effects of work ethic and of equality ethic were not found in the Dutch study. Apparently, Dutch people's conditionality regarding the support of needy people does not depend on their work ethic, nor on whether or how much they favour social equality. However, these findings could be particular to the Dutch, who are a European people with a high work ethic and strong egalitarian attitudes. We included both types of ethic in our analysis to determine whether this interpretation of Dutch exceptionalism would hold.

## DATA AND METHODS

### Data

Our data source was the 1999/2000 round of the European Values Study (EVS) survey, which provided unique data from nationally 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 confined our analysis to the 23 countries we had adequate data for at the time of analyses: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom. The country samples consisted of at least 1000 and at most 2000 respondents each. Our pooled dataset contained 28 894 cases.

**Dependent Variables**

Our central dependent variables consisted of respondents' informal solidarity with four groups of needy people, operationalized using 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<sup>2</sup>
- 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 was that respondents' concern would reflect their perception of the deservingness of the four groups. The rank order of concern thus reflects the rank order of deservingness.<sup>3</sup> The degree of conditionality was measured using the sum of absolute differences between respondents' answers to the above question. People who were equally concerned about the living conditions of all four groups (either at a high or at a low level) had a zero score on conditionality. The conditionality score of people whose solidarity differed for the groups concerned was some figure above zero. The higher the score, the more conditional the people, that is, the more they differentiated among the needy groups.

**Independent Variables****Personal characteristics**

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



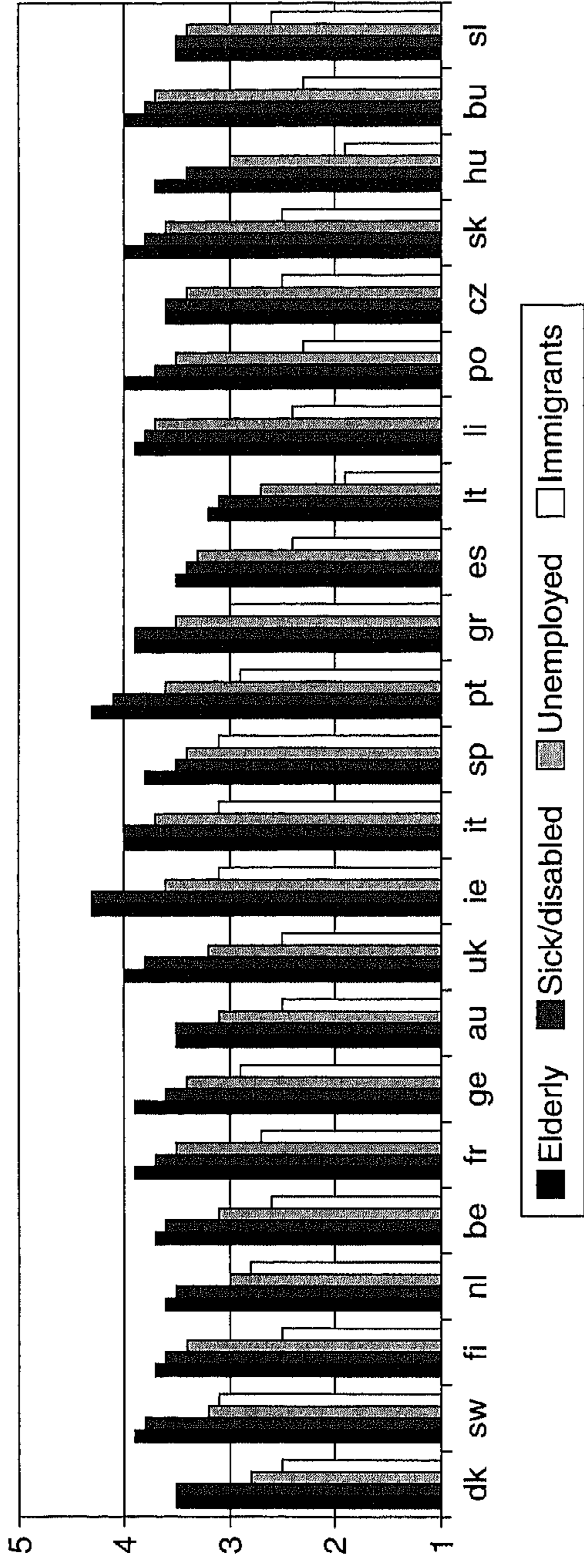
held more responsible for providing for themselves or the state should take more responsibility (scale of 1–10); whether unemployed people should have to take any job or should be able to refuse a job they do not want (scale of 1–10); and whether people who do not work become lazy (scale of 1–5). Interpersonal trust was measured using respondents' answers to the following 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 was measured using 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', and 'the justice system' (alpha reliability=.80). Trust in democracy was measured using a summative scale of 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 were measured, first, by using a measure of feelings towards immigrants combining answers to the questions whether people would like to have immigrants as neighbours and whether they agreed that in times of scarcity employers should give priority to nationals over immigrants. The second measure was a question about whether people would like to place strong restrictions on the inflow of new immigrants, or not have any restrictions at all.

## RESULTS

### **Solidarity Rank Order by Country and Social Categories**

Our hypothesis was that the public would show most solidarity with elderly people, closely followed by sick and disabled people; that solidarity with unemployed people would be less strong, and that solidarity with immigrants would be lowest. As Figure 13.1 shows, this is exactly what was found in 16 of the 23 European countries examined. In all seven other countries (Denmark, Austria, Ireland, Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic and Slovenia), the difference with the universal rank order is that the solidarity with elderly and sick and disabled people is at an equally high level. This is a marginal deviance from the general pattern.

There is substantial variation between the countries in the relative positions of the groups of needy people. In some countries, especially 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. In most other Western and Southern European



Source: Own calculations on the basis of the European Value Survey.

Figure 13.1 Informal solidarity by country (national averages)



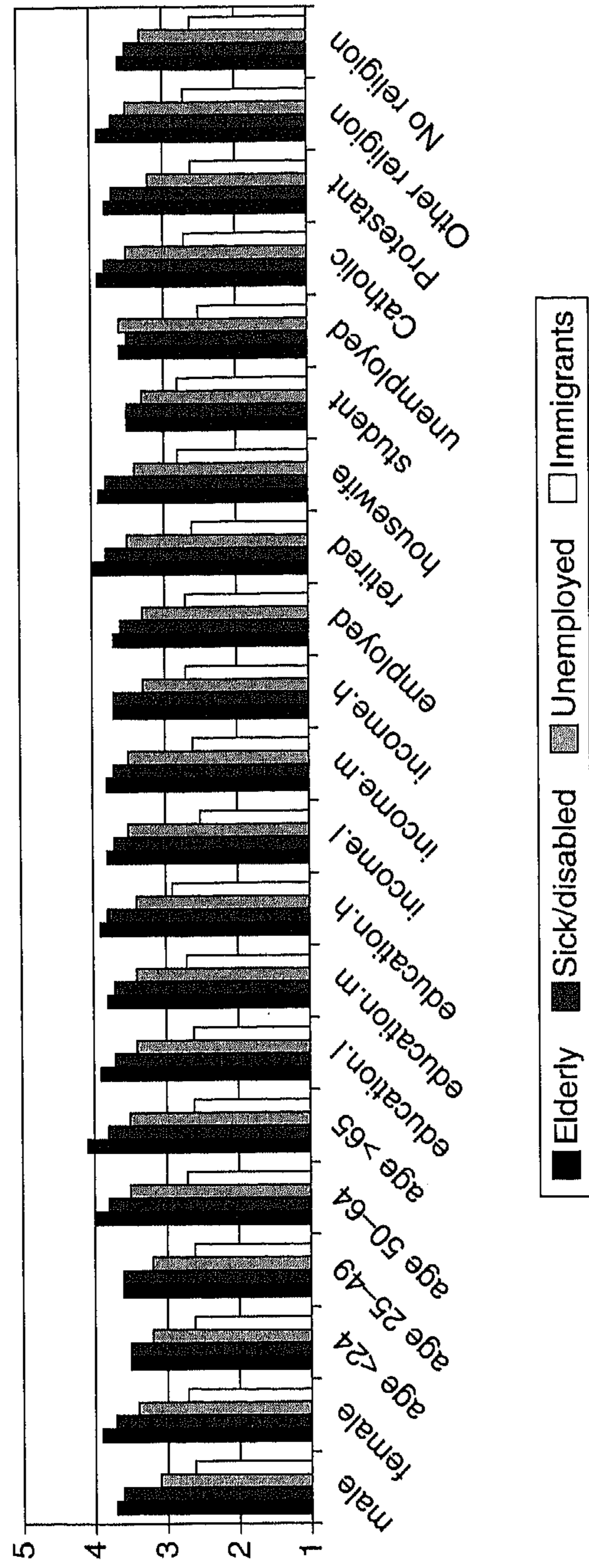
countries, the scores for elderly, sick, and disabled people are quite close, but there are larger differences between unemployed people and immigrants. A typical pattern for Central and Eastern European countries seems to be that the scale distance between immigrants and the other groups is relatively large, while the distances between the other three needy groups are relatively small. How these differences can be explained is unclear. One could speculate that where national resources for social protection are low, as is the case in Central and Eastern European countries, people tend to differentiate more strongly along the criterion of identity in terms of 'us' and '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 13.2 shows that the 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's (1985), who found no differences between the opinions of various categories of UK citizens in how they favoured benefits for pensioners, disabled people, widows, unemployed people, and lone parents. There is one exception in our data: unemployed people's solidarity with unemployed people is slightly higher than their solidarity with disabled people.

#### **Conditionality of Solidarity: Individual Level**

To analyse why some people's solidarity with needy groups is more conditional than that of others, we carried out regression analyses, the results of which are shown in Table 13.1. We analysed the effects of personal characteristics in the pooled data set of all European countries. Note that additional analyses showed that the directions and sizes of the effects of all personal characteristics do not essentially differ between the four regions of Europe: North, West, South, and East.<sup>4</sup>

What, then, is this common pattern? Regarding people's socio-demographic characteristics, Figure 13.2 shows that conditionality is slightly higher among women, and is higher among older people and among people with less education. No difference exists between employed and unemployed people, or between people with higher or lower income. Except for the findings for gender, these results are the same as those of an earlier study in which Dutch opinion data was used (Oorschot, 2000). As



Source: Own calculations on the basis of the European Value Survey.

Figure 13.2 Informal solidarity by social category (average scores)



Table 13.1 Factors explaining European people's conditionality of solidarity

Gender (male–female)	.022
Age	.040
Educational level	–.034
Household income	n.s.
<b>Work status</b>	
– retired	.052
– housewife	n.s.
– student	n.s.
– unemployed	n.s.
– other	n.s.
(ref. category = employed)	
<b>Religion</b>	
– Catholic	n.s.
– Protestant	.039
– other	n.s.
(ref. category = none)	
<b>Church attendance</b>	n.s.
<b>Political stance (left–right)</b>	.042
<b>Meritocratism</b>	n.s.
<b>Egalitarianism</b>	–.027
<b>Work ethic</b>	n.s.
<b>Welfare sentiment</b>	
– responsibility (individual–state)	.024
– unemployed must accept any job (no–yes)	.028
– no work makes people lazy (no–yes)	.031
<b>Trust</b>	
– interpersonal trust	–.048
– trust in institutions	–.055
– trust in democracy	–.090
<b>Attitude to immigrants</b>	
– feelings (negative–positive)	–.139
– inflow of immigrants ok? (no–yes)	–.155
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.126

Note:  $p < .05$ ; n.s. = not significant.

Source: Own calculations on the basis of the European Value Survey.

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 of the allocation of 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, for example, 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, owing to the dynamics of entering and leaving either category, the attitudinal differences between the two are not large generally. In the 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 were to regard social protection less as being in their strictly personal interest, they would want 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 13.1 shows that, as in the Dutch study, rightist people are more conditional, and people's work ethic makes no difference. Apparently, the effect of political stance is not based on leftist and rightist 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 explain. One would expect that people with a stronger work ethic and who are more in favour of society rewarding merit would be stricter and more conditional towards needy people (for instance, because they may have more doubts about whether needy people try hard enough to provide for themselves). Additional analyses showed that both variables have a positive bi-variate correlation with conditionality. Apparently, these relations are suppressed by other variables in the multivariate models. In any case, there is no Dutch exceptionalism involved here, as suggested above.

Regarding attitudinal characteristics, Table 13.1 shows strong effects. As expected, people with more negative attitudes towards state welfare, welfare dependency, and welfare dependants are more conditional. The same was 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 have led to different results, but we did not opt for this since populations of immigrants are increasingly among the core poverty groups in European countries.

With regard to variables of religion, Table 13.1 shows that, contrary to expectations, religious people are not generally less conditional than non-religious people. What we did find was that Protestants as a group have



higher conditionality. This is irrespective of their possibly greater Calvinistic work ethic, since this variable was controlled for.

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

We 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 European Values Study survey 1999/2000, we found a common pattern for all 23 European countries involved that informal solidarity with elderly people is highest, closely followed by sick and disabled people; next is solidarity with unemployed people, and solidarity with immigrants is lowest. This pattern is exactly what was expected based on the results of earlier empirical studies on popular support for types of welfare schemes, on popular images of target groups, and on popular deservingness criteria. 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.

The results of our study confirm those of other studies regarding the rank ordering. Our study is among the first, however, in which explicit attention was paid to the conditionality of solidarity, that is, the degree to which people differentiate in their solidarity with different groups of needy people. We explored conditionality and its determinants at the individual level.

We found that the directions and sizes of the determining effects do not essentially differ between regions in Europe; 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. We found that conditionality is slightly higher among women, among older people, and among people with less education. No difference exists between employed or unemployed people, or between people with higher or lower income. Except for those for gender, these results are the same as those of an earlier study on conditionality in which Dutch opinion data was used. Regarding ideological characteristics it was found that, as in the Dutch study, rightist 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 leftist or rightist. Regarding attitudinal characteristics, it was found that people with more negative attitudes towards state welfare, welfare dependency, and welfare dependants are more conditional. The same was found for people with less trust in others, in (welfare) state institutions, and in democracy. Particularly strong were the negative effects of attitudes towards immigrants. Finally, as in studies on giving to charity, religion played a role. Whether people claim to be religious or not, or what denomination they belong to, is irrelevant; it is church attendance that makes a difference: people who attend church more frequently are less conditional in their solidarity with needy groups. We speculated above on some interpretations of our results regarding conditionality, but we stress that they need further testing in future research, since our study is one of only two that we know of on the issue of conditionality.

The role played by the immigration factor is noteworthy in the findings on both rank order and conditionality. Needy immigrants are at the bottom of the deservingness rank order, and negative views of 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, where there is currently strong debate on whether welfare benefits and services should be provided to immigrants to the same degree and on the same conditions as to non-immigrants (Boeri et al., 2002). There is a risk that this kind of discussion and ensuing policy measures may ultimately put ever more pressure on the solidarity with immigrants, since it stimulates thinking in terms of 'Us versus Them'. Measures might easily create poverty traps from which immigrants would have difficulties escaping, which in turn might enforce negative public images about immigrants. Going even further, as Alesina and Glaeser (2004) speculate, if welfare becomes negatively associated with 'immigrants' in Europe, as it is with 'blacks' in the US, 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 only revolve 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, the individual responsibility of citizens is strongly stressed (George, 1996; Taylor-Gooby, 1997; Forma, 1999; Schmidt, 2000). Citizens are nowadays increasingly expected to be active and to provide for themselves. This is a message that in our view quite easily may form a basis for the general idea that those who are in need do not take up their responsibility well, and can, therefore, be blamed for their neediness. If people are blamed, they do not



deserve support, and there is 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.

## NOTES

1. Please note that the analysis of determinants did not concern people's informal solidarity with any of the four groups separately. This kind of analysis is presented in Van Oorschot and Arts (2005). Please note too that we did not analyse differences in national levels of conditionality. This would certainly be interesting but space limitations did not allow for it.
2. Admittedly, 'immigrants' is an unspecified category. It may be associated with very diverse groups, like migrant workers of different generations, asylum seekers, refugees, non-Europeans, or people born abroad. No specification of the type of immigrants referred to in the question was given in the survey.
3. An alternative interpretation is that 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 the social protection of group A in a country is less than that for other groups, more people will claim to be (more) concerned about the living conditions of group A than about the other groups, and group A will get a higher score on the variable. However, the findings of this study show that this is not the case: informal solidarity is consistently higher with elderly people and sick and disabled people, which are the groups to which all European welfare states offer better protection, than with the groups of the unemployed and immigrants.
4. North = Denmark, Finland, Sweden; West = Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, UK; South = Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain; East = Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, East = Estonia.

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