

Identity and the Welfare State: evolving challenges for sustaining social solidarity

#LSEBeveridge #LSEFestival

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Welfare Conditionality

SANCTIONS, SUPPORT AND
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Identity and the welfare state: the challenge of welfare conditionality for
sustaining social solidarity

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Welfare conditionality: sanctions, support and behaviour change (2013-2018)

Twin aims:

- To consider the ethics and efficacy of welfare conditionality
- Fieldwork with three sets of respondents:
 1. Semi-structured interviews with 54 Policy Stakeholders
 2. 27 focus groups with frontline welfare practitioners who implement policy
 3. Three rounds of repeat qualitative longitudinal interviews with a diverse sample of (n. 482 wave a, total 1,083 interviews) welfare recipients who are subject to welfare conditionality

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Welfare conditionality?

■ A principle of (behavioural) conditionality

Access to certain basic publicly provided welfare benefits and services should “be subject to the condition that those who receive them behave in particular ways, or participate in specified activities” (Deacon, 1994: 53)

■ Conditions of ‘conduct’

“Behavioural requirements and constraints imposed upon different kinds of benefit recipients through legislation of administrative guidance” (Clasen and Clegg, 2007 :174)

■ Understanding welfare conditionality

Sanctions and support (‘sticks’ and ‘carrots’) (e.g. Gregg, 2008)

‘Amorphous’ (behaving responsibly) – ‘concrete’ (tightly specified) conditionality (Paz-Fuchs, 2008)

Implications of welfare conditionality for the 21st century welfare state

5

- **Social citizenship reconfigured: emergence of the ‘conditional welfare state’ (Dwyer, 1998 - 2017)**

From ‘creeping conditionality’ to ‘ubiquitous conditionality’

A distortion or a correction of social citizenship?

- **A shift from the collective to the individual**

The conditional welfare state locates the causes and solutions of ‘welfare dependency’ firmly at the door of recipients of social welfare

- **Undermines the collectivism /universalism central to Beveridge/ THM’s vision of a universal welfare state**

Promotes a divide: **US** (responsible worker/citizens) **Them** (irresponsible shirkers)

- **Marginalises other forms of social contribution**
- **Right to welfare on basis of need undermined**
- **Universal Credit extends the definition of ‘welfare dependency’**

Impacts of welfare conditionality

■ Sanctions

My daughter could not attend school for two weeks. I didn't have any money for that; you have to give her some money every day for some lunch and for a bus (Migrant, male, Scotland)

I got sanctioned for a month...It made me shoplift to tell you the truth. I couldn't survive with no money. I was homeless. (Homeless man, England)

■ Support

It doesn't get people into work. Nothing in what they've done to me has assisted me in getting back into the employment market. (Disabled woman, Scotland)

I don't know where I would have been if I didn't get the help that I did get. Things could have come out a lot worse. (ASB, female, England)

■ A culture of counterproductive compliance

My job was solely to prove to that woman that I had applied for so many jobs, and that was it...whatever jobs were available. Whether they were suitable for me, whether I was suitable for them, whatever, it didn't matter. (UC claimant , male England)

■ For the majority WC does not work as intended by advocates

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Solidarity: what establishes and constitutes a community

Social order: the norms, rules and laws that define our living together

The nation-state, Globalization and Migration



Give meaning to unfamiliar events: a Social Representations approach

Identities socially constructed, shared and debated
They enact define and orient the COMMON PROJECT

WHO we are, WHY we are together and WHAT we do together

The common project: issues of power and Status



Solidarity defines what we believe as just and legitimate within the common project

How resources are distributed ?

Who is the legitimate recipient of resources ?



National Contract

- Recipients of resources are unquestioned: all nationals have equal right to resources
- Resources are unequally distributed (intellectual and manual work distinction)
- **Conflict between Social Classes**

Multicultural Contract

- Recipients or resources are questioned: WHO DESERVES THE RESOURCES
- Emphasis on symbolic and non on material issues
- A conflict of recognition of deserving recipients becomes a
- **Conflict between Cultural groups**

Towards a New Social Contract: What is the project?



- **Moral Order**: similarity, conformity, SECURITY Good Vs Bad people → deserving recipients
- **Free Market**: competition, productivity, individual contributions. MOBILITY/MERIT. Winners Vs Losers → Welfare dependency
- **Social Diversity**: ascribed memberships STABILITY. Us Vs Them → excluding migrants
- **Structural Inequalities**: social hierarchies. EQUALITY. Dominants Vs Dominated → redistributive and universalist welfare

There are many avenues: which one we will choose? Beyond (false) fears...



Cohesion based on

- similarity, likeness and conformity (mechanical solidarity)
- Interdependence and bonds of solidarity between different parties in terms of common grievances (organic solidarity)

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