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25. Welfare Chauvinism across the Political Spectrum

Tim Reeskens and Tom van der Meer

25.1 Experimenting on welfare deservingness

It goes without saying that Wim's most seminal contribution to the social science scholarship is making the empirical study of welfare deservingness more popular, as summarized quite well by the title of his most cited journal article 'Who should get what, and why' (van Oorschot, 2000). The theoretical rigor undergirding the five deservingness-criteria, which he later has been calling the CARIN-criteria (van Oorschot et al., 2017), was outstanding and received little pushback since. By contrast, even though the empirical evidence that showed that the elderly are perceived as the most deserving because they rank highest on all five CARIN-criteria, while the unemployed, but foremost immigrants are perceived as least deserving because they fall short on the same set of criteria, was convincing, over the years incremental empirical refinements have been proposed.

Own research (Reeskens and van der Meer, 2017), published in Wim's co-authored volume on welfare deservingness, showed the necessity to consider *experimental* research to get a better grip on the five CARIN-criteria that explain welfare deservingness. Our argument was that traditional social surveys, which Wim relied on repeatedly to explain why some groups are perceived as more deserving of welfare than others (for example, van Oorschot, 2006; van Oorschot and Uunk, 2007; Jeene, van Oorschot and Uunk, 2014), are unable to completely pull apart the five CARIN-

criteria. Immigrants, perceived as most undeserving of welfare provision, are for instance not a homogenous group. The implication is that assessing their perceived deservingness foregoes the fact that immigrants are not a homogenous group; there are immigrants with favorable as well as unfavorable deservingness criteria. Immigrants often accumulate disadvantages (the criterion of need) while evidently, they are culturally most distant (the identity-criterion), and they often failed making continuous contributions to the welfare state (low on reciprocity).

Inspired by Wim's research on perceived welfare deservingness, we showed that even if immigrants combine favorable criteria, like having been laid off because of a company reorganization to indicate no *control* over their unemployed situation or doing voluntary work as an example for *reciprocity*, they are never able to fully close the gap with natives (Reeskens and van der Meer, 2019). By this, we have given new insights into welfare chauvinism, that is, the idea that natives favor welfare redistribution but not with non-natives (van der Waal et al., 2010; Kitschelt, 1997; Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012), and contributed to a better understanding of Wim's CARIN-criteria applied to the perceived deservingness of immigrants by studying variation among them, while they previously have been treated as a rather homogenous group. Still, the outcomes of our study can be deepened further, as we have not touched upon the question whether welfare chauvinism is widespread across large chunks of the population, or whether these opinions reflect political ideology. Put differently, is the perceived deservingness gap between natives and immigrants more common among voters of monocultural parties, or alternatively, does the electorate of multicultural parties favor natives over immigrants, too?

25.2 Theorizing the ideological divide

In this short essay honoring Wim's work, it will be repetitive to call the five CARIN-criteria by name; control, attitude, reciprocity, identity and need are by now in everyone's social policy repertoire. In previous work, we already indicated the pervasiveness of identity as a criterion that defines perceived welfare deservingness (Reeskens and van der Meer, 2019). Nevertheless, Wim's work also indicated that people would grant immigrants equal access to the welfare state, but only conditionally, particularly upon having made contributions to the welfare state or after having acquired citizenship (Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012). The preferred conditionality of perceptions of immigrants' access to welfare inspired us to set up a survey experiment in which favorable criteria (like making contributions to the welfare state) could be tested more clearly, something quite novel in this field.

Political science research had earlier incorporated survey experiments to study what immigrant attributes make them more likely to be, by public opinion, welcomed to the US (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). Although the study shows that higher educated immigrants in high status jobs who master the English language are preferred most, of greatest importance is what the authors refer to as 'the hidden immigrant consensus' (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). The attributes that make immigrants more likely to be granted access to the US follow the same rank order for the Democratic as for the Republican electorate.

The structuring influence of political preference on attitudes goes back to 'The American Voter' (Campbell et al., 1960), according to which partisanship serves as a 'perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation' (Campbell et al., 1960: 133). The Dutch political landscape is, however, more complex than the American distinction between Democrats and Republicans. Additionally, while political scientists distinguish between political left and right

(compare Lipset, 1959), working with Wim revealed his distaste against this crude continuum. In his empirical studies, he unraveled this scale into the economic and the cultural axis (see van Oorschot et al., 2012), with the former pointing to either favoring state intervention or alternatively *laissez faire* politics, while the latter separates those favoring multiculturalism from those favoring monoculturalism.

In proposing expectations, these orthogonal axes are of primordial importance. On the one hand, it can be argued that differences on the economic axis will translate into clear redistributive policy preferences. Those who are in favor of state intervention (at the political left) will be of the opinion that welfare claimants should receive appropriate welfare provision, while those at the right would think that welfare claimants should rely on alternative resources (for example, personal accounts, friends and family, private insurances, or charity) instead of on government. On the other hand, the cultural axis will be more determining for the perceived deservingness of immigrants. We assume that the electorates of monocultural parties (at the right) would like to exclude immigrant welfare claimants from access to welfare because of the relative importance opposition to immigration has to them; on the opposite, those aligning to multicultural parties (on the left) are expected to perceive immigrants as (almost) equally deserving of welfare compared to native welfare claimants.

In proposing these expectations, we should not be blind to Wim's contribution to the study of the 'new liberal' or 'progressive dilemma', too (compare Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2014; see also Goodheart, 2004). The argument is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile generous welfare provision for all with inclusive orientations towards immigrants. Particular parties at the left, who favor both, would therefore suffer disproportionately for taking this position (see also Koopmans, 2010). If this dilemma holds among public opinion, we should

also diagnose welfare chauvinism among voters of parties that favor multiculturalism. Put differently, also voters of such parties would favor natives' access to welfare provision over immigrants' access.

25.3 Setting up the experiment

Although Wim is an expert on survey research, as he designed several over the course of his academic career, survey experiments are rather novel to him, with the exception of important contributions in the most recent welfare attitudes module of the European Social Survey 2016. Therefore, to design an experiment with great detail, we used Wim's insights into the CARIN-criteria, and got further inspired by related studies on immigrant prejudice (for example Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014) to make illogical combinations (for example a political refugee from Poland) impossible. More information on the empirical set-up of our study, fielded in the Netherlands in 2014, can be found in Reeskens and van der Meer (2017, 2019).

In our study, we asked whether a fictitious unemployed welfare claimant with a number of characteristics should receive (a) more than 70 per cent of his latest income, 70 per cent, less than 70 per cent, or should receive no unemployment provision whatsoever. Because we wanted to identify the importance of the identity-criterion relative to other relevant deservingness criteria, we were first and foremost interested in cultural distance. We distinguished between a fictitious native-born welfare claimant (Daan), a European welfare claimant (Riza from Kosovo), a welfare claimant from a former Dutch colony (Aaron from Surinam), a welfare claimant from a country with a history of labor migration to the Netherlands (Mohammed from Morocco) and welfare claimants from a most culturally distant Muslim country (Mullah from Afghanistan). That our endeavor was not unproblematic

either was presented in conference discussions later: colleagues pointed to the Muslim composition of Kosovo, and that Mullah is not a name but a title.

In addition to the identity-criterion, the four other criteria – albeit less relevant for this present study – also entered our experiment. For control we looked at the reason for unemployment, as well as the reason for initial migration. We distinguished between actively looking for a new job and not looking as proxies for favorable attitudes. For reciprocity, we extended actively looking for a new job with doing voluntary work (that is, doing something in return for the community), as well as whether or not the welfare claimant had a consistent labor market trajectory. Also, we looked at the age of the fictitious welfare claimant, as Wim’s research continuously hints about the fact that the elderly are perceived as most deserving because they already made their duties to society. Need, last but not least, was unraveled in two elements, namely whether the claimant had a high or low salary, and whether he was childless, had two or had four children. Yet, these four remaining criteria are not part of this essay; the relative importance can be checked in two publications (Reeskens and van der Meer, 2017, 2019).

Because we are mostly interested in whether the gap between the perceived deservingness of native welfare claimant Daan and of the native immigrant (whether that is Riza, Aron, Mohammed or Mullah) is equal across the political spectrum, we need to distinguish between the political parties the Dutch can align to. Here we first discern the Socialist Party (SP), which is the economically most leftwing party but rather ambivalent on cultural issues. The social-democratic Labor Party (PvdA) is somewhat more moderate than ambivalent in both respects. In the middle of the political spectrum, we consider the liberal party D66, which is economically rightwing, but progressive on cultural and ethical issues. Next, we consider the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), which is rather rightwing, in terms of economics,

culture and particularly ethics. Further to the right, we find the Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), which is more outspoken rightwing on economic and cultural issues, but not on ethical issues. Finally, the Freedom Party (PVV) is conventionally positioned at the right of the Dutch party system due to its outspoken anti-immigrant discourse, although it is rather ambivalent in terms of its social policy agenda. Not all political parties that dominate the political spectrum nowadays have been considered in this experiment. Parties like Thierry Baudet's Forum for Democracy, or the ecological party Green Left were left out because they respectively did not exist yet or were too small back then.

25.4 The outcomes

We present the findings of our study in a straightforward bar chart, for the reason that randomization of all attributes over vignettes, and the random assignment of vignettes to respondents allows simple statistical analyses (see Figure 25.1). Important to emphasize is that across the board (because all other criteria are randomized), immigrant welfare claimants receive lower levels of solidarity than native welfare claimants; findings that we already discussed in earlier publications and that align with Wim's studies on welfare deservingness (van Oorschot, 2000; van Oorschot, 2006; Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012). Noticeable is that generally, people also do not categorically want to exclude immigrant welfare claimants from unemployment provision. That only applies to a minority of the native population.

However, there is large variation across the electorates in welfare chauvinism (the differential access to welfare for natives and immigrants). The biggest distinction made is among the party members of Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom. We see that 70 per cent of Wilders' electorate would grant unemployed Daan 70 per

cent or more welfare provision of his latest income. In case this unemployed person is of foreign origin, this drops to 40 per cent. This means that there is a deservingness gap of 30 percentage points between natives and foreign-born people.

No other party electorate reports equally sizeable deservingness gaps. However, the left-wing SP, Christian-Democratic CDA, and conservative VVD voters report similar deservingness gaps of approximately 15 percentage points; nevertheless, the starting points are different. As a left-wing party, solidarity is on average rather high among the electorate of the SP. Almost 90 per cent perceives a native unemployed person as deserving of 70 per cent of his latest income. The gap of slightly more than 15 percentage points with immigrants implies that still a lion's share of the SP-electorate perceives immigrants as deserving of a generous unemployment provision. Lower levels of solidarity are present among the conservative electorates of the CDA and VVD, where respectively approximately 75 and 65 per cent of the electorates want to grant immigrants 70 per cent or less of the latest income. With a deservingness gap of 15 percentage points, this means that half of the VVD voters who received the immigrant vignette thinks the depicted immigrant should receive 70 per cent or more.

Most egalitarian are voters of the social-democratic PvdA and the left-liberal D66, with deservingness gaps close to five percentage points. While voters of PvdA are generally in favor of a generous welfare state, they also favor immigrants to have an equal amount of welfare provision. Similarly, albeit the economically more conservative voters of D66 are slightly less in favor of state intervention, they still do not make major distinctions between native claimants and those of foreign origin. Yet, for the electorates of both parties, it needs to be said that there is somewhat more variation among support for the most generous position, namely granting welfare claimants more than 70 per cent of the latest income. Therefore, claiming that even among the

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voters of the most progressive parties, no distinction is being made between natives and immigrants therefore does not hold.

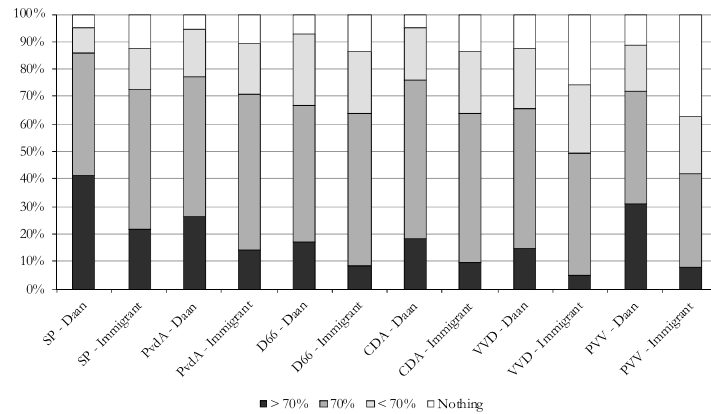


Figure 25.1 *Perceived welfare deservingness of native and immigrant welfare claimants along electoral lines*

25.5 To conclude

In this essay, we wanted to celebrate Wim's scholarship by showing recent evidence on the perceived deservingness of natives and immigrants across the political spectrum. Using Wim's CARIN-criteria, earlier studies have shown the relevance of identity as an important criterion for why immigrants are perceived as less deserving of welfare provision than native welfare claimants. However, less is clear about the extent to which such welfare chauvinist views exist among different parts of the electorate. In some of his studies, Wim preferred to unravel political left-right ideology into its economic and cultural axis. The importance of separating both dimensions is of particular

importance because of the peculiar Dutch party constellation where the economic and cultural axis do not always coincide.

More precisely, we show that the economic and cultural axis work independently. On the one hand, voters of economically left-wing parties are also most in favor of generous welfare provision. On the other hand, we show that the cultural axis predicts solidarity with immigrants, as less solidarity is given by voters of monocultural parties. The result is that the largest welfare chauvinism is common among the voters of the right-wing Party for Freedom (PVV), followed by the economically most left-wing, albeit somewhat monocultural Socialist Party (SP) voters. Less chauvinistic are voters of the social-democratic PvdA and the left-liberal D66, although they also have a slightly greater preference for unemployed claimants of Dutch than of foreign origin.

The findings speak to Wim's work. First, it shows that not everyone is equally favorable of granting immigrants unrestricted access to the welfare state. Rather, granting such access to welfare provision is conditional upon individual ideological dispositions. Embracing monocultural parties translates into perceiving welfare claimants as rather undeserving of welfare. Second, at the micro-level, our study also nuances the 'new liberal' or 'progressive dilemma', as electorates of the left-wing parties do not show the most outspoken chauvinist positions, rather the opposite. While some chauvinism is present among the SP-voters, inclusive orientations are found among voters of the PvdA and the left-liberal D66. The negative interpretation reads that welfare chauvinism is present across the political spectrum, even among the electorate of social-democratic and progressive parties, albeit at different levels. The positive interpretation reads that these voters are less likely to distinguish between welfare claimants by their native or foreign origin. This is relevant and remarkable in the light of ongoing discussions about the sustainability of welfare state solidarity in the age of migration.

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