Universalism of the Young, Universalism of the Old: Universalists, Particularists and Welfare Preferences

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Abstract

Research on the transformation of electoral politics in Western Europe suggests that a second socio-cultural dimension of political conflict dividing universalistic and particularistic policy demands has become increasingly salient and, in some countries, superseded the traditional economic dimension as the primary axis of political competition. To understand the transformative potential of a salient universalism-particularism dimension for welfare politics, we investigate how citizens situated at the two poles of this second dimension have distinct social policy preferences. We complement a rapidly growing literature on the importance of this second dimension for welfare state preferences in two ways. First, we investigate whether and how universalists and particularists differ in their support for redistributive, solidaristic social policies. Second, we theorize that young and old universalists have distinct welfare preferences due to a changing meaning of the universalism-particularism divide over the last decades. Using novel survey data from Germany, including several ways to measure welfare positions and priorities, we show that particularists prefer contribution-based social consumption policies, and universalists are more supportive of social investment and redistributive, solidaristic policies. However, aggregate analyses mask the expected differences between the young and the old universalists. Young universalists show exceptionally high support for social investment, while old universalists attribute less importance to pension expansion and more to redistributive, solidaristic policies. These findings allude to the potentially transformative character of this new cleavage for the mass politics of the welfare state.

1. Introduction

While welfare politics was traditionally structured along an economic left-right programmatic dimension of political conflict, the second dimension of programmatic political conflict between universalistic policy demands and particularistic demands has become salient in all Western European countries, and, in many of them, is today even the dominant dimension of political competition (Kriesi et al. 2012; Hutter and Kriesi 2019). Recent studies even see a fully-fledged social cleavage in this new divide, complete with a socio-structural basis, collective identity and political organization by left-libertarian and green parties on one side and radical right parties on the other (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Bornschier et al. 2021; Marks et al. 2022). Even though we know that this divide was mainly politicized around policy issues distinctive from social policy (in particular immigration, multiculturalism, supranational integration and cultural liberalism), the programmatic "bundles" at the extremes of the divide by now have such a strong structuring ideological impact on how citizens make sense of politics and orient themselves in the political space that the divide between universalists and particularists also affects welfare politics throughout the different areas of social policy (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015; Garritzmann, Häusermann, and Palier 2022; Häusermann et al. 2022), as cleavages indeed help voters incorporate specific issues, both existing and newly raised ones, into their ideological coordinate system.

For this reason, conceptualizing European welfare politics in the 21st century requires that we understand what voters at the extremes of the universalism-particularism divide think of and want from the welfare state. Apart from some studies indicating that welfare chauvinism is closely related to such a divide (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015), we know relatively little about which social policies universalists and particularists support more broadly and which they prioritize over others. Suppose we find that "traditional" social policy attitudes are also structured along this universalism-particularism divide, it would hint at the potentially transformative character of this new cleavage for welfare politics.

We put forward two mechanisms why universalists and particularists should differ in their social policy attitudes. First, a value-based mechanism where we argue that contribution-based social consumption policies reaffirm traditional boundaries of solidarity and thus resonate with particularist values, while benefits of social investment policies are more diffuse and widely spread and thus relate more to universalist values. Second, a compositional mechanism emphasizes the association of universalist attitudes with specific occupational groups and the highly educated.

While this is well known, the existing literature neglects how the universalism-particularism divide relates to redistributive and solidaristic social policies, such as unemployment support or social assistance. Thus, we complement existing arguments by contending that the emergence of the universalism-particularism cleavage over the past 40 years may have led to differences between younger and older universalists in their attitude towards solidaristic, redistributive policies. We hypothesize that such cohort differences among universalists are likely because citizens have been politically socialized by different waves of social movements over time, each with their own programmatic policy-bundles and meanings of what constituted the extremes of the universalism-particularism divide. This dialectical evolution of the programmatic understanding of what universalism implies, coupled with the massive educational expansion and occupational upgrading, has led to larger and more heterogenous group of universalists. Thus, we expect that older universalists support redistributive policies more than younger universalists. The former have become socialized into the new cleavage in a more clearly left-wing, anti-capitalist, and anti-elite habitat, while the latter have more heterogenous background due to educational expansion and their political socialization happened in reaction to the New Right.

To empirically assess our hypotheses, we use original survey data fielded in Germany in early 2021. We rely on multiple ways of operationalizing social policy preferences, ranging from standard positional items, over importance questions, to conjoint experiments to gauge priorities. Our results indicate that universalists and particularists differ indeed on what they primarily want the welfare state to do. While particularists prefer contribution-based social consumption policies (e.g., pensions), universalists are more supportive of social investment policies (e.g., childcare or university education) and redistributive, solidaristic policies (e.g., social assistance). However, aggregate analyses mask the expected differences between the young and the old universalists. In fact, young universalists show particularly high support for social investment, while old universalists attribute less importance to pension expansion and more to redistributive, solidaristic policies.

2. Theory

What do universalists and particularist want from the welfare state and why should this distinction be important? Which social policies do they prioritize? Moreover, are there differences in how younger and older universalists and particularists approach the welfare state and welfare politics? We theorize these questions sequentially, focusing on the general divide between universalists and particularists first, and on age differences second.

2.1. Universalism – particularism and social policy preferences

A growing literature theorizes and empirically studies social policy preferences of voters with decidedly universalistic vs. particularistic attitudes. Much of this literature focuses rather narrowly on different preferences regarding welfare chauvinism, the one aspect of social policy reform that is most explicitly and directly linked to immigration and multiculturalism, which are, of course, key component issues of the universalism-particularism-divide. Theoretically, the preferences of particularists for welfare chauvinism are motivated both by their preference for protectionist policies, shielding existing groups of beneficiaries from the challenges that are implied by the progressive and change-oriented impetus of universalistic policies (e.g. a more diverse society or stronger transnational integration of communities), as well as by their understanding of welfare deservingness based on criteria of identity, control or reciprocity (Abts et al. 2021; Attewell 2021; Busemeyer, Rathgeb, and Sahm 2022). Empirically, attitudes toward welfare chauvinism have been shown to relate closely to the other components of the universalism-particularism divide, i.e., they load on the same factor (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015). In this sense, welfare chauvinism is most likely the one area of welfare politics in which divides between universalists and particularists in terms of both position and priority are most obvious.

In this paper, however, we are interested in more general social policy preference divides between universalists and particularists, beyond the politically specific and numerically relatively marginal field of social policy for immigrants. Suppose attitudes along this divide also structure welfare politics in “traditional” social policy fields such as pensions, education, unemployment insurance or social assistance. In that case, the implications and transformative potential of the universalism-particularism divide for welfare politics are obviously much more extensive than if its implications are confined to welfare chauvinism.

There is indeed much reason to expect the new cleavage to affect welfare state politics beyond the question of immigrants’ social rights. Indeed, we build on a rapidly growing literature that

theorizes precisely such a more general and more consequential divide concerning universalists' and particularists' attitudes on social investment and social consumption policies. The distinction between these types of social policy has been amply developed in the literature: while social consumption policies typically replace income via transfers, are clearly delineated in terms of the eligible beneficiaries, and "repair" income loss ex-post, social investment policies "create, mobilize, and preserve" human capital and capabilities to sustain individuals' earnings potential in the labor market (Morel, Palier, and Palme 2012; Hemerijck 2013; Garritzmann, Häusermann, and Palier 2022). Social investment policies imply social spending in the present to yield societal returns in the future. As a consequence, the exact distribution of the returns and benefits of social investment policies is not clearly identifiable and predictable ex-ante for individuals (Beramendi et al. 2015). We also know that both social consumption and social investment policies enjoy very broad support across the entire population (Garritzmann, Busemeyer, and Neimanns 2018). However, there are differences in degree and – in particular – in the relative importance voters attribute to different social policies (Häusermann et al. 2021, Bremer and Bürgisser 2022). Hence, when studying the preferences of universalists and particularists in this paper, we focus as much on position as on the importance voters assign to specific policies.

Why would we expect universalists and particularists to differ in their preferences regarding social consumption and social investment? A first mechanism goes to the core of the underlying value divide between universalistic and particularistic policies: the expected benefits of social investments are more widely spread, hard to predict, and may enhance inclusion and social mobility, properties that relate them directly to universalist values. Think of investments in education, which unfold their effects over a long period of time and generate diffuse benefits that citizens cannot for certain identify to accrue to them or others (or other people's children). Social insurance transfers, by contrast, as the prototypical example of social consumption policies, accrue to clearly identifiable groups of beneficiaries, and they privilege individuals with long, stable and typical employment and contribution trajectories. They thereby resonate with reaffirming traditional boundaries of solidarity, social order, and protection, and hence with particularist values. This is the value-based mechanism Beramendi et al. (2015) emphasize in theorizing how the new cleavage relates to welfare politics between investment and consumption. Beyond this value-based mechanism, several compositional effects may also drive and/or reinforce the association of second dimension attitudes and welfare reform support, which multivariate models can only partially control for (Garritzmann, Häusermann, and Pinggera 2022). First, universalistic attitudes are closely related to occupation, with people in

highly skilled, public or semi-public professions exhibiting clearly the strongest support for universalism. Hence, support for education policy among voters with universalistic attitudes may also result to some extent from an interest in investments in and expansion of welfare services. Second, people with universalistic values are also, on average, more educated and skilled than people with particularist values. Their experience, trajectory, context and outlook may lead them to believe in education and social investment more generally as a potent foundation for future and continued labor market success and social inclusion in the knowledge economy (Häusermann et al. 2021). Hence, both causal and compositional effects are supposed to underly the association between universalistic and particularistic values and policy preferences regarding social investment and consumption.

The existing empirical evidence confirms this association concerning policy positions (Garritzmann, Busemeyer, and Neimanns 2018), but especially strongly concerning the relative importance universalistic and particularistic citizens attribute to typical social investment and consumption policies (Häusermann et al. 2021). In line with these observations, several recent studies also identify the parties at the extremes of this dimension – the Greens and the Radical Right - to clearly drive the political conflict around investment and consumption (Häusermann et al. 2020; Enggist and Pinggera 2022; Bremer and Schwander 2022).

From these explanations, we derive two hypotheses:

> H1: People with particularistic attitudes support contribution-based consumption policies more than those with universalistic attitudes.
>
> H2: People with universalistic attitudes support social investment policies more than those with particularistic attitudes.

However, all these contributions leave out theorizing how the universalism-particularism divide relates to traditional, redistributive and solidaristic social policies such as unemployment support or social assistance. Hence, they implicitly conceptualize the "second dimension" of welfare politics as orthogonal to a traditional economic left-right divide which is supposed to structure attitudes towards traditional, redistributive social policies. However, we know that the politicization of the second dimension has not developed independently from the existence and re-definition of questions of economic redistribution. What are universalists and particularists likely to think of redistributive social policy?

2.2. Younger and older universalists, and why their social policy preferences differ

From previous studies by Kitschelt and Rehm (2014), Häusermann and Kriesi (2015) and Oesch and Rennwald (2018), we know that voters of the new middle class, especially socio-cultural professionals, are clearly on average decidedly pro-redistribution. As they also on average have strong universalistic preferences, we may conclude that universalists support solidaristic, redistributive policies as much as social investment policies. However, such an assumption, we contend, overlooks relevant heterogeneity within the group of voters with universalistic values. We contend that the emergence of the universalism-particularism cleavage over a period of the past 40 years may have led to differences between younger and older universalists in their attitude towards solidaristic, redistributive policies. We do not expect the same internal heterogeneity for particularists, for reasons we will explain in the subsequent paragraphs.

To understand how first-dimension attitudes of redistribution relate to second-dimension attitudes of universalism and particularism, we need to understand the three different "waves" with which subsequent cohorts of citizens have been accustomed to and socialized into the programmatic "bundles" that today constitute the extremes of the universalism-particularism divide.

Universalistic demands were first mobilized in electoral politics of Western Europe in the context of the New Social Movements, starting in the mid-1970s. The New Social Movements were the first to put "second dimension issues" on the political agenda of mainstream mass politics, in particular through claims for gender equality, international peace and solidarity with developing countries in the Global South, and against nuclear energy (Kriesi et al. 1995; Kitschelt 1986). Through massive mobilization efforts in the form of demonstrations, protests, action committees and – eventually – party formation, they entailed meaningful socializing experiences for an entire generation of young, left-wing voters who would later become the backbone and core electorate of green and left-libertarian parties. These movements emerged from within the traditional Left and in direct succession to the 68-revolt that claimed progressive, systemic, anti-capitalist societal change. They mobilized with the explicit objective of extending the scope and ambition of the social democratic "emancipatory project" to new social groups who had previously been somewhat sidelined from the social democratic class compromise between the (male organized) working class and capital, such as women, non-nationals, precarious and atypical workers, or even future generations (Frega 2021). Importantly, the New Social Movements had both a programmatic and an organizational emancipatory ambition: programmatically, they re-defined the notion of "left-wing politics"

by extending its ambition to a broader set of issues and groups as mentioned before; organizationally, they explicitly mobilized against traditional forms of institutionalized politics – e.g. by organizing mass protests or collective action committees outside established organizations – with the aim of empowering and raising the voices of citizens against the established elites through grassroot movements (Kriesi 1999; Offe 1985). The voters who "became universalists" through processes of political socialization in this first wave of cleavage formation three to four decades ago are by now in their early 60s or older.

It is against this first wave of universalistic mobilization that the "silent counter-revolution" by the populist radical right parties occurred (Ignazi 1992; Kitschelt 1995). Through either new parties or a reorientation of existing socially conservative parties, the New Right mobilized voters who opposed the far-reaching progressive social change the New Left had put on the agenda. With their programmatic claims for traditional gender roles, family norms and social order, for national priority and protectionism over internationalism and against increased environmental protection, they promoted the mirror image of the universalistic policy-bundle of the New Left (Betz 1993; Bornschier 2010) from the late 1980s onwards. During the 1990s and 2000, when the New Right movement gained in scope and importance, anti-immigration and anti-supranationalism positions became increasingly important in defining the particularistic programmatic agenda of these parties, while their traditionalist-authoritarian opposition to the core demands of the New Social Movements remained part of their programmatic supply. However, while their mobilization was in reality strongly driven in a top-down way by party elites, as opposed to the grassroots politics of the New Left (Hutter 2014), their political rhetoric emphasized a populist, anti-elite and anti-establishment claim. This emphasis on bottom-up politics against the elites consequently implied a much less clear demarcation from the New Left than the antagonistic demarcation we observe with regard to programmatic terms. The populist anti-elite claims of the New Right manifested in more recent times in the form of critical or even adversarial positions against experts, technocrats and established educational elites (Caramani 2017).

With the nationalist right-wing electoral potential becoming electorally large and visible in basically all Western European countries from 2000 onwards, the divide between universalists and particularists developed into a full-blown cleavage. Therefore, younger voters born after the mid-1980s were politically socialized into an ideological competitive space in which the particularistic extreme had been very strong from the moment they became aware of politics. Those who developed universalistic political attitudes hence did so in clear demarcation from the populist Radical Right's anti-immigrant, nationalist, traditionalist programmatic positions.

However, their political socialization has been less closely tied to a grassroots movement challenging the establishment than the political socialization in the New Left of the 1980s. Also, given the populist profile of the New Right, many younger universalists may have come to defend established institutions or expert-led politics (Bertsou and Caramani 2022). In short, their universalistic attitudes refer more clearly to programmatic politics, rather than a reversal of power structures and new, anti-establishment ways of doing politics in a bottom-up way, in the pursuit of empowering the weak and marginalized[1].

This dialectic development of programmatic understandings of what universalism is and implies is one factor why we would expect age differences within the group of voters with universalistic attitudes. However, there is a second factor that adds to it: massive educational expansion and occupational upgrading have led to a much larger but most likely more heterogeneous group of "universalists" compared to the 1980s and 1990s. Over the past 20 years, the share of young people with tertiary education in Western democracies has more than doubled on average. With universalistic attitudes closely linked to the types of social and cultural capital that come with higher education, this development has broadened the universalistic coalition way beyond the left-wing subcultures that were at the root of the New Social Movements, thereby weakening the link between left-wing attitudes on the first, economic dimension and socio-cultural issues over these generations (Ares and van Ditmars 2022).

What do these three waves of political-programmatic socialization and cleavage formation imply for the social policy attitudes we expect to prevail among the members of these cohorts? For "early universalists", we would expect their social policy attitudes to extend beyond support for social investment to solidaristic and redistributive policies because of the left-wing, anti-capitalist, and anti-elite habitat in which they became socialized into the new cleavage. For younger universalists, this link is less obvious, both because of the more heterogeneous background they have come from, as well as because their programmatic socialization happened most clearly in reaction to the New Right and their claims, which are decidedly particularist but much more ambiguous when it comes to capitalism and redistribution. Consequently, we expect them to side with social investment claims but to care less about solidaristic and redistributive policies. Finally, for particularistic voters, we do not expect such a cohort difference, as their view on social policy is likely to be shaped by a clear authoritarian-

[1] This may change again with the grassroots character of the "Fridays For Future" movement that started in Sweden in 2018, which also mobilizes in a very elite-critical way, criticizing established parties in general, including left-wing and green parties.

and identity-based understanding of deservingness (resonating with priority given to social consumption policies), but is likely to be less concerned with redistribution per se.

From these explanations, we derive two additional hypotheses:

> H3a: The divide between people with universalistic and particularistic attitudes regarding social investment and social consumption is consistent across age groups.
>
> H3b: The divide between people with universalistic and particularistic attitudes regarding redistributive, solidaristic policies is stronger among older people than among the young.

3. Data and Methods

We test our hypotheses empirically by focusing on the German case. Germany is an ideal case for our study for several reasons: first, the New Social Movements were particularly strong in Germany in the 1980s and left a lasting imprint on the political socialization of an entire generation (Kriesi et al. 1995). Second, while the universalistic claims of the New Left were integrated into the pre-existing social democratic parties in several countries, the difference between the German SPD and the Greens in terms of first- vs. second-dimension programmatic priority remained clear and strong (Kitschelt 1994; Häusermann and Kitschelt 2022). This organizational distinction is likely to result in more distinctive preference profiles of universalistic voters over time. Third, Germany did experience a strong counter-revolution against the New Left way before the – relatively late – mobilization of the radical right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in 2012. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Germany dealt with repeated waves of radical right mobilization, not least in the wake of reunification, and these waves left strong imprints on the political socialization of young people at the time. German conservative parties struggled over decades with the question of how to appeal to a right-wing national electoral potential without compromising themselves in the light of the German historical trauma (Art 2011; Bornschier 2012). The AfD finally gave this electoral potential a voice comparable to what had happened in neighboring countries 10-20 years earlier.

To empirically assess our hypotheses, we use original survey data gathered as part of the ERC-funded WELFAREPRIORITIES project.[2] The survey was fielded between January and March 2021 in cooperation with the survey company Bilendi. It includes completed answers from 3019

[2] welfarepriorities.eu

respondents in Germany. The target population was the adult population. To increase the representativeness of the survey, we included quotas for sex and age (crossed) as well as educational attainment. This survey is the third wave of data collection within a larger project in which we gather information on a broad range of social policy preferences, electoral behaviour, perceptions of party positions, general attitudes, and standard socio-demographic variables.

One of the main strengths of the survey is that it includes multiple ways of operationalising social policy preferences, ranging from standard positional items, over items that capture the importance that respondents attribute to these positions, to items which introduce constraints that force respondents to make hard decisions and explicitly state their priorities (here, we use conjoint experiments to gauge priorities). In this paper, we use all these types of measures. Using different kinds of operationalisations to assess our hypotheses has both a theoretical and an empirical reason. Theoretically, previous research has insinuated that preferences on the second, non-economic attitudinal dimension are related to welfare preferences. Importantly, however, this research suggests that these effects may be stronger for relative measures of social policy preferences, i.e., measures of importance or priorities than for measures of positional attitudes (e.g., Häusermann et al. 2022). Thus, even though we have no clear expectations regarding this, we might find some of our hypotheses to be stronger when it comes to importance or even constrained priorities attributed to policies. Empirically, the use of different operationalisations of the dependent variable can be used to probe robustness.

3.1 Individual-level analysis

The first operationalisation of our dependent variable (social policy support) focuses on *unconstrained positional items.* Therefore, we use standard items which capture respondents' support for expanding or reducing spending for six social policies. Respondents were asked: "Do you think the government should expand or reduce the following benefits and services?". This question was answered on a 7-point answer scale from 1 (reduce) to 7 (expand) for the following policies: "Old age pension benefits", "Childcare services", "University education", "Unemployment benefits", "Services that help reintegrate unemployed into the labour market" (ALMP), and "Social assistance benefits".

The second operationalisation of our dependent variable (social policy support) focuses on *unconstrained importance items.* Therefore, we use the following item: "How urgent do you consider the following improvements of social policy benefits in [COUNTRY]?". Again, respondents answered this question for the same six social policy fields listed above. Answers

were captured on a 4-point answer scale: "1 Not at all urgent", "2 Rather not urgent", "3 Rather urgent", and "4 Very urgent". The third operationalisation of our dependent variable (social policy support) focuses on *constrained priorities* (conjoint analysis) and are described in more detail below.

As indicated in the hypotheses, we differentiate between support for c*ontribution-based consumption policies*, measured by support for old age pensions, *social investment policies*, measures by support for ALMP, childcare, and university education, and *traditional, redistributive and solidaristic policies*, measured by support for social assistance and unemployment benefits.

Our main independent variable are attitudes on the particularism-universalism dimension. We use five items to construct an unweighted, additive index. Respondents are asked to "Disagree Strongly", "Disagree", "Agree", or "Agree Strongly" with the following statements: "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 our national culture", "Immigration is a threat to the national labour market", and "European integration has gone too far"[3]. We normalise the additive index to range from 0 (particularist) to 1 (universalist). The mean is at 0.58.

Our second independent variable is age, which we interact with particularism-universalism attitudes in the analyses for hypotheses 3a/b. The weak negative correlation between the two variables (r=-0.15) indicates that high values of universalism are more prevalent among the younger. Nonetheless, as Table 1 shows, we have a sufficient number of both young (<30 years) particularists (lower third of the distribution) and of older (>=70) universalists (upper third of the distribution).

Table 1. Number of particularists and universalists across age groups

Age	**Particularists**		**Middle Group**		**Universalists**		**full sample**	
<30	98	*21%*	125	*27%*	237	*52%*	460	*100%*
30-49	384	*40%*	306	*32%*	264	*28%*	954	*100%*
50-69	482	*40%*	375	*31%*	337	*28%*	1194	*100%*
>=70	161	*39%*	144	*35%*	106	*26%*	411	*100%*
full sample	1125	*37%*	950	*31%*	944	*31%*	3019	*100%*

[3] The answer scale to items 2 to 5 have been reversed.

To analyse the relationship between social policy preferences (positional support and unconstrained importance) and particularism-universalism and age, we run a series of regression models. For each social policy and both types of operationalisations separately, we regress support on our independent variables in standard OLS regression models. All models presented include control variables for sex, educational attainment, and attitudes on the first, economic dimension. The latter is operationalised analogous to the particularism-universalism index, namely by combining the answers on two items to an unweighted, additive index: "For a society to be fair, income differences should be small", and "Social benefits and services in [COUNTRY] place too great a strain on the economy"[4]. Furthermore, all models include poststratification weights (sex and age crossed, educational attainment) to increase the representativeness of results. Excluding the weights does not change the results substantively.

3.2. Conjoint analysis

While questions about social policy positions and the importance of different social policies are unconstrained, that is principally allowing respondents to demand welfare expansion for all social policies and to attribute high importance to all social policies, differences between universalists and particularists might become manifest more strongly concerning *relative* support for different social policies. Therefore, we are particularly interested in which social policies respondents prioritize. The expansion of which social policies do people support if they must decide but cannot have expansion across the board?

To measure such welfare priorities, we use a novel conjoint experiment that we have fielded as part of the same survey to the same respondents that we use for the individual-level analysis. Conjoint designs are well-suited to capture individuals' welfare priorities since welfare politics are multi-dimensional and since real-world welfare reforms often involve trade-offs across multiple policy fields (Bremer and Bürgisser 2022). In our conjoint experiment each respondent had to compare four pairs of two different welfare state reform proposals and for each pair chose the reform proposal they like more. These reform proposals contained information on whether welfare benefits and services in six areas of social policy (namely old age pensions, childcare services, university education, unemployment benefits, active labour market policies and social assistance benefits) would stay the same or would be expanded in a respective welfare reform proposal (see Table 2 for an overview of the exact wording). Since the welfare

[4] The answer scale to this item has been reversed.

reform packages are generated randomly, the conjoint design allows us to observe how much the expansion of each of these six social policies contributes to the popularity of a reform proposal. The more it does, the more it is prioritized.

Since the goal of this conjoint experiment is to measure priorities for expansion in the six social policies, two more specifics of our design should be noted. First, the expansive reforms in all cases specified that the benefit expansion should be redistributive and target the needier part of recipients, that is prioritize expansion of minimum benefits, for lower-income families or in the case of active labour market policies for the long-term unemployed. Holding the progressivity of expansion constant across social policies, on the one hand, reduces the complexity of the conjoint and, on the other hand, ensures comparability across social policies. Second, we made sure by design that within each pair of welfare reforms to be compared, the number of social policies to be expanded was identical (although it varied between pairs). This prevents respondents from using simple heuristics such as always choosing the more (or less) expansive reform proposal but forces respondents to really ponder which social policy expansions they care more about than others.

Table 2: Overview of the attributes and levels used in the conjoint experiment

Attribute	**Type of level**	**Content of level**
Old age pension benefits	Status Quo	Leave benefits unchanged
	Expansion	Increase minimum benefits, but preserve maximum benefits
Availability of good quality childcare services	Status Quo	Leave availability unchanged
	Expansion	Increase availability for lower-income families.
Access to good quality university education	Status Quo	Leave access unchanged
	Expansion	Expand access for students from lower-income families
Unemployment benefits	Status Quo	Leave benefits unchanged
	Expansion	Increase minimum benefits, but preserve maximum benefits
Reintegration services for the unemployed	Status Quo	Leave services unchanged
	Expansion	Expand services for long-term unemployed
Social assistance benefits	Status Quo	Leave benefits unchanged
	Expansion	Increase minimum benefits, but preserve maximum benefits

Since the focus of this paper is on the welfare preferences of universalists and particularists, we analyse the findings of the conjoint experiment separately for universalists and particularists. This enables us to observe whether the people situated at the two poles of the second dimension prioritize the expansion of different social policies. We define the two groups based on the index measuring attitudes on the particularism-universalism dimension introduced above. For the conjoint analysis, we split the sample roughly into thirds (see Table 1) and compare the preferences of the most universalist third with the preferences of the most particularist third. The remaining third of respondents who express ambiguous or centrist positions on the particularism-universalism dimension are discarded for the conjoint analyses.

In a second step, we divide these attitudinal groups further according to their age in order to test H3 which expects the divide between universalists and particularists to play out differently among younger than among older age groups. In our main analysis, we study the welfare priorities of people aged up to 49 and the priorities of respondents aged 50 or older separately. As can be derived from Table 1, this still leaves us with group sizes of between 443 (old universalists) and 643 (old particularists) respondents. Since the age threshold is somewhat arbitrary, we check the robustness of our findings by additionally using an age threshold of 40 (see appendix A7), for which the findings are qualitatively similar.

4. Results

4.1. What do universalists and particularists want from the welfare state?

We start by asking what universalists and particularists want from the welfare state. Figure 1 illustrates the effect of particularism-universalism on *unconstrained positional support* for different social policies. The corresponding regression table can be found in the appendix A1. Hypothesis 1 expects that particularists are more supportive of contribution-based consumption policies than people with universalistic attitudes. Indeed, we find the respective negative relationship between particularism-universalism and support for pensions, as illustrated in the bottom left panel. In contrast, the effect of second-dimension attitudes is positive for social investment policies, as illustrated in the top panels. This confirms our second hypothesis. We find that for ALMP, childcare, and university education, support is substantially higher among universalists than among particularists.

Because we expect strong age differences (see H3b), we have unclear theoretical expectations how attitudes on the particularism-universalism dimension are related to traditional, redistributive and solidaristic social policies such as unemployment benefits or social assistance

on average. For the former, we do not find significant effects. Support for unemployment benefits is not affected by attitudes on the particularism-universalism dimension. Regarding social assistance, however, we find that universalists are significantly and substantively more supportive than particularists – a finding that we will take up again below.

Overall, the findings show that universalists are (even when controlled for economic preferences) more supportive of social investment policies and social assistance, i.e., the policy whose recipients might be perceived as most undeserving and where support is thus driven most strongly by solidarity considerations. In contrast, particularists are characterised by strong support for old age pensions, a traditional insurance-based consumption policy. Also note that overall support for most policies is relatively high. Hence, even though in general we may say that universalists are more supportive of social policies, particularists are certainly not anti-welfare state either. Even for social assistance benefits as the least liked social policy, we do not find even the most extreme particularists to (on average) support retrenchment. Rather, they indicate that benefits should be left unchanged (as 4 is the middle category on the 7-point answer scale).

Figure 2 assesses the same hypotheses but illustrates the effect of particularism-universalism attitudes on *unconstrained importance* attributed to the very same social policies[5]. The findings look very similar. Particularists are not only more supportive of old age pensions than universalists, but they also attribute more importance to the expansion of these benefits. More so, this divide even gets considerably bigger looking at importance rather than positions. The importance attributed to an expansion of old age pension benefits is the most pronounced social policy conflict between particularists and universalists. As with unconstrained positions, universalists also attach considerably more importance to expanding social investment policies. Again, conflict over unemployment benefits is not characterised by a divide on the particularism-universalism divide. However, the finding concerning social assistance stands out. Although universalists reported to be in favour of expanding these benefits, as shown in Figure 1, importance attributed to such an expansion is not higher among universalists than among particularists, as illustrated in the bottom middle panel in Figure 2. Hence, the solidarity expressed by universalists seems to be rather shaky. The analyses below further investigate this result.

[5] See the regression table in appendix A2.

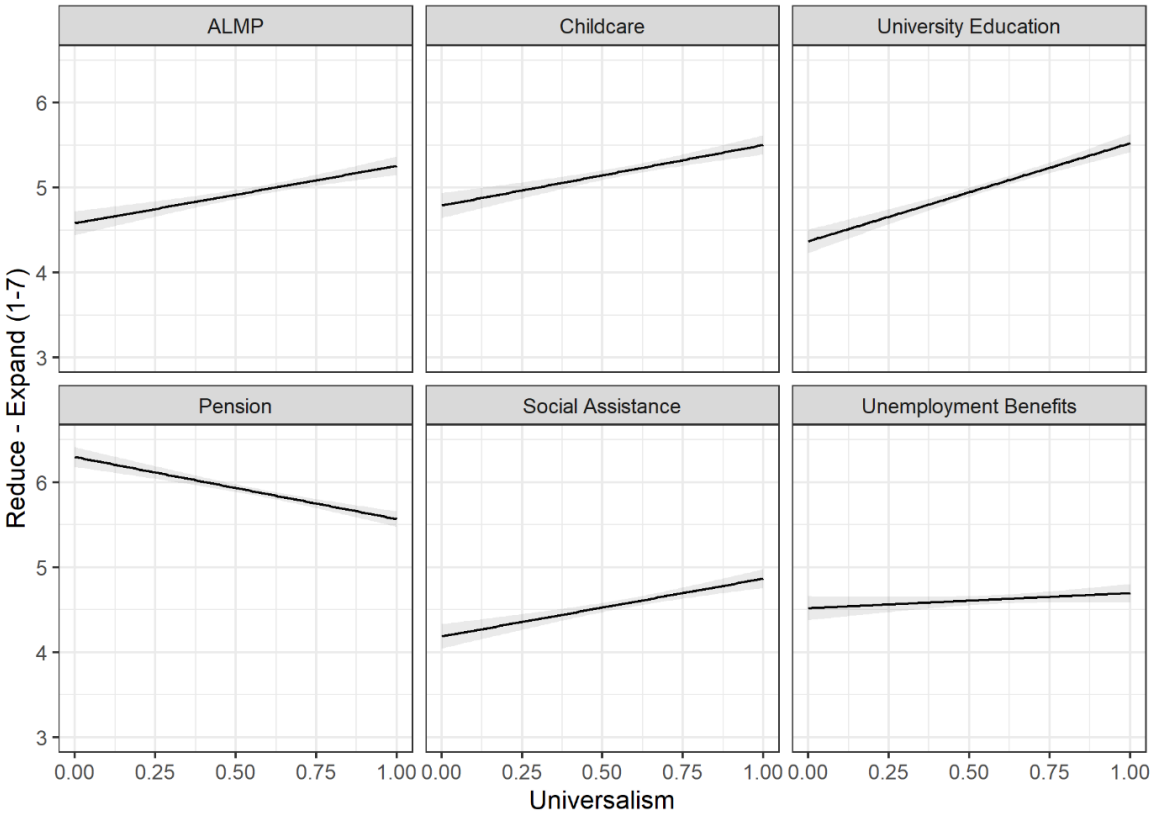

Figure 1. Effects of particularism-universalism attitudes on unconstrained positional support for social policies

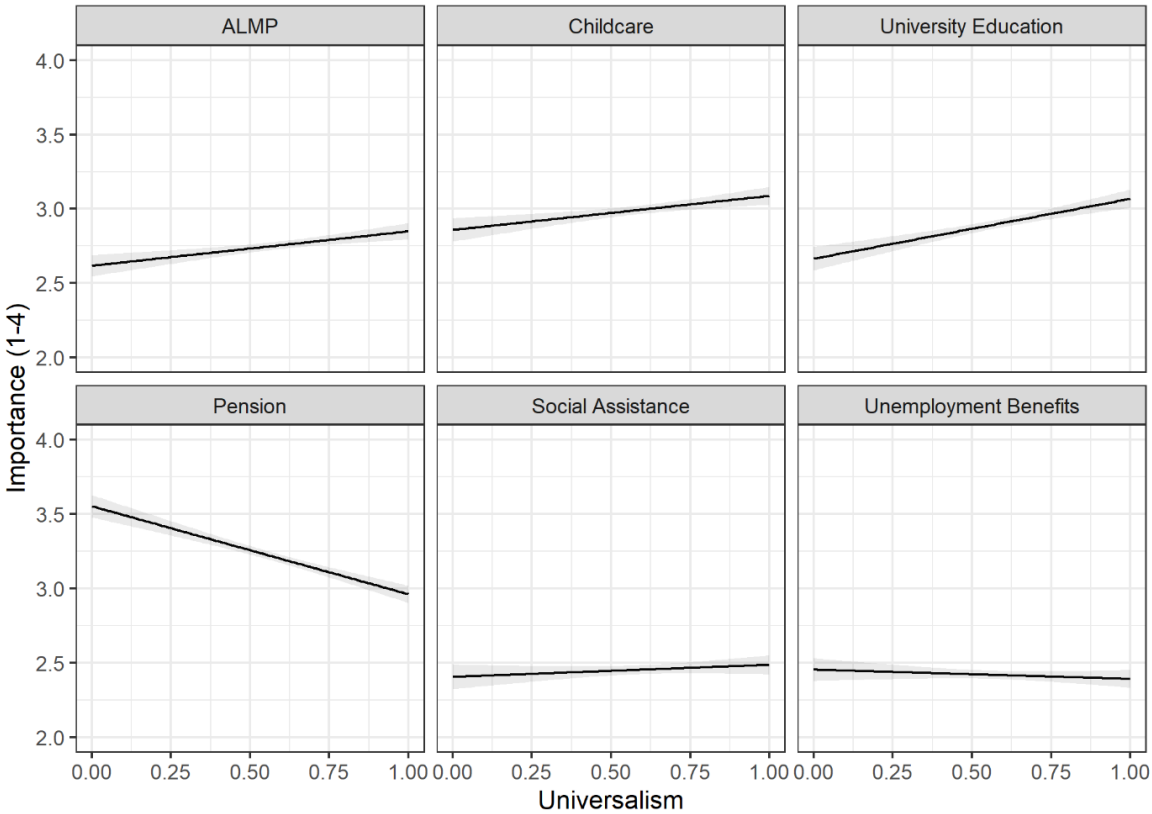

Figure 2. Effects of particularism-universalism attitudes on unconstrained importance attributed to social policies

As a third way of measuring universalists' and particularists' welfare preferences, we compare based on a conjoint experiment, for which social policies these two groups prioritize welfare expansion more or less. While we do not per se have different theoretical expectations, this way of measuring differs from the two measures used above not only in that it is experimental but also in that it introduces trade-offs between policy fields. While respondents could theoretically demand welfare expansion in all policy fields and attribute a high importance to all social policies, the conjoint design forces them to decide where they want to expand most fervently.

Figure 3 presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs)[6] for the expansive reform propositions relative to the status quo, that is leaving benefits or services unchanged, for each of the six social policies and both for people with universalist and particularist attitiudes. Positive AMCEs indicate that the expansion of the respective social policy being part of a welfare reform package contributes positively to the likelihood of a welfare reform package being chosen. The expansion of these policies is prioritized. Negative AMCEs indicate that the expansion of the respective social policy makes support for a welfare reform containing that expansion less likely. It is however important to note that negative AMCEs do not necessarily mean that an expansion in that social policy is generally disliked. Since we introduce trade-offs between policies by design, it could also just mean that welfare expansion in this area of the welfare state is liked less than expansion for other social policies.

If we first look at the findings from the conjoint in Figure 3 without paying attention to differences between universalists and particularists, we observe – in accordance with previous contributions stressing the popularity of old age pensions (Busemeyer and Garritzmann 2017) – that pension expansion is extremely popular and gets clearly prioritized over expansions in other welfare areas. At the other end of the popularity scale are both active and passive labour market measures located. German citizens on average prioritize the expansion of unemployment benefits and services to reintegrate long-term unemployed people into the welfare state least, less so than expanding social assistance benefits or facilitating access to childcare services or university education for lower-income families.

[6] Corresponding marginal means can be found in appendix A3.

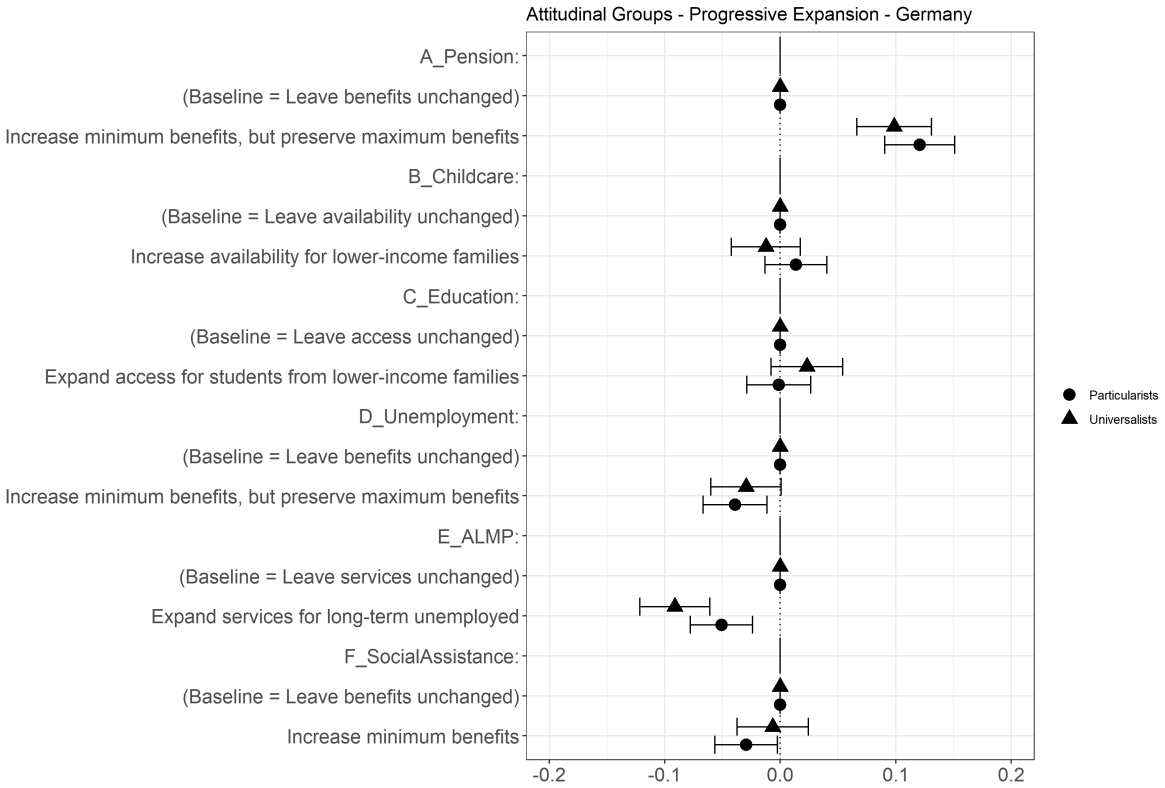

Figure 3: AMCEs from conjoint experiment for the universalist and the particularist third of the sample

This prioritization of pensions over everything else and the relatively small prioritization of policies related to labour market risks can be observed for both people with universalistic and particularistic attitudes. Thus, comparing these attitudinal groups it should be noted that differences between the two groups are not huge. Universalists and particularists do not diverge completely concerning what they want the welfare state to do primarily. Zooming in on some policies, however, important and partly significant differences emerge.

For several policies, the tendencies discovered in welfare positions and importance can be found also in the conjoint experiments. First, although the difference not being significant, the prioritization of old age pensions is even greater among particularists than it is among universalists. Second, the expansion of social assistance benefits contributes negatively to the likelihood of welfare reform packages being chosen among particularists while the AMCE among universalists is nearly zero with only pensions and university education being prioritized more among this part of the population. Thus, we observe in the conjoint a slight, although again insignificant difference with social assistance benefits being more popular at the universalist than the particularist pole of the second dimension. Third, we find more sizeable

differences between universalists and particularists with regard to social investment policies. Looking at the prioritization of expanding access of students with a lower-income background to university education, this policy proposal is – in accordance with H2 and findings from the other measures – more popular and more important to universalists. While universalists seem to be quite willing to renounce on other social policies for expanding access to university education, particularists on average do not care about this policy at all. However, the expected difference of universalists prioritizing social investment policies more than particularists is specific to university education and cannot be found for the other social investment policies. Quite to the contrary, universalists seem – despite their general support for all kind of social investment policies – to be rather willing to sacrifice the expansion of childcare services and quite willing to sacrifice the expansion of active labour market policies to expand other policies. They prioritize childcare and active labour market policies decidedly less than particularists. Lastly, we find near to no difference between universalists and particularists regarding the prioritization of unemployment benefits. The absence of a difference is not too surprising, however, since unemployment benefits at the same time constitute a contribution-based consumption policy and should therefore appeal to particularists (H1) but entails also redistributive implications which should appeal more to at least older universalists (H3b).

Summarizing the findings from all our three ways to measure welfare preferences, that is positions, importance and priorities as observable in the conjoint experiment, we detect that people at the two poles of the newly dominant, second attitudinal dimension also differ with regard to their welfare preferences. We find in accordance with H1 quite robust support for the fact that old age pensions, as the prototypical case of a contribution-based consumption policy that benefits a group widely perceived deserving, are supported and prioritized most strongly by particularists rather than universalists. In contrast, we find as expected in H2 universalists to more strongly support social investment policies. When it comes to the prioritization of these policies, however, this pattern is only upheld for university education but not for childcare services and active labour market policies. Lastly, we find some evidence for universalists also being more supportive of social assistance benefits, the most redistributive social policy for which support should for many people be driven by solidarity rather than material self-interest considerations. This divide, however, becomes insignificant in the conjoint and disappears nearly completely when respondents are asked whether social assistance benefits are important to them. We do not know yet, however, whether – especially with regard to the prioritization of social assistance benefits – the results shown so far might mask differences between how the universalism-particularism divide play out among younger and older age groups.

4.2. How does the effect of being universalist or particularist differ by age?

After we have established what particularists and universalists overall want from the welfare state, we investigate in the following analyses how these findings vary across age groups. Therefore, we regressed unconstrained importance attributed to social policies on the interaction of particularism-universalism attitudes and age. Please find the corresponding regression table in the appendix A4. Figure 4 plots predicted importance dependent on particularism-universalism for respondents of age 30 (dark grey) and respondents of age 70 (light grey). Note that the findings are somewhat weaker (which is perfectly in line with the theory) though not substantively different for 40 and 60 years (appendix A5).

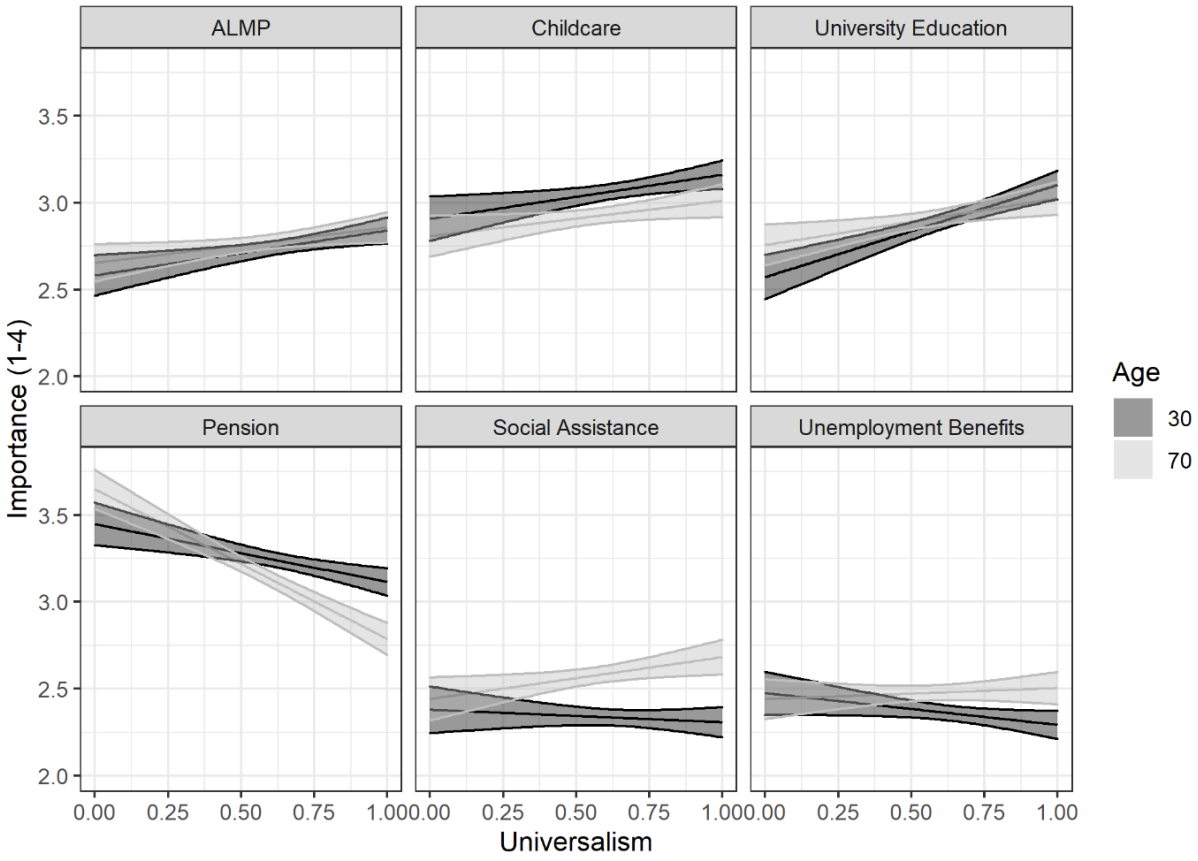

Figure 4. Effects of particularism-universalism by age groups on attitudes on unconstrained positional support for social policies

As noted above, we expect that the divide between people with universalistic and particularistic attitudes regarding social investment and social consumption is consistent across age groups (H3a). The findings are principally in line with these expectations. For both the young and the old we find significant effects of particularism-universalism attitudes on importance attributed

to ALMP, childcare, university education, and pensions. There is, however, some noteworthy nuance to these results. The particularism-universalism divide is stronger for those groups that are more directly concerned by a social policy: Regarding university education, the divide is somewhat more strongly driven by the young. In contrast, the divide regarding pensions is much more strongly driven by the old. This is remarkable. Despite pensions being the social policy which most people find most important, older universalists – who might benefit from pensions themselves – attribute lower importance to pensions than for example to childcare or university education. Hence, preferences of older universalists seem to be driven by solidarity rather than solely by self-interest. This can also be seen regarding importance attributed to unemployment benefits and especially social assistance. Older universalists attribute considerably more importance to policies for "undeserving" groups than older particularists. In contrast, young universalists do not attribute more (for unemployment benefits even less) importance to these policies than young particularists.

Hence, in line with hypothesis 3b, we find that while for younger people, universalistic attitudes are associated with placing a lot of importance on social investment policies, in particular university education and childcare, for older people, universalistic attitudes go hand-in-hand with being more solidaristic with groups that are generally perceived to be rather undeserving.

Similar conclusions can also be drawn from the findings of the conjoint experiments. Figure 5a shows the AMCEs for universalists and particularists aged 50 or older while Figure 5b depicts which welfare expansions universalists and particularists younger than 50 prioritize[7]. Most apparently, we find that the slight but insignificant divide between universalists and particularists concerning the prioritization of social assistance benefits is exclusively due to the elderly. For universalists born before 1971, increasing social assistance benefits is the only expansive reform measure besides pensions that contributes positively to reform packages being chosen and accordingly their second most prioritized policy out of the six we study here. In contrast, for younger universalists social assistance benefit expansions are the second *least* prioritized social policy reform. They prioritize social assistance benefits about as little as their young particularist counterparts. A sizeable and significant conflict about the prioritization of social assistance benefits opens up only among the elderly, which is in accordance with H3b.

[7] Corresponding marginal means can be found in appendix A6.

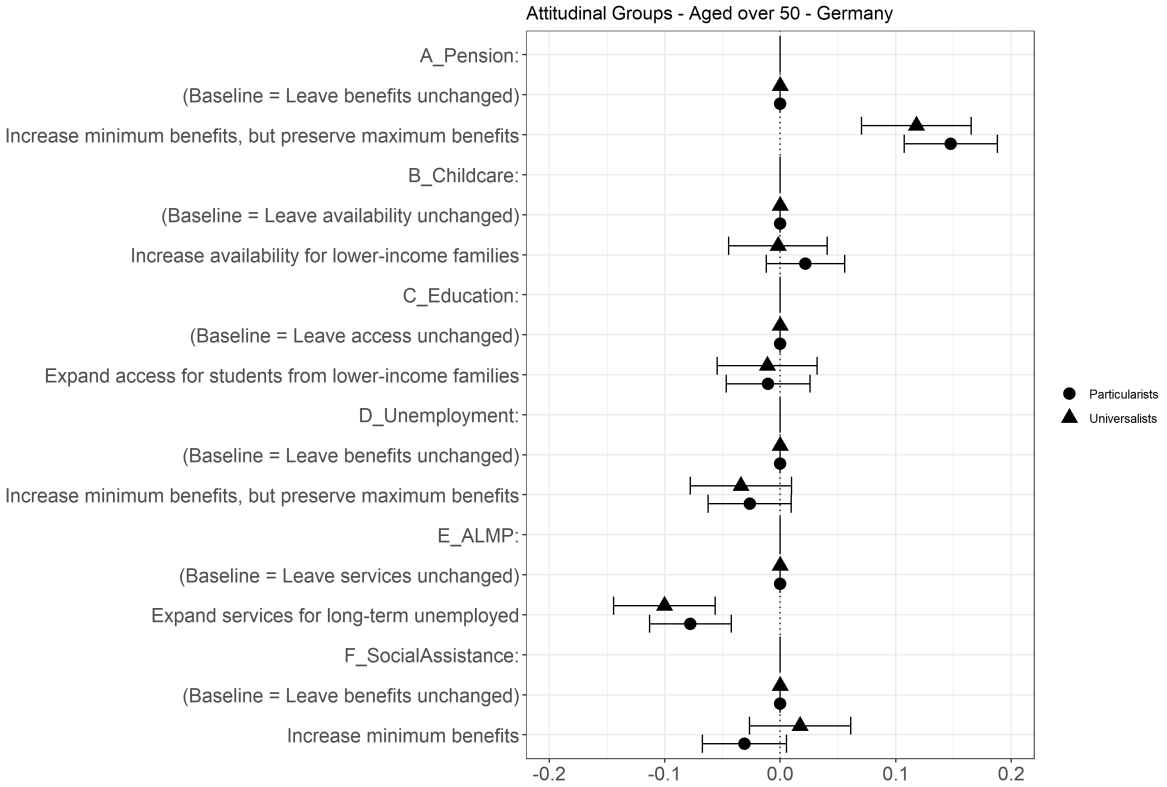

Figure 5a: AMCEs from conjoint experiment for people aged 50 or older, shown for the universalist and the particularist third of the sample

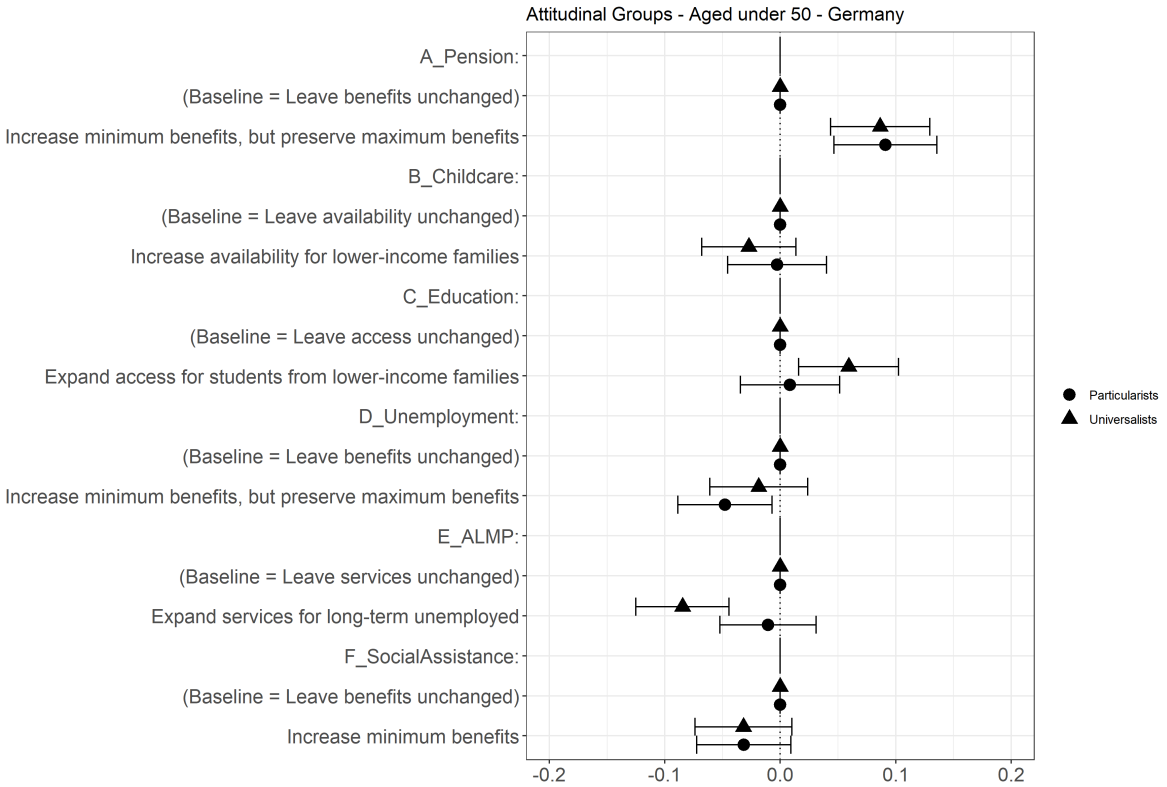

Figure 5b: AMCEs from conjoint experiment for people aged 49 or younger, shown for the universalist and the particularist third of the sample

Contrary to our theoretical expectations (see H3a), we detect age to also matter for the universalism-particularism divide in welfare preferences concerning the prioritization of social investment and consumption. In contrast to the unconstrained importance, we see in the conjoint that if there is a divide concerning the prioritization of pensions, this is driven nearly exclusively by the elderly. Even more clearly, the strong prioritization of expanding access to university education by universalists is solely due to the prioritization among young universalists for whom this reform measure is nearly as appealing as the ever-popular expansion of minimum pensions. Among the elderly though, the universalist third does not prioritize university education more than the particularist third of the population. As in the case of social assistance benefits, also here it is the differing position of young and elderly universalists which opens up a significant universalism-particularism divide among either the young (university education) or the elderly (social assistance benefits).

Summarizing differences by age, we thus find using both a measure of self-reported importance as well as conjoint experiments that the most important divides between universalists' and particularists' welfare preferences are more strongly driven by either older or younger generations. While for younger voters the attitude on the second, attitudinal dimension matters primarily for their prioritization of university education (prioritized by young universalists), these attitudes among older voters are related to the prioritization of old age benefits (strongly prioritized by elderly particularists, less so by elderly universalists) and the prioritization of social assistance benefits (quite strongly prioritized by elderly universalists). These findings provide some indications that the meaning of being universalist for welfare preferences is different for older or younger generations. While older universalists attribute a relatively lower importance to the social policy they benefit from most strongly, i.e., pensions, they are strongly solidaristic with the neediest welfare recipients, namely the beneficiaries of social assistance benefits. Less evidence for such solidaristic preferences can be found among younger universalists. These differ from particularists primarily in their higher prioritization of social investment policies, especially university education.

5. Conclusion

Our results show that the universalism-particularism divide also structures welfare politics in traditional social policy fields such as pensions, education, unemployment insurance and social assistance. Universalists and particularists have different conceptions of the welfare state and differ in their support for specific social policies. While particularists favour contribution-based

consumption policies, universalists are generally more supportive of social investment policies and redistributive, solidaristic policies directed at groups which are commonly perceived as rather undeserving. However, support for solidaristic policies among universalists is notably strong in unconstrained settings but declines in choice settings. Hence, when solidarity conflicts with other social policies in choice settings, universalists also tend to reduce their support to levels comparable to particularists.

Moreover, our findings indicate that older and younger universalists have different social policy preferences, potentially supporting our argument that ongoing political struggles constantly redefine the meaning of the universalism-particularism divide. Young universalists show above-average support for social investment policies and, in particular, for university education. On the other hand, old universalists attribute less importance to contribution-based social consumption policies – notably a policy they are expected to benefit from – but are most supportive of expanding solidaristic, redistributive social policies.

These findings have important implications for the mass politics of the welfare state in the 21st Century. Suppose the second dimension of political conflict indeed becomes the dominant axis of political competition, pitting the Radical Right against the Greens. In that case, conflicts about welfare generosity, in general, will likely be replaced by conflicts about the generosity and size of specific welfare programs. If the age differences we find are due to the political socialization of generations rather than life-cycle effects, our findings paint a somewhat gloomy picture for the future of solidaristic policies. Most solidaristic universalists willing to support the most vulnerable groups of society are already relatively old, while a new generation of universalists seems to prioritize social policies other than social assistance. These findings might also help explain the difference in party choice between older and younger voters on the Left and, potentially, parties' social policy positions. The voting behaviour literature has shown that the Green Party is exceptionally victorious among young universalists and often even the dominating vote choice among them. In contrast, older universalists split more evenly between the SPD, the Left Party, and the Green Party.

However, it is essential to note that our design does not allow to disentangle age, period, and cohort effects. Thus, future research could embark on the potentially exciting avenue to disentangle these effects and how social policy preferences relate to different waves of political socialization.

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7. Appendix

A1) Effects of particularism-universalism attitudes on unconstrained positional support for social policies (as illustrated in Figure 1)

	ALMP	Childcare	University Education	Pension	Social Assistance	Unemployment Benefits
(Intercept)	3.93***	4.58***	4.09***	5.77***	1.76***	2.42***
	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Universalism	0.68***	0.71***	1.15***	-0.73***	0.68***	0.18
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Sex: Male	-0.12*	-0.09	-0.02	-0.27***	-0.03	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Age	0.00*	-0.00*	0.00	0.00	0.01***	0.01***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Educ: Lvl 2	-0.09	-0.10	-0.05	-0.10	0.05	-0.18**
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Educ: Lvl 3	-0.16*	-0.12	0.22**	-0.36***	-0.16*	-0.22**
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Econ. Attitudes	1.11***	0.87***	0.34**	1.30***	3.53***	2.65***
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.13)
R^2	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.09	0.25	0.17
Adj. R^2	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.09	0.25	0.17
Num. obs.	2937	2960	2965	2972	2961	2969

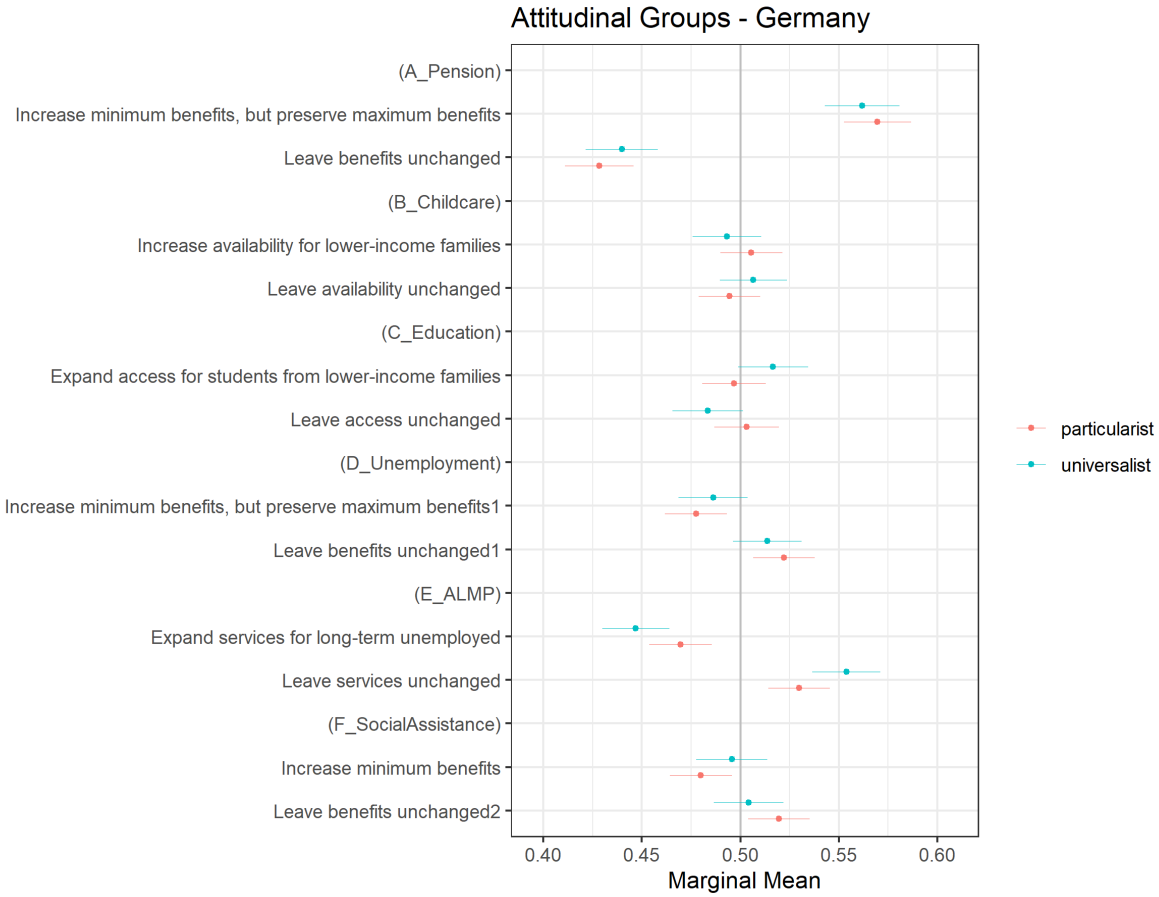
***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05

A2) Effects of particularism-universalism attitudes on unconstrained importance attributed to social policies (as illustrated in Figure 2)

	ALMP	Childcare	University Education	Pension	Social Assistance	Unemployment Benefits
(Intercept)	2.50***	2.90***	2.58***	3.44***	0.91***	1.53***
	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Universalism	0.23***	0.23***	0.40***	-0.59***	0.08	-0.06
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Sex: Male	-0.04	-0.12***	-0.02	-0.21***	0.07*	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age	0.00	-0.00***	0.00	-0.00***	0.01***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Educ: Lvl 2	-0.12***	-0.08*	-0.03	-0.10**	-0.01	-0.11**
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Educ: Lvl 3	-0.15***	-0.02	0.00	-0.24***	-0.07	-0.13**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Econ. Attitudes	0.33***	0.38***	0.14*	0.82***	1.99***	1.50***
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
R^2	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.09	0.23	0.15
Adj. R^2	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.09	0.22	0.15
Num. obs.	3006	2998	3001	2999	3002	3000

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

A3) *Marginal Means from conjoint experiment for the universalist and the particularist third of the sample (corresponds to the AMCEs shown in Figure 3)*

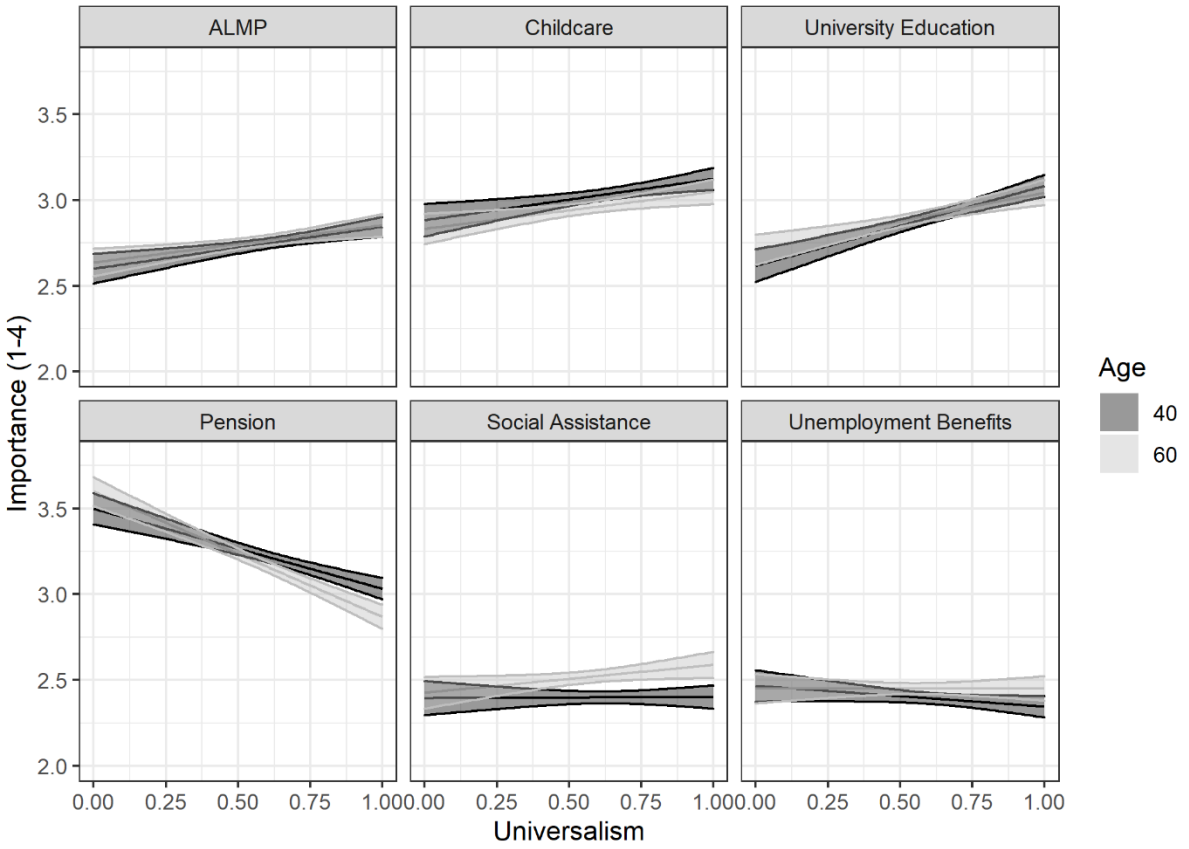


A4) Effects of particularism-universalism by age groups on attitudes on unconstrained positional support for social policies (as illustrated in Figure 4)

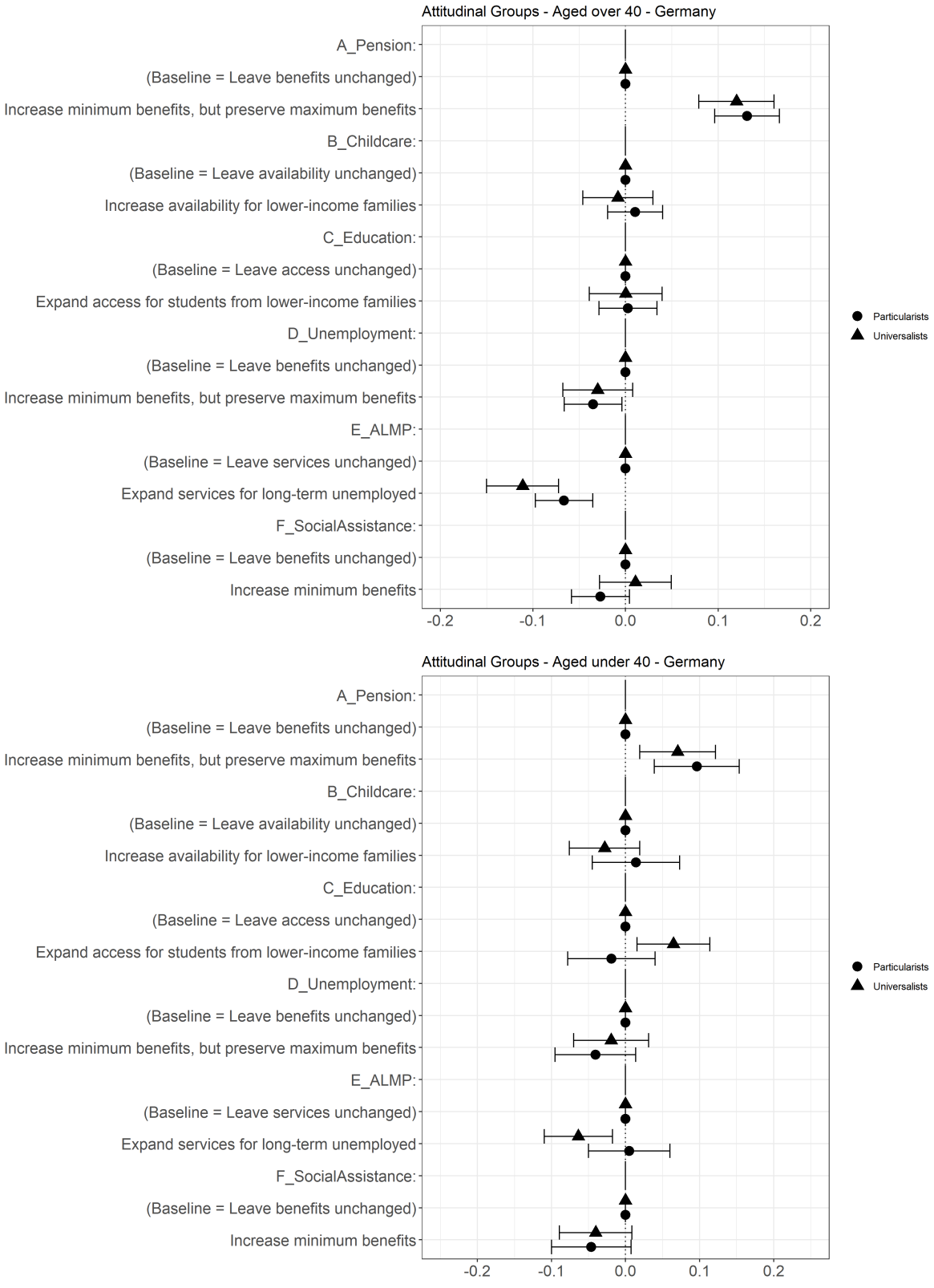
	ALMP	Childcare	University Education	Pension	Social Assistance	Unemployment Benefits
(Intercept)	2.45***	2.86***	2.38***	3.03***	1.15***	1.72***
	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Universalism	0.30	0.29	0.73***	0.06	-0.31	-0.37
	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.19)
Sex: Male	-0.03	-0.12***	-0.02	-0.21***	0.07*	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age	0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.01*	0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Universalism*Age	-0.12***	-0.08*	-0.03	-0.11**	-0.01	-0.11**
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Educ: Lvl 2	-0.15***	-0.02	-0.00	-0.24***	-0.07	-0.13**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Educ: Lvl 3	0.33***	0.38***	0.14*	0.82***	1.99***	1.50***
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Econ. Attitudes	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01	-0.01***	0.01*	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
R^2	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.10	0.23	0.16
Adj. R^2	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.09	0.22	0.15
Num. obs.	3006	2998	3001	2999	3002	3000

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

A5) Effects of particularism-universalism by age groups on attitudes on unconstrained positional support for social policies, based on A4 – *Alternative age thresholds*



A6) AMCEs from conjoint experiment with an age threshold of 40 rather than 50



A7) Marginal means to the conjoint experiments shown in Figures 5a and 5b