

Class and social policy in the knowledge economy

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Abstract

Recent studies of welfare state attitudes in the knowledge economy find very high generalized support for generous welfare state policies, both among the working and the middle classes. Has class become irrelevant as a predictor of social policy preferences? Or do we simply misconceptualize today's class conflict over social policy? To what extent has it changed from a divide over the *level* of social policy generosity to a divide over the *kind* of social policy and – more specifically – the *relative priorities* that should be given to different social policies? Answering these questions is not only relevant to understand welfare politics in the 21st century, but electoral politics, as well: Only when we understand what working- and middle class voters care about, can we evaluate the role distributive policies play in electoral processes. We use original survey data from eight West European countries from the ERC-project “welfarepriorities” to show that middle and working class respondents indeed differ in the relative importance they attribute to social investment and social consumption policies. Middle class respondents consistently attribute higher absolute and relative importance to social investment. We also show that this emphasis on investive policies relates to the middle class expecting better subjective future economic and social opportunities for themselves and/or their children than the working class. This divide in anticipated economic and social opportunities underlies a new kind of working- vs. middle-class divide, which contributes to transforming the class divide from a conflict over the level of social policy to a conflict over the priorities of social policy.

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1. Introduction

Is there still a class divide over social policy in the knowledge economy of the 21st century, and if yes, what is it fought over and what drives different class preferences? While diverging class interests over social policy seemed obvious, and indeed were at the very center of early theories of welfare state emergence and development (in particular the power resource theory, (Esping-Andersen 1985; Korpi 1983; Stephens 1979), this has become a theoretical and empirical question over the past two decades. Indeed, as predicted by theories of the new politics of the welfare state (Pierson 2001), generalized support for existing social policy provision today is so massive that it transcends by far both the working class and the electorate of the Left. These high levels of state provision of social security reflect strong generalized welfare state support also among the middle and upper classes, while the working class has always supported generous social benefits.

Pierson himself attributed middle class support for generous social policy to the endogenous constituency formation of maturing welfare states, with all citizens becoming stakeholders of generous provision. Other theories underlined more specific drivers of middle-class support for the welfare state, e.g. universalism (Korpi and Palme 1998), skill specificity (Iversen and Soskice 2001), specific risks the middle class is not being spared from (Häusermann *et al.* 2015; Jensen 2012; Rehm 2016), or the spread of egalitarian values among the new middle class (Kitschelt 1994; Beramendi *et al.* 2015). And with existing welfare states strongly bolstering support via feedback mechanisms (e.g. Svallfors 1997), we today observe generalized levels of support that approach unanimity. Garritzmann *et al.* (2018) recently showed that across Western Europe, about 75-85% of respondents in representative surveys support a further expansion of higher education, childcare services and labor market training. Support for further expanding pension benefits is lower, but that is only because pension systems in most countries are highly developed already, and hence their further expansion does not reflect the issues that are at stake on the political agendas properly. Hence, when turning the perspective around, data from the ISSP 2016 shows similarly high levels of support for old age pension provision: over 90% of respondents across Europe disagree with cutting back pension benefits, a finding that is confirmed in our own data (below). Hence, generalized support levels can be seen as high across the different social policy schemes.

These findings would imply that all political parties have an incentive to promise expansive social policies and – furthermore – that they should manage to appeal to voters on the basis of these promises. However, that does not seem to be the case. For one, parties still do differ strongly in the extent to which they emphasize social policy in their electoral platforms (Green-Pedersen and Jensen (forthcoming)), with the Left clearly leading the rank order. However, despite this difference in party supply and given the preference patterns observed above, the Left seems to have a hard time mobilizing growing electoral shares on the basis of their expansive social policy programs, especially among the working class (e.g. Oesch and Rennwald 2018). One explanation for this puzzle could be that voters simply care more about other “second dimension” issues (such as cultural liberalism, migration flows or international integration), rather than about social policy, a claim that has been made prominently for many years now (e.g. Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi *et al.* 2008, 2012; Beramendi *et al.* 2015). According to such an argument, parties – and left-wing parties in particular – would simply not be able to capitalize on pro-welfare policy appeals because these appeals do not resonate with the voters’ most salient demands. However, measures of issue saliency among voters qualify this argument: while it is true that new “second dimension”-issues have massively gained in saliency, social security keeps ranking among the top priorities of citizens, also among the working class (Rovny and Polk 2019; Traber *et al.* 2018). Hence, there is most likely more to the story than the saliency of the economic-distributive dimension of electoral competition alone.

In this paper, we propose that the focus on *generalized* welfare support and saliency masks the fact that working- and middle class voters prioritize *different kinds* of welfare provision. More specifically, we test whether middle class voters attribute higher importance to *social investment policies* as opposed to working class voters. Social investment policies are social policies that “create, preserve or maintain human capital” (Garritzmann *et al.* 2017), i.e. which invest in the capacity of individuals to support themselves, particularly in the context of the knowledge economy where skills are a crucial factor. We hypothesize that the class divide over social policy in the 21st century may lie not so much in the overall level of welfare provision citizens support, but in the kind of welfare provision that is *prioritized*. Priorities become more relevant, because both elites and citizens perceive the context of distributive politics as being constrained by budgetary limits. In our survey of 12’000 citizens in eight West European countries, no less than eighty percent of the respondents think that the limits of taxation have been reached, and over two thirds of respondents think that social policy improvements for one

social group come at the expense of other social groups. Hence, irrespective of whether there indeed is or is not a budgetary constraint on the welfare state, such a zero-sum thinking is very much real in the perception of voters, and it fundamentally transforms the ways in which social policy matters to political decisions. While almost all citizens may wish to expand various benefit levels, to support families and to improve schools, they are very likely to differ in the importance they attribute to these different considerations. By implication, programmatic social policy appeals may only resonate with voters when they target their priorities.

Hardly any research to day has studied either these priorities, their determinants or their implications, and this is no surprise, as we largely lacked adequate data (see, however, Gallego and Marx 2017; Busemeyer and Garritzmann 2017; Häusermann *et al.* 2018; Bremer and Bürgisser 2018 as contributions starting to address this idea). In this paper, we introduce a newly collected dataset on social policy attitudes in eight Western European countries, which includes extensive and varied measures of priorities for different policy fields and logics of welfare provision, in particular social investment policies vs. social consumption policies (Beramendi *et al.* 2015).

This data allows us to study the prevalence and determinants of a post-industrial class divide regarding social investment reforms. Our findings generate two key contributions. First, we show that working- and middle-class citizens differ consistently and systematically in the absolute and relative importance they attribute to social investment. Second, we show that how individuals evaluate their economic and social opportunities in society closely relates to these priorities, and is an important mechanism linking class and priority. Together, these two contributions provide evidence for a new type of political-economic class divide over social policy in Western Europe.

The paper is structured as follows. The theory section develops the main concepts of the study in terms of policies, social class and distributive preferences, and proposes two hypotheses on the prevalence and driver of a supposed class divide over priorities. The subsequent section introduces the new dataset and the key measures. In terms of findings, a first part of the analyses compares class differences regarding positions and priorities, while a second part tests economic opportunities as a determinant of valuing social investment. The final section concludes and discusses implications for and beyond welfare politics.

2. Theory

Mass politics, social class and social policy – the trinity of European democracy in the 20th century - have been pronounced incapable of explaining politics in the 21st century by a sizeable share of literature in comparative politics and comparative political economy over the past decade. At the most general level, the literature on cartelization, producer group politics and winner-takes-all politics (e.g. Mair 2004, Hopkin and Blyth 2018; Hacker and Pierson 2010; Baccaro and Pontusson 2016) has argued that electoral politics has become hollowed out and largely inconsequential for policy outcomes. This statement was based on the idea of a hegemony of dominant business interests, and a convergence of governing parties on both economically and socially liberal policy-positions. However, the recent electoral turmoil, with right-wing nationalist parties and candidates unexpectedly winning major decisions at the polls, has shed a clearer light than before on an ongoing repolarization of mass politics that has been going on for two decades at least (Beramendi *et al.* 2015; Hall 2018), with massive consequences on policies both in the socio-economic and the socio-cultural realms.

Mass politics may not follow the same dynamics as until the 1990s, but that does not mean it is dead. The same may go for class as a determinant of these mass politics. Much has been written about the decline of class voting and class politics, referring mostly to the declining capacity of working class membership to predict vote choice for the Left (e.g. Evans 1999; Knutsen 2006; Evans and Tilley 2017). In the field of comparative political economy, more specific theories on the endogenous growth of the welfare state have similarly predicted class divides to fade in the 21st century, as citizens throughout social strata have become stakeholders of the existing welfare state (Pierson 2001). Indeed, several studies have shown that class predicts attitudes only when it comes to very concentrated risks (Rehm 2016; Jensen 2012), but does not carry much explanatory power when it comes to the pillars of the 20th century welfare state such as health and pensions. Against this literature, studies on the electoral realignment of mass politics have shown that working- and middle class voters indeed continue to hold very different preferences, and that they also keep acting on these differences. However, many have argued that the most consequential differences are not to be found anymore regarding their general economic-distributive attitudes (such as welfare generosity or progressivity), but regarding their preferences on policy issues that form a second dimension of political conflict, opposing liberal-universalistic attitudes to traditional-particularistic ones

(Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi *et al.* 2008; Häusermann and Kriesi 2015; Ares 2017). In other words: class politics is very much alive, but it plays out mostly on issues (both socio-cultural and socio-economic, such as minority rights, gender equality, supranational integration or migration), which are not neatly aligned politically with the traditional economic-distributive left-right conflict.

This brings us to the last element of the trinity evoked above, social policy. As outlined in the introduction, very high generalized levels of welfare state support across different social classes (in particular across the old working class and the new middle class) may suggest at first glance that a class divide *over social policy* has indeed waned. However, a more recent literature in comparative political economy studies how socio-economic distributive policies themselves have transformed, and identifies new orientations of social policy, such as social investment (Hemerijck 2013), new social risks (Bonoli 2005), welfare chauvinism (Afonso and Rennwald 2018) or negative activation (Bonoli 2013; Knotz 2016), which not only seem to reflect the class polarization on the abovementioned “second dimension”-issues (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015), but which also contribute to re-politicizing class in the area of social policy itself (Beramendi *et al.* 2015) through various socio-economic and socio-cultural mechanisms.

In this study, we focus on *social investment* as one such key area of welfare state reform on the current agendas of West European countries. Social investment policies differ in their logic of welfare provision from traditional forms of social security schemes. Their function is not to de-commodify citizens, but to “produce, preserve and mobilize” human capital, in order to support citizens’ earnings capacity (Garrizmann *et al.* 2017). Social investment, however, is not the same as activation, certainly not negative activation. While negative, sanctioning activation policies (“workfare”) pursue the goal of commodification and – oftentimes – fiscal retrenchment, social investment pursues the dual goal of social inclusion and economic prosperity through employment opportunities and good work conditions. In such an understanding, social investment policies have become a very influential social policy paradigm across Western Europe since the 2000s (Hemerijck 2013; Morel *et al.* 2012). Social investment policies differ from traditional, “consumption”-oriented social policies in two main ways: first, social consumption policies also provide material security, but do not aim at

enhancing or improving human capital and citizens' own earnings chances in the labor market². Second, social consumption policies entail financial transfers that not only have an immediate distributive effect, but that also make the beneficiaries of transfers clearly identifiable. When it comes to social investment, on the other hand, costs occur in the immediate, but returns are both temporally distant and also more uncertain in distributive terms. The two orientations of social policy (investment and consumption) are not mutually exclusive or antagonistic. Rather they can indeed be very much complementary (as in the traditional Nordic model of welfare provision), but politically, they reflect different objectives and logics of how social policy sustains security and inclusion. This is why political conflict over social investment is structured – both at the level of voters and at the level of political parties - in ways that differ from conflict over social consumption policies (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015; Garritzmann *et al.* 2018a; Häusermann 2018).

Several studies have hypothesized that the preferences of working- and middle-class voters on social investment and consumption might differ. Two main mechanisms have been advanced for such a possible difference in demand. First, several studies have shown “Matthew effects” of social investment policies, i.e. regressive distributive effects that are due to policy design and to the fact that middle- and upper class citizens seem to know better how to benefit from social investment policies than lower class citizens (such as universal childcare provision, education and training etc.) (Pavolini and Van Lancker 2018; Bonoli and Liechti 2018). Alternatively to such a rational, economic mechanism motivating class differences in preferences, Beramendi *et al.* (2015) have argued that universalistic values, which politically motivate many new middle class voters resonate with the future-oriented logic of social investment, as the benefits of investive social policies can less clearly be targeted to specific beneficiaries. Finally, recent studies have introduced political trust as a determinant of social investment support, since allocating funds to temporally distant outcomes requires trust that the institutions and decision-makers will be able and willing to deliver the goods in the future (Jacobs and Matthews 2017, Garritzmann *et al.* 2018b)). This third determinant is not explicitly framed as a *mechanism* linking class to attitudes, but rather as an independent factor, but since it has been established for a long time that systemic trust is much more widespread among

² Hemerijck's (2018) notion of “welfare buffer”, i.e. policies that allow individuals to uphold their qualifications through income-replacement payments when they are out of work temporarily, includes some of the traditional social insurance policies in the realm of social investment. Typically, unemployment insurance schemes are such a “hybrid” policy with both consumption and investment functions.

middle- and upper class citizens than among the lower classes, it may also act as a mediator linking class to policy support.

All three mechanisms – self-interest, values and trust - might explain different levels of social investment support, i.e. differences in actual policy *positions*. However, while some empirical studies indeed find slightly higher levels of social investment demand among the middle class, the overall finding is again one of very high generalized levels of policy support across different social groups (Bremer 2018; Garritzmann *et al.* 2018a). Social investment policies enjoy very high levels of support, both among the working and the middle class. In economic terms, this is highly plausible, since even if there are distributive “Matthew effects” in a particular policy design, these would be very hard to gauge *ex ante* for citizens. Hence, as long as there is no constraint attached to it, there is no reason not to support expansive social investment policies for working class voters.

We examine in this study whether working- and middle class voters differ in the *importance* they attribute to social investment. Identifying the importance given to a certain policy is different from measuring the position. A constraint or trade-off (i.e. adding a price to a certain policy outcome) is not per se necessary to measure importance, but it is a means to more validly gauge it. In the context of the knowledge economy, the perception of distributive choices being fiscally constrained is very widespread. In our survey, about 80% of respondents from eight West European countries think that the limits of taxation have been reached, and two thirds think that social policy improvements for one social group sooner or later come at the expense of other social groups. Hence, thinking about social policy design in terms of trade-offs is highly realistic to people. For this reason, we argue that political conflict over social policy today is over priority as much as it is over position.

Hence, while we expect both working- and middle class voters to support both social investment and social consumption, we expect a clearer class divide over *priorities* regarding social investment. Why would that be? Our key argument relates to the temporal dimension that distinguishes social investment from social consumption (Jacobs and Matthews 2017, Garritzmann *et al.* 2018b). Social investment involves costs in the present in order to reap benefits in the future. You invest in good schools now to sustain an adequately trained workforce in 10-20 years. You expand good childcare facilities now in order to both allow parents to keep up their earnings potential over the years of childrearing, and to prepare small

children for school and society. You spend money on classes and job councilors in order to support people who are looking for employment. The benefits that arise from these expenses are both temporally distant and they are relatively uncertain in their distributive effect. For this reason, it makes sense to suggest that both political trust and universal values should indeed also predict social investment priorities. However, in addition to these determinants that the literature has theorized, we propose a more *economic mechanism*. We argue that - as with every investment - the importance voters attribute to these social investment policies depends on how they evaluate the future. The more positively people evaluate their future opportunities in work and in life more generally, the more they should be willing to invest, even if it is at the cost of present potential income. However, if people evaluate future opportunities negatively, you would expect them to prioritize current, personal and secure compensation. Social investment pursues the goals of both well-functioning labor markets and social integration, and it holds the promise of intergenerational mobility at its core (Jenson and Mahon 2018). The evaluation of opportunities may thus relate to both labor market prospects, as well as prospects of social integration, and it may refer to both a citizen's own future or their children's. We think of the evaluation of opportunities mainly as mediating variable, linking class differences to social investment priorities, because we expect working- and middle class citizens to differ in their evaluation of opportunities.

Hence, the two key hypotheses of this study are the following:

H1: Middle- and working class voters differ in the importance they attribute to social investment.

H2: The relationship between class and priorities for social investment is mediated by the subjective evaluation of economic and social opportunities.

One open, empirical question in this study is whether importance of social investment is negatively related to importance of social consumption or not. Some theoretical contributions have theorized welfare politics as a trade-off between investment and consumption (Beramendi et al. 2015). However, there is no logical need for a zero-sum game between the two orientations of social policy. Hence, we will examine both the importance attributed to social investment alone (as opposed to any other social policy reform strategy), as well as the *relative* importance attributed to social investment as explicitly opposed to consumption. The second open question obviously relates to country differences. Both the development of social investment policies, as well as their distributive effects differ strongly between countries. We

expect the level of social investment in a country to affect mostly the baseline level of support and importance, rather than the class distribution of it. However, its distributive design might also impact class preferences of course (you would expect lower class differences when social investment is targeted towards lower income-classes, for instance). In this study, while we will obviously control for different country-baselines, we nevertheless focus on a general argument, irrespective of country differences. If anything, country variance should make it harder to identify a consistent class divide over social investment priorities.

3. Data and operationalization

To assess our hypotheses on social investment priorities and its mechanisms, we use original data from a survey conducted in the context of the ERC-project “welfarepriorities” (Häusermann 2017). Data was collected in eight Western European countries with 1500 respondents in each country. The countries were chosen to represent the main welfare regimes in Western Europe: Denmark and Sweden for the social democratic regime, Germany and the Netherlands for the conservative type, Ireland and the United Kingdom for the group of Liberal welfare states, and Italy and Spain as representatives of the Southern regime. The questionnaire and sample design was in our hands, while the actual fieldwork was done in cooperation with a professional survey institute (Bilendi) using their online panels. The target population was a country’s adult population (>18 years). The total sample counts 12506 completed interviews that were conducted between October and December 2018.

Different measures were taken in order to increase the survey’s representativeness and to ensure high quality answers. First, we based our sampling strategy on quota for age, gender, and educational attainment, drawn from national census figures. Age and gender were introduced as crossed quotas, with six age groups (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 66 or older) for both female and male respondents. We used a three-group split for educational attainment quotas, distinguishing between respondents who at the most completed lower secondary education, respondents that have upper- or post-secondary non-tertiary education, and those that completed tertiary education. Beginning the survey, respondents were first asked to answer the socio-demographic questions. Respondents which would have fallen into quotas that were oversampled already, were excluded from the survey directly. The quotas were tracked on a daily basis in order to steer new invitations into the non-filled quota. We were not able to completely reach all quotas which leaves certain groups slightly underrepresented (such

as men aged 18-25 in Denmark and the Netherlands, and women 66 or older and low educated in Ireland). For all other groups we at reached at least 70% of the quota.

Second, we account for remaining bias from survey response by including poststratification weights adjusting for age, gender, educational attainment, and partisanship. All analyses presented here have been conducted using these weights (non-weighted models however do not provide substantially different results). Third, to further ensure high quality data, we included an attention check. We had a so-called trap question included in a matrix of items asking about general political attitudes around half-way through the questionnaire saying: “*Please in this line, choose the option ‘Disagree strongly’*”. Respondents failing to choose the correct answer or those completing the questionnaire too quickly, were restrained from completing the survey resp. excluded from the sample.

The survey includes a wide range of items capturing social policy positions as well as priorities. In the first part of the analysis we show that support for social policies is overall high and that class differences in these *positions* are relatively small. We establish this by looking at five variables that capture support for pensions, childcare, and higher education in different ways. Specifically, we asked: “*To what extent do you agree with the following policy reform proposals? The government should increase old age pension benefits*” and “*The government should reduce old age pension benefits*” to assess support for pensions as the most relevant social consumption policy on the reform agendas of Western Europe and “*The government should expand access to good-quality childcare services*” as well as “*The government should invest more in education*” to capture support for social investment policies. Furthermore, respondents were asked to speak their minds on work-family reconciliation: “*It is the government’s responsibility to support working parents*”. All items have been answered on a 1 (Disagree strongly) to 4 (Agree strongly) scale.

Moreover, the survey includes various items that enable us to measure social policy priorities, and priorities for social investment in particular. As outlined above, focusing on priorities rather than position alone was one of the main aims of the survey. The measurement of priorities is not straightforward however. For this paper, we use variations of two types of questions implemented in the survey: point distribution and trade-off questions.

In the point distribution questions, respondents were asked to allocate 100 points to six items, reflecting the relative importance they attribute to different strategies of welfare state expansion. As described in more detail in Häusermann *et al.* (2018), through this type of question we are able to account for the multidimensionality of welfare preferences while at the same time we pay respect to the constraint that is inherent in the concept of priorities. We implemented two types of these questions: first, we asked interviewees to distribute 100 points to six social policy *reforms* that affect specific groups (e.g. increase good-quality childcare services for everyone). The reforms include measures in the fields of old age pensions, childcare and tertiary education and vary in whether they affect all citizens (universal) or only specific groups (targeted)³. In a second task, respondents were asked to allocate points to social policy *fields*⁴ rather than specific reforms. These questions allow us comparing either simply the points attributed to social investment items, or these points in comparison with points (i.e. importance) allocated to typical social consumption policies.

The second set of priority items consists of trade-off questions of a more direct kind. Respondents were asked to express their opinion regarding a situation in which the increasing benefits in some policy comes with the direct and explicit cost of a decrease in another policy. Hence, the costs of a reform were made very explicit and concrete. In the question reflecting social investment vs. social consumption policies, respondents were asked whether they consider it acceptable if the government increases the availability of good-quality childcare, at the cost of lowering child benefits (i.e. services vs. transfers). Respondents indicated whether they thought this to be completely unacceptable (1), rather unacceptable (2), rather acceptable (3), or completely acceptable (4). Thereby, combining expansion and retrenchment, we gain information about the degree that aversion to cutbacks or preference for expansion shapes responses to the trade-off.

These different measurement strategies allow us to probe the robustness of our main findings. Our analyses focus on childcare and tertiary education as social investment policies and old age pensions as the typical (and financially most relevant) consumption policy. Generally, we

³ The government should...1) ...increase the minimum level of old age pension benefits, 2) ...increase old age pension benefits for everyone, 3) ... increase the availability of good-quality childcare services only for lower-income families, 4)... increase the availability of good-quality childcare services for everyone, 5)...expand access to good quality university education for all students, 6)...expand access to good quality university education only for students from lower-income families.

⁴ Old age pensions, childcare, higher education, unemployment benefits, labor market reintegration services, services for the social and labor market integration of immigrants.

distinguish between measures of social investment priority with consumption as a reference category and without reference to consumption. For the latter, it is the number of points given to childcare and the number of points given to tertiary education in the point distribution questions introduced above. Hence, the variables can take a number between 0 (all of the 100 points available were given to other fields than childcare or tertiary education respectively) and 100 (100 points given to childcare or tertiary education respectively). We focus on policy fields rather than specific reforms, but include reforms to probe robustness. As a relative measure of social investment priorities, we take the sum of points given to childcare and tertiary education and subtract the points given to old age pension expansion, resulting in a possible range between -100 (all points were allocated to pensions) and 100 (all points were given to childcare and tertiary education). In terms of the trade-off question, we used: “*The government increases the availability of good-quality childcare, at a cost of lowering child benefits*” with answers given on a 1 (Completely unacceptable) to 4 (Completely acceptable) scale. Hence, prioritizing social investment in the form of increased availability of childcare services would need to go along with accepting cutbacks in consumptive family policy in the form of lower child benefits.

The main independent variable is class. More specifically, we study differences in social investment preferences between the working and the middle class. A voters’ class position is measured using a two-dimensional class scheme based on marketable skills (high, low) on a hierarchical, and work logic (independent, technical, organizational, interpersonal) on a horizontal dimension (Oesch 2006). The resulting eight-class scheme allows us to identify the working class that includes production workers, clerks, and service workers who are all characterized by low marketable skills. On the other hand, the middle class includes technical specialists, managers, and socio-cultural specialists, who for their part are endowed with high marketable skills. Occupational classes with an independent work logic, regardless of their level of marketability (large employers and small business owners), have been discarded from the analyses. Our proposed mechanism about future opportunities does not necessarily apply to the self-employed. Respondents of the survey have been classified into one of these eight occupational classes based on three open-ended questions asking about their (1) current job, (2) the type of company, and their (3) hierarchical position. Using this operationalization, we end up with 4944 (39.5%) of observations coded as working class while 4436 (35.5%) of respondents belong to the middle class. 695 (5.6%) self-employed have been excluded from the main analyses, as well as 2426 (19.4%) observations for which we do not have information on their occupational class. Alternative operationalizations of class have been tested, and it can

be shown that the results are not sensitive to using different measures (see results section). Note that our argument is one about differences in preferences between the entirety of the middle and the working class, irrespective of work logics. Our analyses indeed show that there is a (vertical) class divide in social investment priorities.

In terms of mechanisms, our focus is on the subjective evaluation of economic and social opportunities. Regarding economic opportunities respondents were asked: *“The world is changing fast. If you think of your future, how do you rate your personal chances of being in good, stable employment until you will retire?”*. Social opportunities are captured asking: *“Now think beyond the labour market of your overall quality of life. How do you rate your personal chances of having a safe, fulfilled life over your life course?”*. For both economic and social opportunities, the answers on an eleven-point scale (very bad – very good) were normalized to simplify comparison with other mechanisms. Mean economic opportunities are 0.54, with a standard deviation of 0.30, mean social opportunities are 0.57 with a standard deviation of 0.25. The average assessment of respondents’ future however differs quite a bit between the countries under study. The means for economic opportunities for Italy (0.41) and Spain (0.44) are considerably lower, and the means for Sweden (0.64), Germany (0.60), and Denmark (0.59) are somewhat higher than the ones in the Netherlands (0.56), Ireland (0.56), and the UK (0.57). The pattern is almost identical with regards to social opportunities. Citizens in Northern Europe tend to assess their future much more positively than citizens in Southern Europe. Moreover, respondents were asked to assess both economic and social opportunities for their children (if they have any) as well: *“Please think of the life your children have ahead of them in this changing world. How do you rate their chances of being in good, stable employment until retirement?”*, *“And beyond the labour market, think about their overall quality of life. How do you rate your children’s chances of having a safe, fulfilled life over their life course?”*. Both variables were operationalized the same way as the personal assessments.

The literature mentions alternative explanations for class differences in priorities, most prominently political trust and universalistic values. These variables were included in the analysis as well. Political trust was captured on a 1 (I do not trust politicians at all) to 10 (I completely trust politicians) scale asking: *“In general, do you trust politicians in your country?”*. After normalizing, we find a mean of 0.30 and the standard deviation of 0.25 indicating that generally, trust in politicians is rather low. A battery of items (similar to the one

used to measure universalism vs. particularism in the literature, see Häusermann and Kriesi 2015) was used to compile an index for universalistic values. Respondents were confronted with the following five statements: “*Immigration is a threat to our national culture*”, “*Gay and lesbian couples should have the same rights to adopt children as straight couples*”, “*All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job*”, “*Immigration is a threat to the national labor market*”, and “*European integration has gone too far*”. Respondents could disagree strongly (1), disagree (2), agree (3), or agree strongly (4). After correcting for the direction of the items (recoding all items except the one on gay and lesbian couples), an unweighted mean was computed and normalized thereafter, forming an index from 0 (traditional values) to 1 (universalist values). The distribution resembles a normal distribution quite well, with a mean of 0.52 and a standard deviation of 0.23.

The hypotheses have been tested estimating multivariate regression models. Since the dependent variables in the position models are on a 4-point scale, ordered logit has been used. For the priority models we run OLS regressions (except for the trade-off model, where we again run an ordered logit model). All models include controls for age and sex. Also, all regressions include country-fixed effects and are computed using a weighting variable ensuring a close-to-population distribution of age and sex and educational attainment. Excluding the weights does not change the results substantially (tables included in the appendix). In order to test the mediation hypothesis and to quantify the proportion of the class effect that is mediated by opportunities (or political trust and universalistic values respectively) we run mediation models using the R package “*mediation*” (Tingley *et al.* 2014). We use nonparametric bootstrap for variance estimation with 1000 simulations.

4. Findings

4.1. Position vs. priorities

We start by establishing that class differences are extremely small when it comes to positional preferences over social policy, both regarding social consumption and social investment. Table 1 shows the findings of relating working- and middle class membership to preferences over the expansion and the retrenchment of old age pensions, the expansion of childcare services, spending on education generally, as well as to attitudes on whether or not it is the governments’ responsibility to provide services to help working parents reconcile work and care duties.

We see that when it comes to pension policy – taken here as an example of social consumption policies – middle class voters are less likely to support further pension expansion than working class voters. At first glance, this finding goes against the assumption our study builds on. However, further analyses show that this finding is due only to the inclusion of pensioners (who overproportionally belong to the working class) who have higher preferences for pension expansion than working age working class respondents. Also, class differences (even including pensioners) are non-significant in three countries (Sweden, Netherlands and Italy). In addition, the *expansion* of old age pensions does not really adequately reflect the policy agendas of these countries, as old age pension reform is concerned more strongly with retrenchment than with expansion. This is why we also include position preferences on pension retrenchment in model 2. As expected, we find no class difference there, neither in the full sample, nor in the one limited to active respondents, nor in any of the countries included. Regarding attitudes towards the expansion of services in support of working parents we find that support is slightly smaller among middle class voters on this typical social investment reform, but significantly so only in Ireland. All other countries individually, whether including or excluding pensioners, we find no significant difference. Finally, the higher support among the middle class for investment in education stems exclusively from the UK, whereas we find no class differences in the other countries.

Table 1: Class as a determinant of social policy *position* preferences regarding social investment and consumption

	Expand pensions	Retrench pensions	Expand Childcare services	Gvt. Resp: services for working parents	Gvt should spend more on education
Working class	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
Middle class	-0.213*** (-3.39)	0.020 (0.23)	-0.136* (-2.15)	-0.021 (-0.41)	0.187** (2.64)
Age	0.013*** (6.69)	-0.032*** (-11.76)	-0.002 (-1.14)	-0.022*** (-13.73)	0.012*** (5.49)
Male	-0.032 (-0.52)	0.250** (2.91)	-0.291*** (-4.62)	0.024 (0.47)	-0.126 (-1.81)
(Intercept)	1.348*** (9.53)	-1.747*** (-8.24)	1.471*** (10.95)	1.043*** (9.42)	1.013*** (6.92)
R2	0.162	0.171	0.072	0.107	0.034
N	8861	8863	8864	8945	8945

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01 * p<0.05. Country fixed-effects included in all models.

A look at the predicted probabilities of supporting the policy in question (table 2) shows how high and generalized support for all these policy reforms is. The probability that respondents support the expansion of pensions, childcare services or education spending lies between 80 and 90% for both classes. As Garritzmann et al. (2018), we find support for social investment expansion to be even slightly higher than support for social consumption expansion. However, when taking pension retrenchment into account – which much more accurately reflects the policy agendas in these countries – we see that the probability *not to support* retrenchment reaches even 95%. These findings illustrate the massive and generalized support for social policy across the population in all eight countries.

Table 2: Class differences in support of social policy reforms

Predicted probabilities of supporting the policy (all other variables at means)

	Expand pensions	Retrench pensions	Expand Childcare services	services for working parents	Gvt spend more on education
Working class	86.4%	4.82%	87.9%	75.1%	89.3%
Middle class	83.6%	4.92%	86.3%	74.6%	91%

Turning to priorities instead of positions, the findings look clearly different. Table 3 presents findings on class predicting the number of points respondents allocated to the expansion of childcare and higher education, as well as to the expansion of old age pensions for reasons of comparison to a social consumption reform strategy. On both items measuring social investment importance, middle class respondents differ significantly from working class respondents. This finding is robust in several ways: first, it holds cross-sectionally, even though our sample includes extremely different countries in terms of welfare state regimes and reform agendas. The same finding holds when we exclude pensioners from the sample. Moreover, and most importantly, middle class respondents also attribute higher importance to social investment expansion than working class respondents when – instead of asking them about the field overall – we present them with specific reform proposals, i.e. an increase in the availability of good-quality childcare for all families. This comparison to the alternative “priority-question” is not only relevant because the wording of the answer item changes, but also because the set of possible alternative choices changes. While the specific reform-question compares only pensions, childcare and education reform, the field question (allocating points to a policy field) provides respondents additionally with the opportunity to allocate the funds to policies supporting the unemployed through services or transfers or to policies supporting the integration of immigrants into the labor market and society. Hence, the reference categories for the two questions are not the same, and yet, the findings are robust. Also, middle class respondents attribute overall less importance to the expansion of old age pensions (social consumption) This finding holds when pensioners are excluded. In the reduced sample without pensioners, middle class respondents also attribute less importance to pension expansion than the working class. Hence, there indeed seems to be a trade-off between the two in the perception of citizens.

Table 3: Class as a determinant of social policy *priority* preferences regarding social investment and consumption

	Childcare	University education	Old age pensions
Working class	ref	ref	ref
Middle class	1.231*** (4.84)	2.416*** (10.42)	-2.614*** (-5.94)
Age	-0.081*** (-10.24)	-0.087*** (-12.12)	0.260*** (18.96)
Male	-1.423*** (-5.68)	-0.036 (-0.16)	-0.328 (-0.76)
(Intercept)	22.501*** (33.28)	16.984*** (27.56)	21.434*** (18.32)
R2	0.064	0.062	0.072
N	8901	8901	8901

Moving on to priorities for social investment *relative* to social consumption, table 4 shows findings on two dependent variables. First, we subtract the points allocated to the expansion of old age pensions from the cumulative point share attributed to childcare and higher education expansion. Again, the analyses show that middle class respondents attribute significantly more importance to social investment than to the expansion of old age pensions. This finding holds when we express the importance attributed to social investment as a share of the total points attributed to investment and consumption combined. The finding is not driven by either education or childcare alone, it also holds when comparing either of them on its own against consumption. It is also robust for the working population only, as well as across all countries, except for the Netherlands, where the difference between middle- and working class respondents is not significant (reflecting mostly the comparatively low levels of importance that middle class respondents attribute to childcare expansion in the Netherlands). Finally, the general finding of middle class voters prioritizing social investment more strongly than working class voters also holds “within” family policy, when asking respondents, whether they would find it acceptable to expand childcare services at the expense of child allowances. Only in Italy and the Netherlands is there no significant difference between the two classes. But in

all other instances (countries, sample), middle class respondents find it more acceptable to reallocate parts of government expenditures that go into child allowances to childcare services.

Table 4: Class as a determinant of *relative* social policy *priority* preferences regarding social investment versus consumption

	Difference I-C	childcare services vs. child allowances
Working class	ref	ref
Middle class	6.262*** (9.06)	0.203*** (5.03)
Age	-0.428*** (-19.91)	0.004** (3.10)
Male	-1.131 (-1.66)	0.202*** (5.07)
(Intercept)	18.051*** (9.82)	-1.515*** (-13.83)
		0.102 (0.94)
		2.511*** (22.47)
R2	0.087	0.006
N	8901	8979

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01 * p<0.05. Country fixed-effects included in all models.

Figure 1 illustrates the substantive effects for positions (left hand side) and priorities (right hand side). As table 1 above has shown already, differences in *position* on childcare and education between working and middle class respondents are tiny and not significant. An overwhelming majority of both classes supports the expansion of childcare services (86.3% among middle class, and 87.9% among working class respondents). The same holds for education, where 89.3% (working class) and 91% (middle class) of respondents are in favor of expansion. Again, the difference between the two classes is not significant. Support for expansion on old age pensions is on a similar level, with 86.4% (working class) and 83.6%

(middle class) of people interviewed agreeing. As noted above, this difference loses significance when we exclude pensioners.

Remarkably, however, differences between classes turn highly significant if we look at priorities, clearly indicating a class divide over priorities that we cannot observe when looking at positions. As the panels on the right show, middle class respondents allocate considerably more points to social investment policies, here captured by childcare and education, and less points to consumptive measures such as pensions. The point difference on average is between 2-3 points. This may seem little, but it has to be judged against the in-sample range, and in light of the two rather broad and heterogeneous class categories. Std. deviations of the point allocations are between 8-12 points, which means that at least 2/3 of the values are within a range of about 20 percentage points.

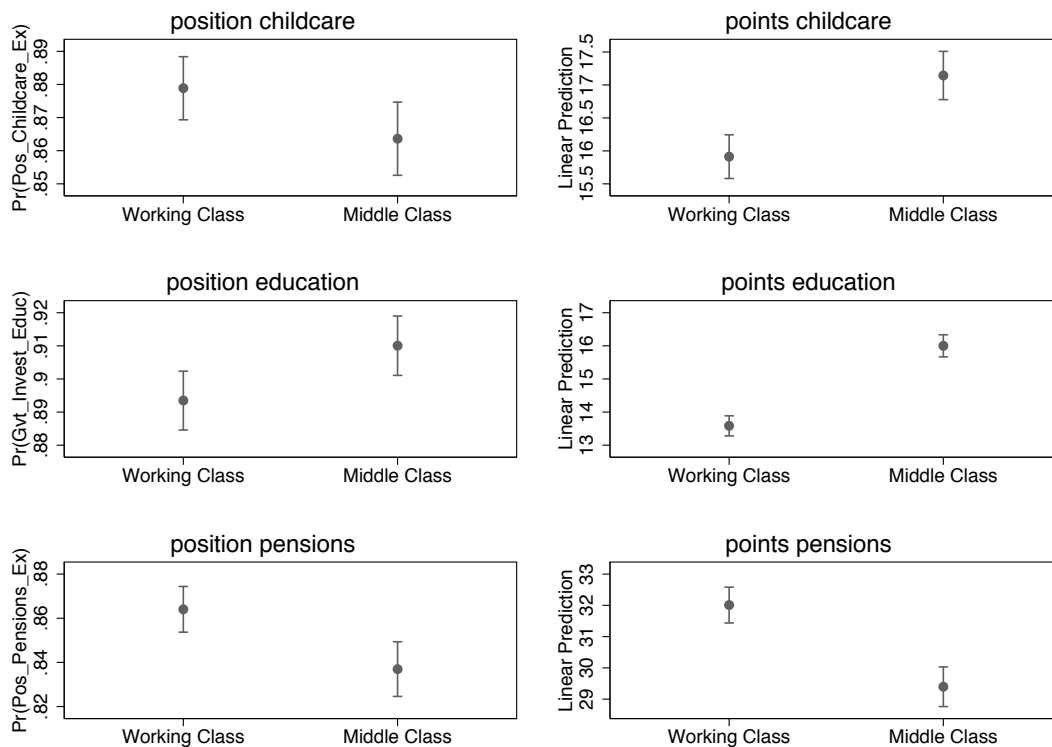


Figure 1: Class as a determinant of social policy positions and priorities, substantive effects

Overall, this section has shown that – contrary to positions concerning social investment and social consumption – there is indeed a consistent class divide over the importance attributed to social investment, both on its own and relative to social consumption. Hence, the apparent

unanimity in terms of welfare support appears to actually hide a potential new form of class conflict around the social policies that should be prioritized. This observation obviously raises the question of mechanisms: to what extent does this class divide reflect economic, cultural or institutional differences in the attitudes and preferences of working- and middle class respondents?

4.2.Determinants of priorities

The previous section has shown that the middle class attributes more importance to social investment than the working class. In this part of the analyses we argue that this is due to the middle class' more positive evaluation of future opportunities. Hence, an economic rationale underlies social investment priorities. As mentioned above, this is expected to hold for economic as well as social opportunities for the respondents themselves as well as for their children. The models presented in this chapter are all based on respondents' personal economic opportunities, since the results do not differ using either of the four, as shown in the tables included in the appendix.

As expected, we find that the middle class has a more optimistic sight of their future than the working class. The mean score for economic opportunities among middle class respondents is 0.65 (on a 0 to 1 scale) while it is 0.52 for working class respondents. The numbers for social opportunities as well as respondents' assessments of their children's economic and social opportunities are very similar. Each of the following tables implements a different operationalization of social investment priorities (as the dependent variable). The first column in all of the tables includes the coefficients for the baseline model, including only class and controls for age, sex, and country (not shown). The second column introduces economic opportunities as an additional independent variable, expected to mediate the class effect. Column 3 and column 4 introduce political trust and universal values respectively as alternative explanatory and/or mediating variables. Note that a positive sign indicates higher prioritization of social investment.

Model 1 in table 5 shows that the middle class, as opposed to the working class, on average and controlling for age and sex, allocates more points to childcare. We have seen this from

model 1 in table 3 already⁵. Having 100 points at their disposal to distribute to six different policy fields, the middle class on average allocates 0.9 points more to childcare than the working class does. Hence, the middle class prioritizes social investment more than the working class. Furthermore, and in line with expectations, with increasing age people tend to prioritize childcare less, and so do men compared to women. Model 2 includes economic opportunities as a mediating variable. Two things can be observed: First, the more positively respondents evaluate their own future opportunities in the labor market, the more importance they attribute to social investment. The effect is again limited in size, but highly significant: people with the most optimistic evaluation of their future opportunities (1) on average allocate 3.3 points more to childcare than those with the most negative evaluation of opportunities (0). Second, the effect of class decreases in size (from 0.9 to 0.6 points) and loses its significance.

Table 6 gives more insight into the composition of these effects. It shows the results of the mediation analysis for every dependent variable (childcare, education, pensions, combined) and all tested mechanisms (opportunities, trust, universalism). The total effect reports the coefficient for middle class when no mediator is included (corresponds to the coefficient reported in the first model in the respective regression table). This total effect is composed of an average direct effect (ADE), the effect from middle class on priorities controlling for the mediator, and the average causal mediation effect (ACME), which is the difference between the total and the direct effect. Hence, the proportion mediated by the mediating variable is simply the ACME as a share of the total effect. Values in brackets are the corresponding confidence intervals. The first section of the table correspond to the childcare models of table 5 and reveals that economic opportunities in fact do significantly mediate the class effect by 39%. Hence, differences in the evaluation of economic opportunities seem to be the reason why the middle class values social investment expansion more than the working class. Looking at model 3, we can see that political trust relates positively and significantly to childcare priorities, as well. With an average 2.3 point difference between lowest and highest political trust, the direct effect is somewhat smaller than the opportunity effect. However, the class coefficient decreases only by 0.1 points. Although we find a significant partial mediation effect (table 6), the proportion of the total class effect that is mediated by political trust is indeed very

⁵ Note that the slight deviances in the coefficients are due to the smaller sample size in this part of the analysis: The mediation analysis requires that the sample in the full model is identical to the class-only-model. Hence, all observations with missing values on opportunities, trust, or universalism have been excluded (mainly pensioners, since they were not shown the opportunity items).

small (10%). Further, the introduction of universalistic values does neither change the class effect, nor does it have a significant direct effect. More universalistic values do not relate significantly to prioritizing social investment in terms of childcare service expansion.

Table 5. Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Intercept)	23.043*** (0.738)	21.110*** (0.807)	22.157*** (0.777)	22.735*** (0.834)
Middle Class	0.895** (0.315)	0.550 (0.320)	0.803* (0.316)	0.864** (0.317)
Age	-0.145*** (0.012)	-0.143*** (0.012)	-0.144*** (0.012)	-0.144*** (0.012)
Male	-1.332*** (0.306)	-1.495*** (0.306)	-1.350*** (0.305)	-1.323*** (0.306)
Economic Opportunities		3.250*** (0.556)		
Political Trust			2.272*** (0.629)	
Universalism				0.541 (0.685)
R ²	0.079	0.084	0.081	0.079
Adj. R ²	0.078	0.083	0.080	0.078
Num. obs.	6402	6402	6402	6402
RMSE	12.135	12.104	12.124	12.136

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

In models 5 to 8, shown in table 7, social investment priorities are operationalized as points allocated to tertiary education (as opposed to one of the other five policy fields). The results are largely in line with what we found regarding childcare: class differences in points are on average 2.3, the effect of opportunities is 3.8 points, the class effect decreases with the introduction of opportunities (by 0.4 points), and trust again has a positive direct effect (2.6 points) but the class coefficient is only reduced marginally with its inclusion (by 0.1 points). There are two noteworthy exceptions however: first, the share of the total effect mediated by opportunities decreases (relative to the childcare variable) to 17%. Second, universal values do have a significant relationship with social investment priorities if we look at tertiary education and the class effect seems to be partially driven (11%) by universalism Altogether, irrespective of whether we look at childcare or tertiary education, social investment priorities are different

between classes, and are (partially) mediated by economic opportunities and only to a lesser extent by universalistic values.

Table 6. Mediation Analysis

	Economic Opportunities	Political Trust	Universalism	Dependent variable
ACME	0,345 <i>(0,217 0,468)</i>	0,092 <i>(0,038 0,164)</i>	0,031 <i>(-0,047 0,103)</i>	
ADE	0,550 <i>(-0,055 1,237)</i>	0,803 <i>(0,186 1,389)</i>	0,864 <i>(0,231 1,465)</i>	Childcare [Table 5]
Total Effect	0,895 <i>(0,291 1,554)</i>	0,895 <i>(0,278 1,485)</i>	0,895 <i>(0,301 1,499)</i>	
Prop. Mediated	0,385 <i>(0,179 1,110)</i>	0,103 <i>(0,036 0,338)</i>	0,034 <i>(-0,064 0,199)</i>	
ACME	0,380 <i>(0,264 0,502)</i>	0,107 <i>(0,051 0,166)</i>	0,258 <i>(0,173 0,348)</i>	
ADE	1,884 <i>(1,290 2,496)</i>	2,156 <i>(1,554 2,766)</i>	2,006 <i>(1,416 2,585)</i>	Tertiary Education [Table 7]
Total Effect	2,264 <i>(1,678 2,876)</i>	2,264 <i>(1,669 2,848)</i>	2,264 <i>(1,682 2,829)</i>	
Prop. Mediated	0,168 <i>(0,111 0,252)</i>	0,047 <i>(0,022 0,083)</i>	0,114 <i>(0,071 0,173)</i>	
ACME	-0,131 <i>(-0,314 0,047)</i>	-0,421 <i>(-0,596 -0,268)</i>	-0,958 <i>(-1,189 -0,748)</i>	
ADE	-1,346 <i>(-2,366 -0,268)</i>	-1,056 <i>(-2,024 0,007)</i>	-0,519 <i>(-1,506 0,550)</i>	Old Age Pensions [Table 8]
Total Effect	-1,477 <i>(-2,485 -0,421)</i>	-1,477 <i>(-2,444 -0,440)</i>	-1,477 <i>(-2,447 -0,432)</i>	
Prop. Mediated	0,089 <i>(-0,031 0,353)</i>	0,285 <i>(0,148 0,975)</i>	0,648 <i>(0,373 2,061)</i>	
ACME	0,855 <i>(0,554 1,192)</i>	0,621 <i>(0,416 0,846)</i>	1,246 <i>(0,943 1,583)</i>	
ADE	3,780 <i>(2,055 5,449)</i>	4,015 <i>(2,372 5,607)</i>	3,390 <i>(1,779 5,069)</i>	Childcare + Tertiary Education - Old Age Pensions [Table 9]
Total Effect	4,636 <i>(2,974 6,351)</i>	4,636 <i>(3,027 6,255)</i>	4,636 <i>(3,033 6,266)</i>	
Prop. Mediated	0,185 <i>(0,109 0,314)</i>	0,134 <i>(0,084 0,226)</i>	0,269 <i>(0,182 0,441)</i>	

Note: Numbers in italics are lower and upper bounds.

Table 7. Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Tertiary Education

	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(Intercept)	19.398*** (0.687)	17.271*** (0.750)	18.366*** (0.722)	16.820*** (0.773)
Middle Class	2.264*** (0.293)	1.884*** (0.297)	2.156*** (0.294)	2.006*** (0.294)
Age	-0.121*** (0.011)	-0.119*** (0.011)	-0.120*** (0.011)	-0.113*** (0.011)
Male	-0.040 (0.284)	-0.219 (0.285)	-0.060 (0.284)	0.038 (0.284)
Economic Opportunities		3.577*** (0.516)		
Political Trust			2.645*** (0.585)	
Universalism				4.539*** (0.635)
R ²	0.064	0.071	0.067	0.071
Adj. R ²	0.062	0.069	0.065	0.070
Num. obs.	6402	6402	6402	6402
RMSE	11.291	11.249	11.273	11.246

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

In models 9 to 12 in table 8 we look at social consumption policies or more specifically, at points given to the expansion of old age pensions. From the baseline model (model 9) we can see that, as expected, the middle class prioritizes consumption less than the working class. Working class respondents have on average allocated 1.5 points (out of hundred) more to old age pensions. Introducing economic opportunities in model 10 leads to a marginal decrease in the effect of class (from -1.5 to -1.4), while there is a negative but not significant correlation between the evaluation of opportunities and old age pension priorities. On contrary, both more universalistic values and higher political trust seem to explain class differences in pension priorities better than opportunities. They account for 29% (trust) and 65% (universalism) of the middle class effect. Moreover, it is worth noticing that the effect sizes of both trust and values are remarkably big: moving from minimum to maximum political trust, the average points allocated to old age pensions drops by 10 points. Similarly, respondents with the most universalistic values allocate almost 17 points less to the consumptive policy field. Hence, we find support for a moderating effect opportunities on classes' different priorities regarding

social policies, however only for social investment and not for consumption policies. Middle class voters' pro social investment attitudes are driven by their (economic) evaluation of the future, while working class voters' consumption prioritization is due to more traditionalist values. Tables 9 and 10 provide more evidence on this.

Table 8. Consumption Priority - (Points given to) Old Age Pensions

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(Intercept)	17.112*** (1.163)	17.846*** (1.275)	21.155*** (1.215)	26.699*** (1.289)
Middle Class	-1.477** (0.496)	-1.346** (0.505)	-1.056* (0.494)	-0.519 (0.490)
Age	0.332*** (0.019)	0.331*** (0.019)	0.329*** (0.019)	0.301*** (0.018)
Male	-1.207* (0.482)	-1.145* (0.484)	-1.126* (0.478)	-1.495** (0.473)
Economic Opportunities		-1.235 (0.878)		
Political Trust			-10.367*** (0.984)	
Universalism				-16.877*** (1.058)
R ²	0.077	0.077	0.093	0.112
Adj. R ²	0.076	0.076	0.091	0.111
Num. obs.	6402	6402	6402	6402
RMSE	19.125	19.123	18.962	18.757

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

In models 13 to 16 in table 9 we include consumption as a reference for assessing social investment priorities. More precisely, we look at the points allocated to childcare and tertiary education minus the points given to old age pensions. As seen in tables 5 and 7 when we looked at childcare and tertiary education separately and without considering old age pensions, the estimate for middle class is positive, meaning that middle class respondents allocated 4.6 points more to social investment relative to consumption as compared with working class voters. Economic opportunities in model 14 increase this priority by 8 points on average and accounts for 19% of the total effect, which indicates a partial mediation. Furthermore, with increasing levels of trust and universalistic values, people tend to prioritize social investment more strongly, both variables also mediate the class effect (13% for trust, 27% for universalism, see

table 6). These mixed results reflect the differing importance of opportunities and universalism for investment and consumption as described above.

Table 9. Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare + Tertiary Education - Old Age Pensions

	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
(Intercept)	25.329*** (1.864)	20.535*** (2.038)	19.368*** (1.950)	12.856*** (2.080)
Middle Class	4.636*** (0.795)	3.780*** (0.807)	4.015*** (0.792)	3.390*** (0.791)
Age	-0.599*** (0.030)	-0.594*** (0.030)	-0.594*** (0.030)	-0.559*** (0.030)
Male	-0.165 (0.772)	-0.569 (0.773)	-0.284 (0.767)	0.210 (0.763)
Economic Opportunities		8.063*** (1.404)		
Political Trust			15.284*** (1.579)	
Universalism				21.957*** (1.708)
R ²	0.099	0.104	0.112	0.122
Adj. R ²	0.098	0.102	0.111	0.120
Num. obs.	6402	6402	6402	6402
RMSE	30.649	30.573	30.429	30.263

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

Finally, the trade-off between investing in childcare and “consuming” child benefits is one more way to look at social investment priorities. While the costs of social investment are rather implicit in the point distribution questions used above (there were only a limited number of points to distribute), they are very explicit in the trade-off. The expectations in terms of directions are however the same, and this is also what we find (table 10). Middle class respondents are more likely to accept cutting back child benefits in order to expand childcare services (model 17). This is again partially mediated by the respondents’ assessment of future opportunities (model 18), and only to a lesser degree by the respondents’ level of trust (model 19) or universalistic values (model 20).

In order to test whether these differences between middle- and working-class respondents are driven by certain parts of the middle class, we decompose the middle class into its three occupational classes and re-run the analyses. Specifically, we tested whether the results are comparable if we compare, in a single model each, the technical professionals, the managers, and the socio-cultural professionals with the working class. The respective tables can be found in the appendix (A6-A17). While the effect sizes in some cases differ slightly between the classes, and the reduced group sizes in some models erase the significance, the direction of the effects remains the same in all models. Moreover, the mediation analyses for the different middle classes reveal the exact same pattern as for the pooled middle class described above. This makes us confident that the conflict over priorities between working class and middle class is indeed a true (vertical) class divide and is not driven by occupational specificities.

Additional robustness checks further corroborate our findings. All models have been re-calculated using a class variable that does not exclude the self-employed (independent work logic). Tables A18-A22 in the appendix show that results still lead to the very same conclusion. Moreover, we tested an operationalization of class that is based on income and education rather than occupation. Respondents who are located in the first four (country-specific) income deciles were classified as working class, respondents in income deciles six to ten belong to the middle class. Respondents in the fifth income decile belong to the working class if their highest educational attainment does not exceed lower secondary level. Citizens in decile five who completed at least upper secondary education are classified as middle class. Using this operationalization, we count 4899 (39%) citizens in the working class while 6790 (54%) respondents have been classified as middle class. Results (see A23-A27 in the appendix) with regard to social investment priorities remain stable, or in some cases even become somewhat stronger in the sense that opportunity is the even better mediator of the class effect. However, coefficients do change considerably if we look at pension priorities. Using income and education as a proxy for class (rather than occupation), we find that middle class respondents prioritize pension expansion slightly more than working class respondents. This is contrary to what we find in all other specifications of the model. It turns out, that a considerable share of production workers (47%) and clerks (58%) are classified as middle class, which is mainly due to relatively high incomes among parts of the production workers, but especially among clerks. Since both occupations' priorities for pensions are above average, this might explain the reversion of the class effect.

Summarizing, the middle class clearly prioritizes social investment more than the working class. In line with the literature, we find that both political trust as well as universalistic values positively correlate with social investment priorities in most of our models. Especially universalism is partially able to *explain* differences between the working and middle class when it comes to consumption policies. However, analyzing social investment priorities has clearly shown that respondents' assessment of their or their children's economic or social opportunities are better suited to (at least partially) explain class differences. Put differently, middle class citizens are more likely to positively evaluate their future, and precisely this more positive evaluation increases the importance they attribute to policies that are oriented towards the future, namely childcare and tertiary education.

Table 10. Social Investment Priority - Trade-off: Childcare vs. Child benefits

	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Middle Class	0.223*** (0.048)	0.174*** (0.049)	0.193*** (0.048)	0.206*** (0.049)
Age	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)
Male	0.227*** (0.047)	0.204*** (0.047)	0.224*** (0.047)	0.232*** (0.047)
Economic Opportunities		0.472*** (0.087)		
Political Trust			0.760*** (0.098)	
Universalism				0.302** (0.107)
AIC	15802.532	15774.907	15744.391	15796.521
BIC	15890.477	15869.617	15839.101	15891.231
Log Likelihood	-7888.266	-7873.454	-7858.196	-7884.261
Deviance	15776.532	15746.907	15716.391	15768.521
Num. obs.	6406	6406	6406	6406

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

5. Conclusion

Class conflict over social policy is not dead in the 21st century, but it has changed content. While much of the literature on democracy in current times has either written off mass politics or assigned it exclusively to the realm of socio-cultural conflict over societal values, we have shown in this paper that working- and middle class citizens differ clearly and consistently in

their social policy preference. However, the class divide of our times is not so much articulated around the level of benefit provision favored, or the resistance to cutbacks in existing welfare rights. In line with the key assertions of the “new politics of the welfare state”-literature, we find very high generalized levels of support for social policy expansion and equally high levels of opposition against retrenchment. However, working- and middle class voters do indeed differ in their social policy preferences when it comes to priorities. Which are the problems, beneficiaries and policies that welfare states should address primarily in times of constrained fiscal resources? When conceptualizing the class conflict in such terms of priorities rather than position, we indeed find consistent and robust evidence for diverging preferences. Middle class voters clearly and consistently attribute more importance to social investment than working class voters. This finding is robust to cross-national variance, to the field of social investment (childcare and higher education), to the formulation of the question, to including or excluding pensioners, and to looking at social investment alone or relative to social consumption policies.

In the literature, political trust and universalistic values have so far been identified as key variables driving support for social investment at the individual levels. We also find at least partial evidence for these factors driving social investment priorities. However, we find that a large part of the direct effect of class on social investment priorities is mediated by the subjective evaluation of future opportunities of respondents both in society and in labor markets. The more positively respondents evaluate their chances of being in good employment and of having a secure, fulfilled life over their life course, the more importance they attribute to social policies that aim at furthering welfare through sustaining the creation, preservation and formation of human capital.

Why is this finding important? First, it shows that social investment is not the welfare reform strategy that the disadvantaged classes prioritize. Against rationalist or technocratic assumptions, people who evaluate their own prospects in the labor market more negatively do not seem to prioritize human capital formation and activation policies to remedy their situation. Rather, citizens want the welfare state to support their individual situation as it is. Hence, a social investment emphasis of welfare state reform seems rather unlikely to garner the enthusiasm of working class voters. Second, class being mediated by the evaluation of economic opportunities is important, because it complements the existing explanations – focused on political trust and universalistic values – with a more economically based mechanism at the source of social investment support. Indeed, the existing literature has mainly

insisted on the collinearity of political preference patterns when it comes to social investment on the one hand, and socio-cultural issues such as cultural liberalism, universalism, or attitudes on migration on the other hand (Beramendi et al. 2015, Garritzmann et al. 2018). Our findings add to a series of recent studies, which argue that preferences on this highly salient and polarized dimension of political competition are driven by factors that are both economically and culturally connoted (e.g. Gidron and Hall 2018). The subjective evaluation of your and your children's opportunities in the labor market and in society refers both to an assessment of risk, as well as to an evaluation of how society has changed more generally in terms of the chances and pitfalls it presents for different social groups.

Hence, while being clearly an economic-distributive policy and dividing citizens along traditional class lines, social investment very much resonates with the economic and socio-cultural second dimension politics that prevail in the mass politics of our times. What does that imply for class conflict and for electoral politics in the 21st century? It adds further evidence to a scenario of electoral trade-offs (Abou-Chadi and Wagner forthcoming): when political parties promote social investment, this is likely to resonate with middle class voters, but it may also be unable to reach working class voters or may even antagonize them, and vice versa when it comes to social consumption policies.

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7. Appendix

A1. Alternative Opportunity Variables
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Intercept)	21.110*** (0.807)	21.000*** (0.859)	29.696*** (1.218)	29.013*** (1.245)
Middle Class	0.550 (0.320)	0.580 (0.324)	0.474 (0.428)	0.432 (0.428)
Age	-0.143*** (0.012)	-0.149*** (0.012)	-0.257*** (0.018)	-0.257*** (0.018)
Male	-1.495*** (0.306)	-1.467*** (0.310)	-1.086** (0.414)	-1.105** (0.414)
Economic Opportunities	3.250*** (0.556)			
Social Opportunities		3.637*** (0.670)		
Kids' Economic Opportunities			2.481** (0.866)	
Kids' Social Opportunities				3.400*** (0.912)
R ²	0.084	0.085	0.113	0.114
Adj. R ²	0.083	0.083	0.110	0.112
Num. obs.	6402	6275	3785	3785
RMSE	12.104	12.151	12.431	12.422

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A2. Alternative Opportunity Variables
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Tertiary Education

	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(Intercept)	17.271*** (0.750)	16.510*** (0.797)	14.660*** (1.062)	13.844*** (1.084)
Middle Class	1.884*** (0.297)	1.817*** (0.301)	2.663*** (0.373)	2.613*** (0.373)
Age	-0.119*** (0.011)	-0.123*** (0.011)	-0.074*** (0.016)	-0.074*** (0.015)
Male	-0.219 (0.285)	-0.145 (0.288)	-0.508 (0.361)	-0.527 (0.361)
Economic Opportunities	3.577*** (0.516)			
Social Opportunities		4.830*** (0.622)		
Kids' Economic Opportunities			4.007*** (0.755)	
Kids' Social Opportunities				5.048*** (0.794)
R ²	0.071	0.072	0.080	0.083
Adj. R ²	0.069	0.071	0.077	0.080
Num. obs.	6402	6275	3785	3785
RMSE	11.249	11.275	10.837	10.820

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A3. Alternative Opportunity Variables
Consumption Priority - (Points given to) Old Age Pensions

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(Intercept)	17.846*** (1.275)	20.841*** (1.349)	18.058*** (1.833)	19.749*** (1.871)
Middle Class	-1.346** (0.505)	-1.000* (0.509)	-2.174*** (0.644)	-2.070** (0.643)
Age	0.331*** (0.019)	0.336*** (0.019)	0.357*** (0.027)	0.357*** (0.027)
Male	-1.145* (0.484)	-1.081* (0.487)	-0.364 (0.624)	-0.314 (0.622)
Economic Opportunities	-1.235 (0.878)			
Social Opportunities		-6.015*** (1.053)		
Kids' Economic Opportunities			-5.904*** (1.302)	
Kids' Social Opportunities				-8.195*** (1.370)
R ²	0.077	0.083	0.082	0.085
Adj. R ²	0.076	0.082	0.079	0.083
Num. obs.	6402	6275	3785	3785
RMSE	19.123	19.093	18.705	18.668

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A4. Alternative Opportunity Variables
Social Investment Priority – (Points given to) Childcare + Tertiary Education – Old Age Pensions

	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
(Intercept)	20.535*** (2.038)	16.669*** (2.157)	26.298*** (2.937)	23.109*** (2.995)
Middle Class	3.780*** (0.807)	3.398*** (0.814)	5.311*** (1.032)	5.115*** (1.030)
Age	-0.594*** (0.030)	-0.609*** (0.030)	-0.688*** (0.043)	-0.687*** (0.043)
Male	-0.569 (0.773)	-0.531 (0.779)	-1.230 (0.999)	-1.319 (0.996)
Economic Opportunities	8.063*** (1.404)			
Social Opportunities		14.482*** (1.685)		
Kids' Economic Opportunities			12.392*** (2.087)	
Kids' Social Opportunities				16.643*** (2.194)
R ²	0.104	0.111	0.126	0.132
Adj. R ²	0.102	0.110	0.124	0.129
Num. Obs.	6402	6275	3785	3785
RMSE	30.573	30.531	29.977	29.889

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A5. Alternative Opportunity Variables
Social Investment Priority - Trade-off: Childcare vs. Child benefits

	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Middle Class	0.174*** (0.049)	0.166*** (0.049)	0.185** (0.064)	0.181** (0.064)
Age	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.008** (0.003)	0.008** (0.003)
Male	0.204*** (0.047)	0.196*** (0.047)	0.291*** (0.062)	0.290*** (0.062)
Economic Opportunities	0.472*** (0.087)			
Social Opportunities		0.704*** (0.105)		
Kids' Economic Opportunities			0.776*** (0.131)	
Kids' Social Opportunities				0.848*** (0.139)
AIC	15774.907	15448.588	9342.174	9339.913
BIC	15869.617	15543.007	9429.377	9427.115
Log Likelihood	-7873.454	-7710.294	-4657.087	-4655.956
Deviance	15746.907	15420.588	9314.174	9311.913
Num. obs.	6406	6274	3747	3747

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A6. Decomposed Middle Class: Managers
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Intercept)	23.224*** (0.823)	21.547*** (0.900)	22.277*** (0.868)	22.865*** (0.938)
MNG (vs. WC)	1.183** (0.407)	0.901* (0.411)	1.058** (0.409)	1.149** (0.410)
Age	-0.150*** (0.013)	-0.148*** (0.013)	-0.149*** (0.013)	-0.149*** (0.013)
Male	-1.355*** (0.345)	-1.531*** (0.347)	-1.379*** (0.345)	-1.346*** (0.345)
Economic Opportunities		2.798*** (0.614)		
Political Trust			2.411*** (0.709)	
Universalism				0.622 (0.780)
R ²	0.088	0.092	0.090	0.088
Adj. R ²	0.086	0.090	0.088	0.086
Num. obs.	4824	4824	4824	4824
RMSE	11.942	11.917	11.928	11.942

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A7. Decomposed Middle Class: Managers
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Tertiary Education

	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(Intercept)	19.552*** (0.765)	17.219*** (0.835)	18.091*** (0.805)	17.010*** (0.869)
MNG (vs. WC)	2.022*** (0.379)	1.630*** (0.381)	1.829*** (0.379)	1.779*** (0.380)
Age	-0.119*** (0.012)	-0.116*** (0.012)	-0.119*** (0.012)	-0.110*** (0.012)
Male	-0.143 (0.321)	-0.387 (0.321)	-0.179 (0.320)	-0.081 (0.320)
Economic Opportunities		3.891*** (0.570)		
Political Trust			3.719*** (0.658)	
Universalism				4.402*** (0.723)
R ²	0.060	0.069	0.067	0.068
Adj. R ²	0.058	0.067	0.064	0.065
Num. obs.	4824	4824	4824	4824
RMSE	11.108	11.056	11.072	11.067

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A8. Decomposed Middle Class: Managers
Consumption Priority - (Points given to) Old Age Pensions

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(Intercept)	16.647*** (1.319)	17.362*** (1.445)	20.740*** (1.380)	26.070*** (1.477)
MNG (vs. WC)	-0.490 (0.653)	-0.370 (0.660)	0.050 (0.650)	0.413 (0.645)
Age	0.342*** (0.021)	0.341*** (0.021)	0.340*** (0.021)	0.309*** (0.021)
Male	-1.323* (0.553)	-1.248* (0.556)	-1.222* (0.548)	-1.554** (0.543)
Economic Opportunities		-1.192 (0.986)		
Political Trust			-10.419*** (1.128)	
Universalism				-16.322*** (1.228)
R ²	0.082	0.082	0.098	0.114
Adj. R ²	0.080	0.080	0.096	0.112
Num. obs.	4824	4824	4824	4824
RMSE	19.138	19.137	18.972	18.798

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A9. Decomposed Middle Class: Managers
Social Investment Priority - Trade-off: Childcare vs. Child benefits

	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
MNG (vs. WC)	0.384*** (0.064)	0.337*** (0.064)	0.351*** (0.064)	0.360*** (0.064)
Age	0.007*** (0.002)	0.008*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.008*** (0.002)
Male	0.198*** (0.054)	0.169** (0.054)	0.193*** (0.054)	0.205*** (0.054)
Economic Opportunities		0.456*** (0.098)		
Political Trust			0.640*** (0.112)	
Universalism				0.433*** (0.124)
AIC	12060.084	12040.200	12029.475	12049.786
BIC	12144.527	12131.139	12120.414	12140.725
Log Likelihood	-6017.042	-6006.100	-6000.738	-6010.893
Deviance	12034.084	12012.200	12001.475	12021.786
Num. obs.	4893	4893	4893	4893

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A10. Decomposed Middle Class: Technical Professionals
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Intercept)	22.938*** (0.850)	21.144*** (0.930)	22.375*** (0.896)	23.062*** (0.967)
TECH (vs. WC)	0.879 (0.506)	0.623 (0.508)	0.833 (0.507)	0.890 (0.508)
Age	-0.138*** (0.014)	-0.135*** (0.014)	-0.138*** (0.014)	-0.138*** (0.014)
Male	-1.754*** (0.363)	-1.932*** (0.364)	-1.763*** (0.363)	-1.759*** (0.364)
Economic Opportunities		2.975*** (0.633)		
Political Trust			1.464* (0.744)	
Universalism				-0.219 (0.814)
R ²	0.085	0.089	0.085	0.085
Adj. R ²	0.083	0.087	0.083	0.082
Num. obs.	4273	4273	4273	4273
RMSE	11.721	11.692	11.717	11.723

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A11. Decomposed Middle Class: Technical Professionals
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Tertiary Education

	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(Intercept)	19.130*** (0.795)	16.898*** (0.868)	18.019*** (0.837)	16.617*** (0.901)
TECH (vs. WC)	2.253*** (0.474)	1.935*** (0.474)	2.163*** (0.473)	2.015*** (0.474)
Age	-0.124*** (0.013)	-0.121*** (0.013)	-0.124*** (0.013)	-0.115*** (0.013)
Male	0.107 (0.340)	-0.114 (0.340)	0.090 (0.339)	0.198 (0.339)
Economic Opportunities		3.700*** (0.591)		
Political Trust			2.885*** (0.695)	
Universalism				4.430*** (0.759)
R ²	0.063	0.071	0.066	0.070
Adj. R ²	0.061	0.069	0.064	0.068
Num. obs.	4273	4273	4273	4273
RMSE	10.966	10.917	10.945	10.924

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A12. Decomposed Middle Class: Technical Professionals
Consumption Priority - (Points given to) Old Age Pensions

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(Intercept)	16.710*** (1.365)	16.638*** (1.498)	19.929*** (1.433)	24.762*** (1.533)
TECH (vs. WC)	-1.789* (0.813)	-1.799* (0.818)	-1.528 (0.810)	-1.025 (0.805)
Age	0.339*** (0.022)	0.339*** (0.022)	0.337*** (0.022)	0.310*** (0.022)
Male	-1.359* (0.583)	-1.366* (0.587)	-1.309* (0.580)	-1.650** (0.576)
Economic Opportunities		0.120 (1.020)		
Political Trust			-8.358*** (1.188)	
Universalism				-14.191*** (1.290)
R ²	0.087	0.087	0.097	0.112
Adj. R ²	0.085	0.085	0.095	0.110
Num. obs.	4273	4273	4273	4273
RMSE	18.832	18.834	18.726	18.572

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A13. Decomposed Middle Class: Technical Professionals
Social Investment Priority - Trade-off: Childcare vs. Child benefits

	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
TECH (vs. WC)	0.205*	0.169*	0.183*	0.192*
	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)
Age	0.007***	0.008***	0.007***	0.008***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Male	0.172**	0.145*	0.170**	0.177**
	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.057)	(0.057)
Economic Opportunities		0.459***		
		(0.102)		
Political Trust			0.689***	
			(0.120)	
Universalism				0.238
				(0.131)
AIC	10875.106	10856.936	10843.717	10873.805
BIC	10958.127	10946.343	10933.124	10963.212
Log Likelihood	-5424.553	-5414.468	-5407.858	-5422.903
Deviance	10849.106	10828.936	10815.717	10845.805
Num. obs.	4386	4386	4386	4386

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A14. Decomposed Middle Class: Socio-cultural Professionals
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Intercept)	22.971***	20.733***	22.022***	22.742***
	(0.845)	(0.920)	(0.887)	(0.962)
SCP (vs. WC)	0.589	0.128	0.495	0.564
	(0.468)	(0.472)	(0.468)	(0.470)
Age	-0.134***	-0.132***	-0.135***	-0.134***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Male	-1.564***	-1.796***	-1.571***	-1.558***
	(0.359)	(0.359)	(0.358)	(0.359)
Economic Opportunities		3.799***		
		(0.631)		
Political Trust			2.579***	
			(0.743)	
Universalism				0.406
				(0.815)
R ²	0.070	0.078	0.073	0.070
Adj. R ²	0.068	0.076	0.071	0.068
Num. obs.	4463	4463	4463	4463
RMSE	11.945	11.898	11.930	11.946

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A15. Decomposed Middle Class: Socio-cultural Professionals
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Tertiary Education

	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(Intercept)	19.351*** (0.788)	17.453*** (0.858)	18.300*** (0.826)	17.360*** (0.894)
SCP (vs. WC)	2.641*** (0.436)	2.251*** (0.440)	2.538*** (0.436)	2.428*** (0.437)
Age	-0.121*** (0.013)	-0.119*** (0.013)	-0.121*** (0.013)	-0.114*** (0.013)
Male	0.237 (0.334)	0.040 (0.335)	0.229 (0.334)	0.283 (0.334)
Economic Opportunities		3.222*** (0.588)		
Political Trust			2.855*** (0.692)	
Universalism				3.533*** (0.758)
R ²	0.067	0.074	0.071	0.072
Adj. R ²	0.065	0.071	0.069	0.070
Num. obs.	4463	4463	4463	4463
RMSE	11.135	11.099	11.115	11.109

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A16. Decomposed Middle Class: Socio-cultural Professionals
Consumption Priority - (Points given to) Old Age Pensions

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(Intercept)	17.010*** (1.328)	17.078*** (1.452)	20.543*** (1.386)	25.505*** (1.488)
SCP (vs. WC)	-2.760*** (0.735)	-2.746*** (0.745)	-2.413*** (0.731)	-1.851* (0.727)
Age	0.330*** (0.022)	0.330*** (0.022)	0.330*** (0.022)	0.301*** (0.022)
Male	-1.388* (0.564)	-1.381* (0.567)	-1.360* (0.560)	-1.585** (0.556)
Economic Opportunities		-0.115 (0.996)		
Political Trust			-9.606*** (1.160)	
Universalism				-15.077*** (1.261)
R ²	0.084	0.084	0.098	0.113
Adj. R ²	0.082	0.082	0.096	0.110
Num. obs.	4463	4463	4463	4463
RMSE	18.777	18.779	18.636	18.485

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A17. Decomposed Middle Class: Socio-cultural Professionals
Social Investment Priority - Trade-off: Childcare vs. Child benefits

	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
SCP (vs. WC)	0.036 (0.072)	-0.018 (0.073)	0.010 (0.072)	0.014 (0.073)
Age	0.006** (0.002)	0.007** (0.002)	0.006** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)
Male	0.245*** (0.055)	0.219*** (0.056)	0.245*** (0.056)	0.250*** (0.056)
Economic Opportunities		0.451*** (0.100)		
Political Trust			0.714*** (0.117)	
Universalism				0.329* (0.128)
AIC	11301.783	11283.457	11266.679	11297.178
BIC	11385.265	11373.360	11356.583	11387.081
Log Likelihood	-5637.892	-5627.728	-5619.340	-5634.589
Deviance	11275.783	11255.457	11238.679	11269.178
Num. obs.	4544	4544	4544	4544

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A18. Alternative Class Operationalization: Including self-employed
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Intercept)	22.585*** (0.697)	20.594*** (0.761)	21.610*** (0.735)	22.226*** (0.789)
Middle Class	0.713* (0.299)	0.391 (0.302)	0.627* (0.299)	0.679* (0.301)
Age	-0.135*** (0.011)	-0.134*** (0.011)	-0.134*** (0.011)	-0.134*** (0.011)
Male	-1.306*** (0.289)	-1.484*** (0.290)	-1.333*** (0.289)	-1.292*** (0.290)
Economic Opportunities		3.381*** (0.524)		
Political Trust			2.491*** (0.596)	
Universalism				0.629 (0.646)
R ²	0.075	0.080	0.077	0.075
Adj. R ²	0.073	0.079	0.076	0.073
Num. obs.	7061	7061	7061	7061
RMSE	12.067	12.032	12.053	12.067

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A19. Alternative Class Operationalization: Including self-employed
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Tertiary Education

	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(Intercept)	19.111*** (0.657)	17.187*** (0.717)	18.132*** (0.692)	16.525*** (0.741)
Middle Class	2.181*** (0.282)	1.870*** (0.285)	2.095*** (0.282)	1.935*** (0.283)
Age	-0.112*** (0.010)	-0.111*** (0.010)	-0.112*** (0.010)	-0.105*** (0.010)
Male	0.098 (0.273)	-0.074 (0.273)	0.071 (0.273)	0.198 (0.272)
Economic Opportunities		3.268*** (0.494)		
Political Trust			2.502*** (0.562)	
Universalism				4.531*** (0.606)
R ²	0.057	0.063	0.060	0.064
Adj. R ²	0.056	0.061	0.058	0.063
Num. obs.	7061	7061	7061	7061
RMSE	11.374	11.339	11.359	11.330

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A20. Alternative Class Operationalization: Including self-employed
Consumption Priority - (Points given to) Old Age Pensions

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(Intercept)	18.190*** (1.099)	18.956*** (1.202)	22.218*** (1.149)	27.708*** (1.219)
Middle Class	-1.460** (0.471)	-1.336** (0.477)	-1.104* (0.468)	-0.554 (0.465)
Age	0.304*** (0.017)	0.303*** (0.017)	0.301*** (0.017)	0.275*** (0.017)
Male	-1.163* (0.456)	-1.095* (0.458)	-1.049* (0.452)	-1.530*** (0.448)
Economic Opportunities		-1.302 (0.828)		
Political Trust			-10.300*** (0.932)	
Universalism				-16.680*** (0.998)
R ²	0.070	0.070	0.086	0.105
Adj. R ²	0.069	0.069	0.084	0.104
Num. obs.	7061	7061	7061	7061
RMSE	19.010	19.008	18.849	18.645

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A21. Alternative Class Operationalization: Including self-employed
 Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare + Tertiary Education - Old Age Pensions

	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
(Intercept)	23.506*** (1.766)	18.825*** (1.927)	17.525*** (1.848)	11.043*** (1.972)
Middle Class	4.355*** (0.757)	3.597*** (0.765)	3.825*** (0.753)	3.167*** (0.752)
Age	-0.551*** (0.028)	-0.548*** (0.028)	-0.547*** (0.028)	-0.514*** (0.028)
Male	-0.044 (0.733)	-0.463 (0.734)	-0.214 (0.728)	0.437 (0.725)
Economic Opportunities		7.950*** (1.327)		
Political Trust			15.294*** (1.500)	
Universalism				21.839*** (1.614)
R ²	0.090	0.095	0.103	0.113
Adj. R ²	0.089	0.093	0.102	0.112
Num. obs.	7061	7061	7061	7061
RMSE	30.552	30.477	30.331	30.165

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A22. Alternative Class Operationalization: Including self-employed
 Social Investment Priority - Trade-off: Childcare vs. Child benefits

	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Middle Class	0.216*** (0.046)	0.177*** (0.047)	0.193*** (0.046)	0.199*** (0.046)
Age	0.006*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)
Male	0.230*** (0.045)	0.208*** (0.045)	0.224*** (0.045)	0.238*** (0.045)
Economic Opportunities		0.421*** (0.082)		
Political Trust			0.716*** (0.094)	
Universalism				0.331** (0.101)
AIC	17348.626	17324.463	17291.825	17339.983
BIC	17437.801	17420.497	17387.859	17436.017
Log Likelihood	-8661.313	-8648.231	-8631.912	-8655.991
Deviance	17322.626	17296.463	17263.825	17311.983
Num. obs.	7042	7042	7042	7042

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A23. Alternative Class Operationalization: Income + Education
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Intercept)	22.001*** (0.661)	20.792*** (0.708)	21.124*** (0.697)	21.631*** (0.747)
Middle Class	1.703*** (0.289)	1.247*** (0.304)	1.620*** (0.290)	1.685*** (0.290)
Age	-0.134*** (0.011)	-0.131*** (0.011)	-0.132*** (0.011)	-0.133*** (0.011)
Male	-1.296*** (0.279)	-1.415*** (0.280)	-1.320*** (0.279)	-1.281*** (0.280)
Economic Opportunities		2.409*** (0.506)		
Political Trust			2.242*** (0.567)	
Universalism				0.658 (0.618)
R ²	0.067	0.069	0.068	0.067
Adj. R ²	0.065	0.068	0.067	0.065
Num. obs.	8248	8248	8248	8248
RMSE	12.643	12.626	12.631	12.643

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A24. Alternative Class Operationalization: Income + Education
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Tertiary Education

	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(Intercept)	17.751*** (0.619)	15.995*** (0.661)	16.658*** (0.651)	15.333*** (0.697)
Middle Class	1.713*** (0.270)	1.050*** (0.284)	1.610*** (0.271)	1.598*** (0.270)
Age	-0.106*** (0.010)	-0.102*** (0.010)	-0.104*** (0.010)	-0.099*** (0.010)
Male	0.338 (0.261)	0.165 (0.262)	0.308 (0.261)	0.435 (0.261)
Economic Opportunities		3.500*** (0.472)		
Political Trust			2.795*** (0.530)	
Universalism				4.296*** (0.576)
R ²	0.041	0.047	0.044	0.047
Adj. R ²	0.040	0.046	0.043	0.046
Num. obs.	8248	8248	8248	8248
RMSE	11.824	11.786	11.805	11.785

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A25. Alternative Class Operationalization: Income + Education
Consumption Priority - (Points given to) Old Age Pensions

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(Intercept)	15.874*** (1.014)	16.953*** (1.086)	20.022*** (1.060)	24.415*** (1.128)
Middle Class	1.042* (0.443)	1.449** (0.467)	1.434** (0.440)	1.448*** (0.437)
Age	0.314*** (0.016)	0.311*** (0.016)	0.306*** (0.016)	0.289*** (0.016)
Male	-1.307** (0.428)	-1.201** (0.430)	-1.193** (0.425)	-1.649*** (0.422)
Economic Opportunities		-2.151** (0.776)		
Political Trust			-10.606*** (0.862)	
Universalism				-15.169*** (0.932)
R ²	0.067	0.067	0.083	0.096
Adj. R ²	0.065	0.066	0.082	0.095
Num. obs.	8248	8248	8248	8248
RMSE	19.382	19.374	19.207	19.079

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A26. Alternative Class Operationalization: Income + Education
Social Investment Priority - (Points given to) Childcare + Tertiary Education - Old Age Pensions

	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
(Intercept)	23.878*** (1.639)	19.834*** (1.752)	17.760*** (1.716)	12.549*** (1.833)
Middle Class	2.375*** (0.716)	0.847 (0.753)	1.796* (0.713)	1.836** (0.710)
Age	-0.554*** (0.026)	-0.543*** (0.026)	-0.542*** (0.026)	-0.522*** (0.026)
Male	0.350 (0.693)	-0.050 (0.694)	0.181 (0.688)	0.803 (0.686)
Economic Opportunities		8.061*** (1.252)		
Political Trust			15.644*** (1.396)	
Universalism				20.123*** (1.515)
R ²	0.079	0.084	0.093	0.098
Adj. R ²	0.078	0.082	0.092	0.097
Num. obs.	8248	8248	8248	8248
RMSE	31.335	31.258	31.101	31.006

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.

A27. Alternative Class Operationalization: Income + Education
 Social Investment Priority - Trade-off: Childcare vs. Child benefits

	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Middle Class	0.280*** (0.042)	0.205*** (0.044)	0.257*** (0.042)	0.273*** (0.042)
Age	0.005*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)
Male	0.211*** (0.041)	0.190*** (0.041)	0.206*** (0.041)	0.218*** (0.041)
Economic Opportunities		0.413*** (0.076)		
Political Trust			0.685*** (0.085)	
Universalism				0.277** (0.092)
AIC	20534.140	20506.424	20470.861	20527.097
BIC	20625.430	20604.735	20569.172	20625.408
Log Likelihood	-10254.070	-10239.212	-10221.430	-10249.548
Deviance	20508.140	20478.424	20442.861	20499.097
Num. obs.	8285	8285	8285	8285

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Country-fixed-effects included in all models.