European comparisons in welfare state legitimacy - its relationship to social control attitudes, attitudes towards immigrants and social trust

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CASE Welfare Policy and Analysis Seminar
Outline

• Context: welfare attitudes in Europe
• Normative approach: normative beliefs as predictors of welfare attitudes
• Part I: Between-country differences in welfare attitude formation
  – Attitudes towards immigrants
  – Distrust
• Part II: Within-country differences in welfare attitude formation
• Conclusion: Welfare attitudes in context
Support for the welfare state in Europe

Source: European Social Survey, 2008
Support for the welfare state in Europe

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Support for the welfare state in Europe

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Support for the welfare state in Europe

Source: European Social Survey, 2008
Welfare states under pressure

Financial crisis & austerity

Immigration

Lack of trust

Crime
Normative beliefs as predictors

- Different factors related to policy attitudes
- Normative beliefs as shared views about social relations, constitutive of social reality
- Ethnocentrism: immigrants seen as a threat
- Social control: need to control deviance and crime
- Distrust: others cannot be trusted

Staerklé, C., Likki. T., & Scheidegger, R. chapter in Svallfors (2012)
Part I: Country comparisons

- European Social Survey 2008
- 28 countries, N = 54 988
- Government responsibility measure:

  People have different views on what the responsibilities of governments should or should not be. Is it the government’s responsibility…
  - …to ensure a job for everyone who wants one?
  - …to ensure adequate health care for the sick?
  - …to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the old?
  - …to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed?

- Overall alpha: .79, (.62-.87)
Social position

• Education level

• **Material vulnerability:** Perceived likelihood of life course events with negative material consequences occurring in the next 12 months
  1. *getting unemployed and looking for work*
  2. *not having enough money for household necessities*
  3. *not receiving health care in case of illness*
  4. *having less time for paid work than desired because of the care given to family members*
Multilevel analysis: Level-1 Effects of Social Position on Welfare Attitudes (scale 0-100)

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>Material Vulnerability</td>
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</table>
• Ethnocentrism
  (overall alpha = .88, .76-.91)
  – Is it generally bad or good for [country]’s economy that people come to live here from other countries?
  – Is [country]’s cultural life generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?
  – Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?
• **Social control** (overall alpha = .56, .33-.64)
  – *People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days*
  – *Schools must teach children to obey authority*
  – *If a man is suspected of planning a terrorist attack in [country], the police should have the power to keep him in prison until they are satisfied he was not involved*

• **Distrust** (overall alpha = .81, .68 -. 85)
  *You can’t be too careful with people*
  *Most people try to take advantage of you*
  *People mostly look out for themselves*
• **Welfare dependency** (overall alpha = .79, .71-.84)
  – **Social benefits and services in [country]**
    • …make people lazy?
    • …make people less willing to care for one another?
    • …make people less willing to look after themselves and their family?
  – **Most unemployed people do not really try to find a job**
  – **Employees often pretend they are sick in order to stay at home**

• **Egalitarianism**
  – **For a society to be fair, differences in people’s standard of living should be small**
# Level-1 Effects of Social Position and Normative Beliefs on Welfare Attitudes

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<tr>
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<th>Normative beliefs</th>
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Social expenditure * Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism predicts welfare state opposition only in high social expenditure countries (e.g., Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany)
Unemployment level * Distrust

- Low Unemployment (-1 SD)
- High Unemployment (+1 SD)

B = .95***
B = -.24
Part II: Attitude patterns within countries

Background:

• Culture of control (Garland, 2001); new punitiveness (Young, 2007)
  – Social control replaces redistribution as an answer to social problems

• What happens on the individual level? What is the relationship between solidarity and control? Is control replacing solidarity? If so, among whom?
## Typology of solidarity-control

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<th>Solidarity</th>
<th>Social control Low</th>
<th>Social control High</th>
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<td>High</td>
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<td>Social-repressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Minimalist</td>
<td>Repressive</td>
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Rokeach (1973): freedom and equality

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freedom High</th>
<th>Freedom Low</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equality</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Socialism</td>
<td>Communism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>Fascism</td>
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Hierarchical cluster analysis: Solidarity-Control Typology (UK)

Socials (16.3%)
Repressives (40.4%)
Minimalists (8.1%)
Social-repressives (35.2%)

Solidarity: 7.7, 6.85, 5.16, 8.75; 4.83, 8.19, 6.48, 8.24
Control: 8.24, 8.24, 6.48, 8.75
## Size of groups in UK, France and Germany (%)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Socials</th>
<th>Repressives</th>
<th>Minimalists</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>16.3</td>
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<td>25.5</td>
<td>20.3</td>
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</table>
Characteristics of each group

• **Socials:**
  Highly educated and well-off individuals with low levels of social distrust and physical insecurity

• **Repressives:**
  Individuals with low education, but also low subjective material vulnerability, for whom the world is a dangerous place and others cannot be trusted

• **Minimalists:**
  Carefree individuals with no material or security concerns

• **Social-repressives:**
  Individuals who live in material, physical and social insecurity and call for protection in all these areas
Conclusion

• Normative beliefs are closely related to support for the welfare state

• However, the meaning they take on with regard to the welfare state differs 1) as a function of the country context and 2) as a function of individual characteristics

• The social reality individuals encounter determines the relationship between normative beliefs, such as social control, and welfare state legitimacy
Thank you for your attention!

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