



Resilient Personalities?

Tim Reeskens (Tilburg) & Leen Vandecasteele (Tübingen)
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Hard times and European youth. The effect of economic insecurity on human values, social attitudes and well-being

Tim Reeskens¹ and Leen Vandecasteele²

¹Department of Sociology, Tilburg School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Tilburg, The Netherlands

²Department of Sociology, University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany

While economic downturns have adverse effects on young people's life chances, empirical studies examining whether and to what extent human values, social attitudes and well-being indicators respond to sudden economic shocks are scarce. To assess the claim that human values are less affected by economic shocks than social attitudes and well-being, two distinct yet related studies based on the European Social Survey (ESS) are conducted. The first employs a fixed effects pseudo-panel analysis of the 2008–2014 ESS-waves to detect whether changes over time in the socio-demographic group's unemployment risk and national youth unemployment affect individual dispositions to varying degrees. The second study captures micro- and cross-national effects in the 2010 ESS cross-section. Unique for this set-up is that we can test whether the findings hold for over-time changes in youth unemployment within countries (pseudo-panel), as well as for cross-country differences in youth unemployment (multilevel). Both studies indicate that political trust, satisfaction with the economy and subjective well-being are lowered by economic risk and hardship, while social trust and self-rated health are less affected by changes in youth unemployment. Secondly, human values are immune to economic risk, underscoring that values transcend specific situations and are therefore resistant against sudden economic shocks.

Keywords: Economic insecurity; Human values; Subjective well-being; Cross-national analysis; Pseudo-panel design.

Study into Resilience

- Achieving satisfactory outcomes after exposure to risks
 - E.g. current economic crisis
- Strong emphasis on material properties
 - E.g. welfare effort
- Less emphasis on immaterial properties
 - A lot of emphasis on social capital
- Turning the attention on personality traits
 - In competition with material properties

Human Values Perspective

“concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors that transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and are ordered by relative importance”
(Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, p. 551)

- Socialized at a young age
- Motivational in character
- Might explain why some are more resilient than others

Expectations: Which Traits Help Overcoming Poverty?

- Active sociable involvement with others, good peer relationships, relating to positive role models (Garmezy, 1991)
 - An orientation on others instead of focusing on self-enhancement
- Autonomy, internal locus of control, hope, self-efficacy (Garmezy 1991, Rouse 1998; Taylor, Distelberg 2016, Seccombe 2002)
 - Self-direction and stimulation instead of rule-following and safety
- Are these immaterial traits in competition with material properties?
 - I.e. are values more important in less encompassing welfare states?
 - Compensation thesis



2010 wave
all countries

Dependent Variable: Subjective Well-Being

- All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? (0 = extremely dissatisfied | 10 = extremely satisfied)
- Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are? (0 = extremely unhappy | 10 = extremely happy)

- $\rho = 0.722$; $p < 0.000$

Independent Variable: Perceived Economic Hardship

Using this card, please tell me to what extent each of the following has applied to you in the last three years (0 = not at all | 6 = a great deal)

Factor Loading

I have had to manage on a lower household income

0.810

I have had to draw on my savings or get into debt to cover ordinary living expenses

0.808

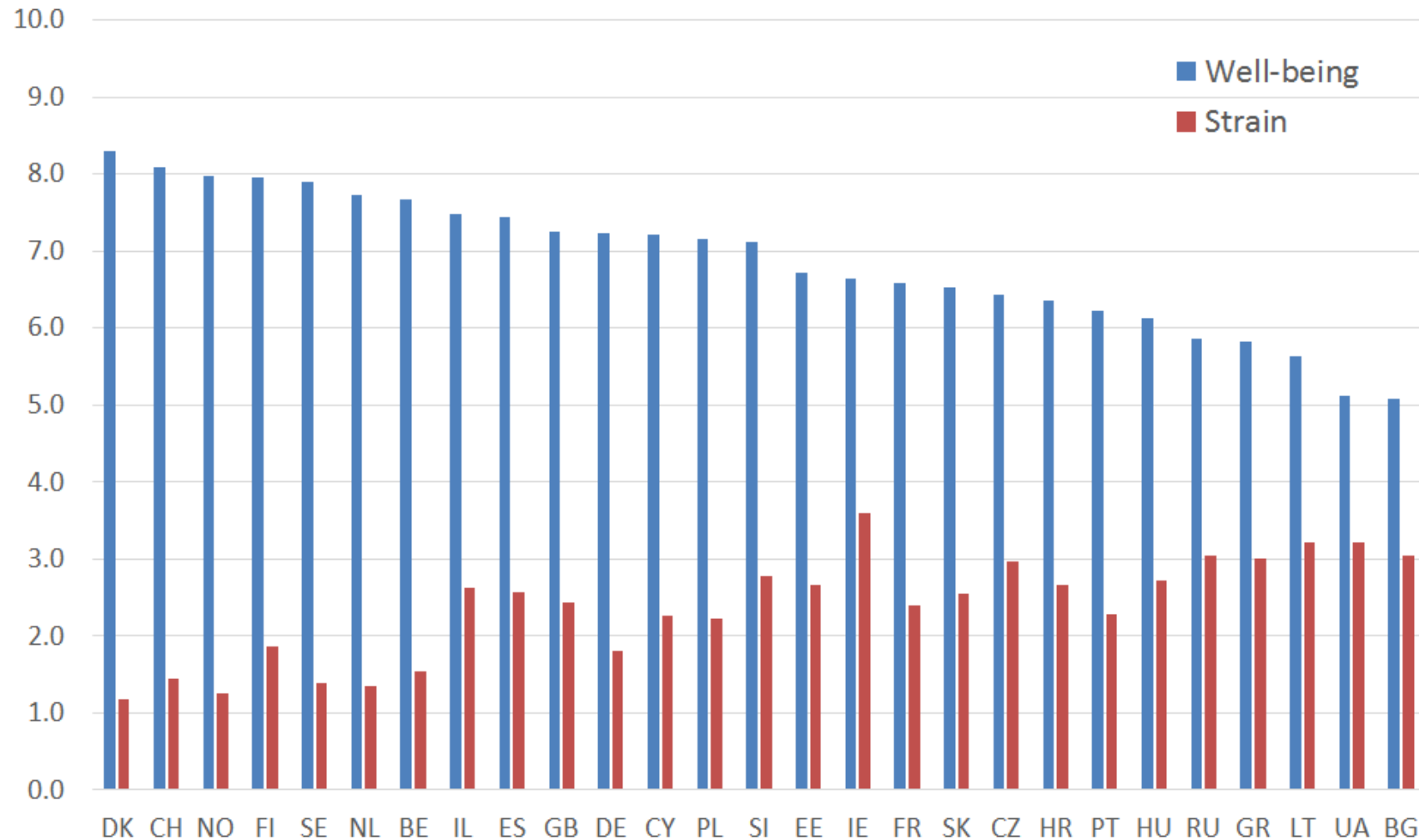
I have had to cut back on holidays or new household equipment

0.755

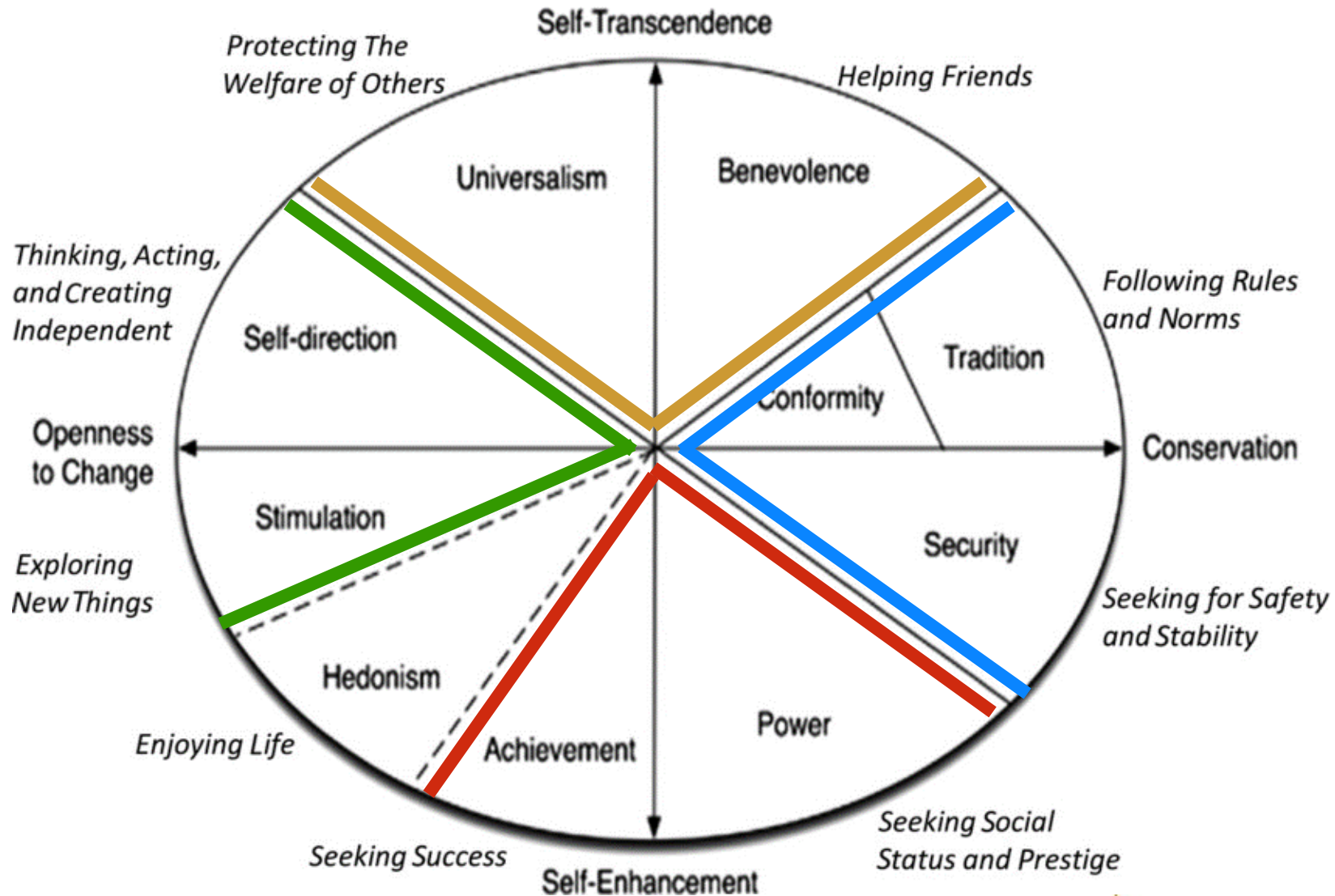
Cronbach's alpha: 0.833

Distribution across Europe

Subjective Well-Being and Perceived Economic Strain, ESS 2010



Moderator Variables: Human Values



Coding Human Values

- See Schwartz his contribution on ESS-website
- Relative importance (to cancel out response styles)
- Analysis as independent variable: problem of multicollinearity
- In this paper:
 - The importance of doing good to others over importance on self
= self-transcendence – self-enhancement
 - The importance of creativity over rigidity
= openness-to-change – conservation

Analytical Strategy

- M0: Well-being regressed on perceived economic strain
 - M1: M0 + Controls
 - M2: M1 + Human values
 - M3a: M2 + Interaction of strain * transcendence over enhancement
 - M3b: M2 + Interaction of strain * openness over conservation
 - M4: M2 + Both interactions
- Multilevel analysis to control for clustering
- Regular controls that explain subjective well-being
= Age + Age Squared, Gender, Education, Income, Work Status

Results (1): The Numbers

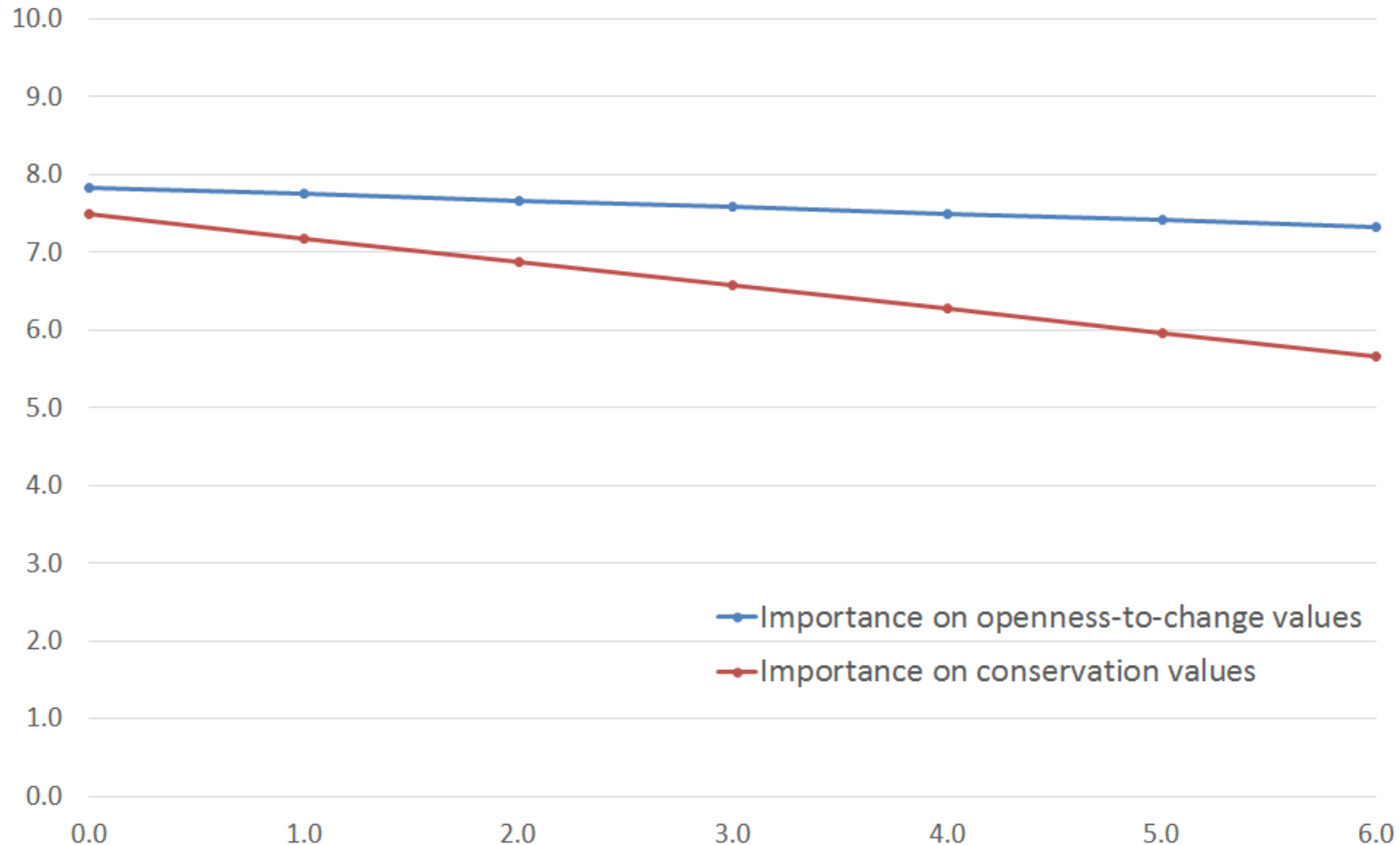
	M0: Strain	M1: + Contr	M2: + Values	M3a: + Trans	M3b: + Openn	M4: Full
Intercept	7.49***	7.75***	7.70***	7.68***	7.67***	7.67***
Economic Strain	-0.26***	-0.20***	-0.20***	-0.19***	-0.19***	-0.19***
Transcend – Enhance			0.10***	0.12***	0.11***	0.11***
Open – Conservation			0.09***	0.09***	0.04***	0.04***
Strain * Transcend				-0.01*		-0.00
Strain * Open					0.02***	0.02***

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

Creativity stimulates resilience!?

Results (2): The Graph

The Impact of Openness on the Effect of Strain on Well-Being



Results (3): The Comparative Part

	DK	BG	RU	NL	IE
Intercept	8.00***	7.39***	8.05***	8.35***	6.79***
Economic Strain	-0.10***	-0.18***	-0.24***	-0.20***	-0.11***
Transcend – Enhance	0.08*	-0.17**	0.04	0.13**	0.29***
Open – Conservation	0.02	0.17*	0.10	0.11**	-0.16
Strain * Open	-0.01	0.03	0.00	-0.03*	0.05*

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

Pooling effect? To be continued!

Conclusion

- Comparative research on resilience is growing
 - Material vs immaterial cushions
- High hopes on human values
 - Theoretically, it makes a lot of sense
- Happiness depends on finding doing good to others and creativity important
- The importance of openness also seems to bring about resilience
- At first glance, a pooling effect? More to be done!