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IN HIS OR HER OPINION?

The gender gap in attitudes toward the welfare state in Sweden and Europe

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~*⸙*⸙*~ To Briony ~*⸙*⸙*~

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Abstract

Background This thesis explores differences in the attitudes that men and women hold toward the welfare state by investigating previously neglected areas concerning how attitudes differ between welfare states, as well as the role played by emotional and psychological attachment to a gender group. The studies analyze how gender differences in welfare state attitudes relate to social policies and prevailing gender relations, as well as to the process of social identification with a gender group. They also provide evidence on the longitudinal development of attitudinal gender differences in Sweden.

Methods All four studies rely on survey data. One part of this thesis consists of a comparison between countries in Europe that utilizes a multilevel analysis to examine how the interaction between family policy and gender (in)equalities in the division of unpaid labor is related to gender differences in support for the government's responsibility to provide social welfare. A second part consists of analyzing trends in multiple attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state, covering both normative and evaluative aspects of welfare state support for the years 1981–2018. A third part consists of examining welfare state attitudes in Sweden during the year 2018. Here, the focus is on social identification with a gender group and its potential role as an intermediary factor in the relationship between gender and welfare state attitudes.

Results The gender gap in people's support for the government's role in providing social welfare varies among European countries, with attitudes differing most in countries where men and women share more equally in performing unpaid care and domestic labor. Conversely, men and women do not display differences in their welfare state attitudes in countries where inequalities in the division of unpaid labor are widespread. However, the relationship between gender (in)equality in unpaid labor and welfare state attitudes is shaped by the institutional design. In countries where family policies subsidize women's caregiving within families without public alternatives—thus normatively conveying the resulting gender inequalities as corresponding to inherent differences in caregiving capabilities—this relationship does not exist. The last four decades of attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state demonstrate no clear trends revealing whether gender differences are diverging or converging; nevertheless, the correlational evidence of contextual variation in the attitudinal gender gap

speaks in favor of progression in gender equality as being coupled with larger attitudinal differences. Regarding social identification with a gender group, this process is not connected with observed gender differences in people's suspicion of welfare overuse in Sweden. However, when compared with both women and other men, men with a strong gender identification are less willing to increase social spending in Sweden. The observed relationships match the predictions made when theorizing social identification with a gender group as enhancing attentiveness to gendered self-interest among men under conditions of potential masculinity threat and thus increasing the likelihood of adopting stereotypically masculine attitudes toward equality and social welfare.

Conclusions Gender differences in welfare state attitudes are not universal. An integrated theory of gender differences in welfare state attitudes should account for the interplay between structuring aspects of the welfare state and prevailing gender norms, and how these relate to psychological aspects of gender as a social identity. Attitudinal gender differences should therefore be understood in terms of what type of welfare state men and women are expressing their attitudes toward and how this welfare state affects gender relations. Attachment to their gender group seems to be of special importance for men's attitudes. However, this is only true for dimensions where the welfare state can be viewed as a threat to masculinity by undercutting the normative connection between masculinity and breadwinning.

Preface

Writing a thesis is a strange occupation. On the one hand, you have great freedom to pursue the things that really interest you. On the other hand, every task seems to be endowed with such significance that it requires your utmost attention. At least, this appears to be true until you learn how to take yourself a bit less seriously. Nevertheless, unless you guard yourself, you can easily end up spending most of your waking time (and some good amount of your sleep) in the forging of your project, hammering away at the future. At one point, to cope with this (sometimes quite stressful) endeavor of writing a good enough doctoral thesis, I decided to take up the practice of meditation.

Being of a curious mind, what started out as a simple mindfulness exercise soon led me to develop a keener interest in how meditation actually works. What I found to be especially fascinating about Buddhist philosophy is its approach to truth and knowledge (its ontology and epistemology, if you will): to scrutinize everything and accept only the realizations that have come to you through your own experience—a sort of radical empiricism, but extended beyond the traditional five sensory organs to include that of the mind. Luckily, there is a great deal of accumulated knowledge aimed at facilitating such an experience, one of which is the teaching that everything is empty of any inherent existence. Now, this concept of emptiness is often conflated with signifying nothingness in the sense that nothing is truly real. This is far from the case. Rather, one of the meanings of emptiness is the realization that every moment represents an endless range of possibilities, depending on the laws of cause and effect.

But what do philosophical reflections on emptiness have to do with writing a doctoral thesis? The conventional path toward realizing emptiness is through meditation and working with the mind. Yet for me, experiencing something that crudely resembles a secular version of this insight took the effort of writing a full doctoral thesis on an entirely different subject. Having arrived at the final punctuation, which marks the end of about 4 years of intellectual labor, I realize that this thesis is but one possibility out of hundreds of different versions that have existed as possibilities along the way—some versions deviating only slightly from the final product and others bearing almost no resemblance at all, beyond a few keywords such as “gender” and “welfare.” If the individual papers that are part of this compilation thesis seem to be an odd bunch, it is

because they represent different stages of the writing process and thus different ideas about the final product.

I am bound by tradition and practicality to put a single name to the thesis (or else it cannot even be shipped to the printing office!). Yet, it is perfectly clear to me that this thesis is not the product of a solitary idea created in my own individual mind. Rather, it is the product of all the environments I have visited and been a part of, my knowledgeable teachers and helpful colleagues, conferences, informal chats, and long hours spent plowing through previous research. To everyone who contributed to this thesis, whether in small or large ways, I am deeply grateful!

While I cannot possibly praise every contributor by name (especially not the various anonymous reviewers to the papers), there are some who have had a profound impact and deserve special recognition. To Ida, for always pushing me to develop precision and clarity, and to Ingemar, for inspiring my own confidence in these and other qualities: For this and for so many other things, I am grateful to you both. I am also thankful to the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life, and Welfare and to the Umeå Center for Gender Studies, which funded the research project and my position as a doctoral student.

Some of my most cherished memories as a doctoral student—and my main source of practical knowledge—have come from the experience of writing with others. Therefore, I want to thank my various co-authors of the papers in the thesis and of other papers: Maureen, Joakim, Ragnar, Daniel, Mikael, and Filip. I also extend my gratitude to my discussion group at the Graduate School for Gender Studies: Bodil, Sofia, Louise, Victoria, Magda, Disa, and Moa. Your comments on various drafts were invaluable, as was your support. Naturally, I owe my gratitude to the Department of Sociology and the Graduate School for Gender Studies, along with all the people affiliated with these institutions. I want to extend a special thank you to the community of doctoral students, the technical and administrative staff, and the management, for contributing to a welcoming and stimulating environment within which I could focus on my own task of writing this thesis. I also want to thank my family: my mothers, father, sisters, and parents- and brother-in-law, who always believed in me.

Linnea, you continue to move my deepest sense of love and gratitude. Although no words do justice to these feelings, these feelings have fueled this thesis and are thus as much a part of it as any of the statistical measurements. To you, I owe the sky and the earth (…*för himmelen att sikta mot och jorden att stå på*). Finally, I want to commemorate my dearest Briony. You taught me very little about writing

a thesis, although you had many bad ideas about what it should cover. Instead, you taught me the true meaning of compassion and what really matters in life. I really miss you.

Introduction

We live in a time where political polarization appears to be everywhere. As the old conflict lines related to social class and economic redistribution diminish in importance (e.g., Hechter, 2004; Vestin, 2019), new cleavages are politicized (Kriesi et al., 2012), and support for the welfare state is restructured (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015). The attitudes that people hold toward the welfare state play a crucial role in the democratic process—both through the electoral process itself and by informing political elites, who are keen to anticipate the welfare preferences of the public (e.g., Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Laenen, Melueman & van Oorschot, 2020; Svallfors, 2012). There are thus good reasons to survey how broad social groups such as men and women perceive the welfare state, especially as women and men may have slightly or even radically different experiences of social policies (e.g., Ciccia & Sainsbury, 2018; Daly & Rake, 2003).

One of the striking features of the modern political landscape is the gender gap in attitudes and behavior (Dassonneville, 2021; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). It is well established that men are less and women are more positive toward economic redistribution (Edlund, Haider & Pande, 2005), social spending (Burclau & Lühiste, 2020; Muuri, 2010), policies that preserve skills during career interruptions (Garritzman & Schwander, 2021), and the role of the government in providing social welfare (e.g., Banducci et al., 2016; Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Mair et al., 2016). National gender gaps in sociopolitical attitudes have been found to correlate with gender differences in turnout (Dassonneville & Kostelka, 2021) and vote choice (e.g., Abendschön & Steinmetz, 2014; Giger, 2009). Even relatively small but systematic gender differences have been found to influence the outcome of national elections (Abendschön & Steinmetz, 2014; Dassonneville & Kostelka, 2021; Giger, 2009).

Gender differences in welfare state attitudes have often been explained using standard political science variables such as self-interest, indicating that the needs and wants of men and women relate to underlying gender inequalities in resources and opportunities. According to this perspective, women and men feel differently about an encompassing welfare state because they differ in aspects related to things such as labor-market position, educational achievement, or patterns of welfare use and dependence (e.g., Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Garritzman and Schwander, 2021). Other explanations have centered on the influence of particular gendered experiences such as motherhood versus fatherhood

(e.g., Banducci et al., 2016; Burclau & Lühiste, 2020; Lizotte, 2017) and differences in pro-social values and ideological beliefs stemming from gendered upbringings and interaction patterns (e.g., Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Lizotte, 2020).

The problem is that, when we employ surveys and use various statistical techniques to look at the variation in welfare state attitudes that can be explained by such factors, we observe that men and women with similar circumstances keep expressing different attitudes toward the welfare state. This raises a question: If the gender gap in welfare state attitudes is not merely a reflection of inequalities in resources and opportunities, of having one's perspective altered by a significant event such as becoming a parent, or of holding slightly different ideological beliefs, then what underlies the different attitudes held by men and women? This is the unresolved problem that any explanation of the differences in men's and women's welfare state attitudes must address.

With this thesis, I offer ways of thinking about gender that place the relationship between welfare state attitudes and self-interest or ideological views in context. I take my inspiration from two main bodies of thought: I draw on aspects of institutional theory, which has demonstrated that perceptions of self-interest are subject to normative processes of politicization and depoliticization that greatly affect the relevance of self-interest to the political attitudes of individuals (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Svallfors, 2007; Öun, 2012). I also draw on a social identity approach, which highlights the complex interplay between group processes, norms, and individual disposition in determining perceptions about, and the relevance of, gender and other collective identities to attitudes (Hogg & Smith, 2007; Smith & Hogg, 2008; Wood & Eagly, 2015). Similar to how behavioral economics and other disciplines have demonstrated the fallacy of viewing human decision-making as a simple rational calculus at the expense of norms, cognition, and emotions (e.g., Elster, 1989, 1998; Slovic et al., 2002), I argue that we cannot theorize about gender differences in welfare state attitudes as being reflective of self-interest without considering the wider social and political context, including gender norms, and what kind of psychological makeup or process makes individuals more or less impressionable to such normative cues and expectations.

Four underdeveloped areas of research on gender differences in welfare state attitudes

I have come to recognize four specific areas where I believe additional research can benefit our understanding of the interplay between welfare, gender, and attitudes in ways that account for context, norms, and psychological processes. The first area is contextual variation in attitudinal gender gaps; more specifically, how the welfare state can structure the interests of men and women (e.g., Daly & Rake, 2003) but also normatively emphasize or downplay the political significance of such gendered differences, and thus affect their ability to influence attitudes (e.g., Mettler & Sorelle, 2018; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Svallfors, 2007, 2012). Such an institutional perspective has already demonstrated its ability to explain country-level variation in the attitudes and perceptions that men and women express in relation to the gender division of labor (Edlund & Öun, 2016; Öun, 2012, 2013). Likewise, research has demonstrated that the saliency of social class is a far better predictor of class divergence in redistribution preferences than between-country differences in actual material inequalities (e.g., Kumlin & Svallfors, 2008). Yet, so far, nothing similar has been done with gender differences in welfare state attitudes. Thus, we do not know whether gender differences in welfare state attitudes are a universally occurring phenomenon across European countries, or whether attitudinal differences are connected to the institutional design of the welfare state.

A second, related theme is the tension that exists between two of the dominant theories that deal with attitudinal gender differences on a more abstract level. Here, modernization theory (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Inglehart & Wezel, 2005; see also Dassonneville, 2021) and social role theory (Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Eagly & Diekman, 2006) expect different outcomes in terms of the convergence versus divergence of attitudes following societal progress in gender equality. While modernization theory expects that the "modern gender gap" in political attitudes will continue to widen as societies progress toward gender equality, social role theory considers that the attitudes of women and men are bound to converge. These opposing expectations stem from differences in ideational explanations linking women's emancipation to the political projects of the left, including the welfare state, versus socio-structural explanations emphasizing overlapping experiences and life patterns due to a more equal gender division of labor. As the welfare state is a mitigating institution that reacts to and influences the localized effects of wider social and economic trends (i.e., path dependence; e.g., Ebbinghaus, 2005), such

as the globally observed transformation of gender relations (e.g., Goldscheider, Bernhardt & Lappegård, 2015), these opposing expectations inevitably come into play when researching the relationships between welfare state arrangements, gender relations, and differences in welfare state attitudes.

The third area addressed by this thesis concerns the interplay between norms, attitudes, and the process of social identification with a gender group—in other words, whether individuals' conceptions about and attachment to gender identity is a part of what makes up the differences in welfare state attitudes. A burgeoning literature, inspired chiefly by social identity theory, has begun to demonstrate how gender differences in a range of political attitudes are moderated by non-binary gender dimensions, such as masculine/feminine traits and the strength of gender identification (e.g., Bittner & Goodyear-Grant, 2017a, 2017b; Magliozzi, Saperstein & Westbrook, 2016; Solevid et al., 2021). However, such a methodology has not yet been combined with a systematic study of gender differences in welfare state attitudes. Thus, we still lack in an understanding of whether or not gender differences in welfare state attitudes are related to individuals' emotional and psychological attachment to their gender identity.

Finally, as the fourth theme, it is my hope that this thesis will contribute to bringing more of men and masculinities into a research tradition that has so far been fairly set on women's interests. To be fair, as I started writing this thesis, I too was caught up with the rapid expansion of women's social and economic roles and the significance of this gender revolution for political attitudes (see e.g., Dassonneville, 2021). However, as I progressed in my understanding of the subject, I began to develop an interest in the implications that these transformations have specifically for men's attitudes; not least due to the realization that some men may be emotionally invested in the political significance of masculinity (e.g., the review provided by DiMuccio & Knowles, 2021). This perspective is valuable when exploring the meaning of gender identity in welfare state attitudes.

Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to contribute new empirical evidence and a more comprehensive explanation of why men and women differ in attitudes toward the welfare state. I do this by analyzing how variation in welfare state arrangements and prevailing gender relations relates to the gender gap in welfare state attitudes, both cross-nationally in Europe and

longitudinally in Sweden. I also aim at theory synthesis by combining institutional theory about policy feedback processes with a social identity perspective that emphasizes the psychological and emotional importance of gender identities. I do so by investigating the extent to which psychological attachment to a gender group relates to the observed differences in welfare state attitudes in Sweden. I ask the following questions:

1) Do gender differences in attitudes toward the welfare state differ between countries in Europe and over time in Sweden?
2) If gender differences in attitudes toward the welfare state vary by context, are such differences related to prevailing gender relations and/or the institutional arrangements of welfare states?
3) Are gender differences in welfare state attitudes related to the process of social identification with a gender group? If so, is the strength of gender identification equally important for men's and women's attitudes?

Overview of the analytical strategy and general outline of the studies

This is a compilation thesis based on four research articles. All four studies rely on representative survey data covering the adult populations in 21 European countries, collected through the European Social Survey (ESS), and on survey data covering the Swedish population, primarily collected through the Swedish Welfare State (SWS) surveys. This type of data makes it possible to use statistical analysis to draw conclusions about the relationship between different theoretical constructs, such as the correlation between the strength of gender identification and social spending preferences. Moreover, the number of participants in the surveys and the random sampling designs that were used ensure that the conclusions drawn are reliable and generalizable to the populations covered by the surveys.

In order to answer the research questions, I employ a type of methodological triangulation consisting of a mix of comparative, longitudinal, and individual-level cross-sectional study designs. The first study uses a comparative, multilevel design to address variability in the gender gap in attitudes toward governments' responsibilities to provide social welfare in Europe. Here, the main focus is on gender equality in unpaid labor and the role of family policy. The second study instead uses

a repeated cross-sectional design to study the longitudinal development of gender differences in attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state in 1981–2018. The third and fourth studies focus on the relationship between the strength of gender identification and individual-level gender differences in social spending preferences and in the suspicion of welfare overuse in Sweden.

The case of Sweden

Sweden is used as an example case in three of the studies. The choice to focus on Sweden is by no means arbitrary, as Sweden constitutes a strong theoretical case. Firstly, Sweden is an international forerunner in terms of the gender revolution. Over the past century, Sweden has experienced a radical transformation in women's social and economic roles, and is projected to be on the verge of seeing a transformation in men's social and economic roles as well (e.g., Stanfors & Goldscheider, 2017).[1] This progression in gender equality is in turn closely connected with state activities, aligning with feminist mobilization around the "women-friendly" welfare state (Hernes, 1987). Indeed, longstanding strategies for gender equality in Sweden include the individualization of entitlements and social insurances, as well as the gender mainstreaming of social policies (Svensson & Gunnarsson, 2012).

Secondly, welfare issues have been an especially prominent feature of Swedish politics and public debate for the last century (Lundberg & Åmark, 2001). Thirdly, and closely related to the previous point, Sweden has a longstanding tradition of debating the welfare state specifically from a gender perspective. For example, the Swedish welfare state is often said to revolve around the dual goals of *jämställdhet* (gender equality) and *jämlikhet* (equity) (e.g., Svensson & Gunnarsson, 2012). Taken together, these goals contribute to a continual framing of welfare issues through a gendered lens (e.g., Borchorst & Siim, 2008; Klinth, 2002, 2013; Lundqvist, 2007; Svensson & Gunnarsson, 2012, etc.). Thus, Sweden is an appropriate choice to study how men and women perceive a welfare state that is persistently articulated through a gendered prism.

[1] Saying that Sweden is comparably gender egalitarian, however, is not the same as saying that Sweden is a gender-equal society.

Beyond gender: Additional contributions of the research papers

As Sweden is a case study in three of the studies, much of the contents of these papers contribute to an updated understanding of attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state in a more general sense—that is, beyond the focus on gender. This is true for Paper IV, which investigates the relationship between individuals' strength of gender identification and their suspicion of welfare overuse. This paper also addresses the explanatory factors of partisanship, political interest, and anti-immigrant attitudes. The same is true for Paper II, which deals with longitudinal trends in welfare state attitudes in Sweden. Although this study provides important empirical evidence on the longitudinal development of gender differences, it grew into a larger project of mapping the development of welfare state attitudes in Sweden in relation to new political cleavages that have been animated by the increasing significance of sociocultural issues. The added benefits of these two papers are as follows:

One of the principal developments addressed in the longitudinal study in Paper II is the waning of one of the main structuring principles behind attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state: namely, class politics (e.g., Svallfors, 2011; Vestin, 2019). The study examines whether we are witnessing a period of weakened conflict or a transformed conflict over the Swedish welfare state. Here, the co-authors and I devote special attention to the topic of immigration, which is now frequently portrayed in the Swedish media and policy discourse as problematic in relation to universalistic welfare policies (e.g., "welfare magnetism") (e.g., Hagelund, 2020). By addressing the hitherto underexplored role of sociocultural issues in structuring generalized attitudes toward the welfare state (c.f. Calzada et al., 2014), this paper contributes to a broader literature about shifting political cleavages in Europe (e.g., Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015; Hechter, 2004; Kriesi et al., 2012; Piketty, 2020). Our findings demonstrate that the interplay between welfare state retrenchment, declining class politics, and increasing heterogeneity among claimants provides a window for challenging longstanding principles of universality, even in archetypical welfare states such as Sweden. However, our findings also demonstrate that, as new political conflicts begin to structure welfare state attitudes, support for the welfare state does not automatically decline. In fact, support for the social democratic model, with high taxes and high social expenditure, is stronger than ever before.

Second, despite a burgeoning international literature (e.g., Roosma, van Oorschot & Gelissen, 2016; Roosma, 2020) and frequent

postulations about threats to welfare state legitimacy (e.g., Rothstein, 1998, 2011), individuals' suspicion of welfare overuse has been severely underexplored in relation to the Swedish welfare state (c.f. Lundström, 2011). Addressing this knowledge gap from the perspectives of political rhetoric and anti-immigrant sentiment constitutes an important empirical and theoretical contribution that is especially helpful when trying to understand recent challenges by the neo-nationalist right to the traditional social democratic principle of universality (e.g., Nordensvärd & Ketola, 2015). Our results suggest that attentiveness to political articulation about welfare abuse is a key intervening factor when examining partisan differences in the suspicion of welfare overuse, and that anti-immigrant attitudes are strongly correlated with welfare overuse perceptions (Goossen, Johansson Sevä & Lundström, 2021).

A roadmap to the rest of this thesis

In the remainder of this thesis, I will first present previous research about gender differences in attitudes toward the welfare state. Next, I present my theoretical framework, followed by my analytical strategy in full. I then present a summary of the four studies and a discussion on how these findings inform the overarching aim and contribute to answering the research questions. Finally, I offer remarks on how to study gender differences in welfare state attitudes in the future.

Previous research on and explanations of gender differences in political attitudes

Prominent gender differences have been found in relation to a range of sociopolitical attitudes, including political ideology (Dassonneville, 2021; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Shorrock, 2017; Solevid et al., 2021), self-professed political knowledge and interest (Atkeson & Rapoport, 2003; Fernández et al., 2021), and attitudes toward specific political issues and policy areas (e.g., Bittner & Goodyear-Grant, 2017a, 2017b). Where attitudinal gender gaps exist, women tend to favor policies that align with social investment and liberal social norms, while men generally favor free-market and security issues (e.g., reviews and results in Bittner & Goodyear-Grant, 2017a, 2017b; Solevid, et al., 2021; Wangsson, Olsson & Nilsen, 2020). Correspondingly, more women than men self-identify as left-leaning, vote for leftist parties, and favor typical leftist policies such as economic redistribution (Abendschön & Steinmetz, 2014; Emmenegger & Manow, 2014; Giger, 2009; Inglehart, 2018; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Iversen & Rosenbluth, 2006; Norrander & Wilcox, 2008; Shorrock, 2017). Conversely, relative to women, men tend to self-identify with and support the issues and parties of the political right (ibid.).

In line with this "modern gender gap," gender differences in welfare state attitudes have been observed in regard to attitudes toward the role of the government in providing welfare to the unemployed, sick, and old (Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Häusermann, Kurer &Schwander, 2016), support for social spending (e.g., Burclau & Lühiste, 2020; Muuri, 2010), welfare chauvinism (Capellen & Midtbo, 2016; but also see Eger, Albrekt Larsen & Mewes, 2020), support for government redistribution (Häusermann, Kurer & Schwander, 2016), and preferences for policies that mobilize and preserve skills during career interruptions (Garritzman & Schwander, 2021). Furthermore, while many studies have not taken gender as a central focus of their analyses, gender differences have nevertheless been recorded in public service evaluations (de Blok, Hausgjerd & Kumlin, 2020) and perceptions of welfare abuse by target groups (Roosma, 2020), as well as in generalized support for the welfare state (Calzada et al., 2014; Ervasti, 2020). In fact, most of the studies included in the three seminal books written on the subject of welfare state attitudes in the last decade report on gender differences over an array of welfare state attitudes (Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Laenen, Meuleman & van Oorschot, 2020; Svallfors, 2012).

Next, I present three prominent theoretical traditions that are (or hold the potential to be) widely adopted frameworks for addressing these issues: modernization, social roles, and institutional theories about policy feedback. I present these traditions separated from the existing empirical research on predictors of attitudinal gender differences; this is because research on gender differences in welfare state attitudes either tends to be more empirical than theoretical in orientation, or draws on a combination of different theoretical constructs. The latter can make it difficult to attribute evidence solely to the explanations of any one theoretical camp.

The modernization approach

At the macro level, one of the most explored sociological explanations of the gender gap in political attitudes involves the societal process of modernization. Through increased material security, longer life expectancy, and lower birth rates, societal modernization is theorized to have led to changes in typical life-courses and subsequent patterns of socialization. Thus, those who grow up in more secure environments tend to shift their value priorities from economic and material concerns toward post-material (cultural) issues and self-expression (Inglehart, 2018; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Importantly, within this ideational shift toward post-materialism, there has been a weakening of the "traditional" gender order, with its gender specialization in productive and reproductive tasks (Inglehart, 2018). The proposed mechanism underlying these shifting values is that younger generations eventually replace older generations, which leads to a glacial movement of society's value priorities. Indeed, such a shift toward post-materialist values has been supported by data from over 75 countries on all inhabited continents (Inglehart, 2018).

However, and most crucially, this process of value change occurs at a slightly different rate for men and women, due to the more radical expansion of women's social and economic roles within modernization in comparison with the more modest changes to men's roles (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; see also Goldscheider et al., 2015; Sullivan, Gershuny & Robinson, 2018). Political parties on the left have generally embraced women's movements and played a larger role in women's partial emancipation during last half of the past century, while most political right parties have instead maintained more conservative views on gender relations. Within the modernization literature, this tendency has been theorized to underlie the observed modern gender gap in political ideology (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; see also Schorrocks, 2017). With respect to

gender differences in attitudes toward the welfare state, the core argument of modernization theory thus posits that gender differences should be prominent due to the emancipatory potential of welfare states for women's social situation (my interpretation of the arguments in Inglehart & Norris [2003]; see also Dassonneville [2020] and Shorrocks [2017]).

Social role theory

Another prominent research tradition that focuses on the gender gap in sociopolitical attitudes is found within the overlapping fields of social and political psychology. Arguably, the most elaborated perspective within this approach is social role theory. This theory explicates how the gender division of labor facilitates gender differences in political ideology, attitudes, and behavior through intermittent social processes connected with social roles and gender norms (e.g., Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Eagly, Wood & Diekman, 2000; Eagly & Diekman, 2006; Wood & Eagly, 2012).

The starting point of social role theory is that men and women are differentially situated within the social structure. Thus, men and women often perform different specific tasks; examples include leading at work, providing care, working with people, working with inanimate objects, being a mother, or being a father. This situation then leads to gender differences in interests to the extent that such tasks or roles are differentiated in status, resources, and influence (Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Eagly & Diekman, 2006). Furthermore, observing men's and women's different role performances in society leads people to form diffuse and generalized norms about gender—that is, they develop perceptions about how most men and women behave and how they ought to behave (ibid.).

Through processes such as self-categorization and self-stereotypification (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Wood & Eagly, 2015), men and women self-regulate their behavior to align with gender norms. In social settings, women and men perform both specific social roles and more diffuse gender roles (Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Eagly & Diekman, 2006). Thus, it is the structural aspects related to the gender division of labor, rather than ideational shifts, that underlie the repetition of gendered social behavior. Such gendered social behavior influences the subsequent internalization of gender norms into personality, which then acts as motivation for later behavior and attitude expression.

With respect to welfare state attitudes, this perspective holds that men should be more negative toward the welfare state, as the redistributive

ideas underpinning an encompassing welfare state are opposed to stereotypical ideas about masculine dominance of outgroups (e.g., Diekman and Schneider, 2010; Eagly et al., 2004; Eagly & Wood, 2006; Lizotte, 2017, 2020). Conversely, women should be more positive toward the welfare state, as the underlying goals of welfare states align better with a contemporary feminine gender role stereotype that emphasizes nurturing qualities and a commitment to the welfare of others (ibid.).

The institutional approach

Institutional theories about policy feedback are one of the most employed paradigms when directly addressing the issue of welfare state attitudes. The basic postulation is that, beyond public opinion informing the construction of social policy (through the electoral process, etc.), enacted social policies inform political attitudes through the ways in which they construct groups of beneficiaries and—depending on things such as the visibility and traceability of policies—imbue these claimants with a sense of shared collective interests and identity (e.g., Mettler & Soss, 2004; Pierson, 1993). Thus far, the institutional framework has generated little empirical research on gender differences in attitudes (at least, in comparison with how modernization theory and social role theory have inspired research on the general nature of attitudinal gender gaps). However, it has had a tremendous impact on our understanding of how welfare state arrangements shape gender relations and thus affect both gendered interests and gender norms (e.g., see the review in Ciccia & Sainsbury, 2018). As such, the institutional framework holds great potential for informing the study of attitudinal gender differences in the future.

For example, in their institutional framework, Daly and Rake (2003) view gender relations as one aspect of welfare state activity that is made up of three different yet overlapping dimensions: resources, social roles, and power relations. In this typology, the term "resources" refers to goods and capacities such as money, opportunities, and time, which can be at the disposal of both groups and individuals, but which are also subject to welfare state regulation through policies aimed at the (re)distribution of financial resources or opportunities. "Social roles" refer to norms, identities, and patterns in behavior, and how these differ for men and women (ibid.). In the feminist literature, social roles are mainly understood as the extent to which policies promote dual or overlapping roles versus gender-specialized roles (i.e., the earner/breadwinner vs. the caregiver/homemaker) (e.g., Gornick & Meyers, 2008; Lewis, 1992). For

example, if a state grants its residents the right to take paid parental leave from work and a child allowance, this action creates (or recognizes) the claimant group of parents. However, if the state specifies that only mothers are eligible for parental leave (which then becomes maternal leave), it has created the claimant group of mothers, which have a separate interest from fathers. This situation can affect how mothers and fathers feel about parental leave or the wider welfare state.

Power relations are closely associated with both resources and roles, as the capacity to act is tied to the availability of resources and the constraints laid down by normative expectations (Daly & Rake, 2003). For example, Orloff (1993, 1996, 2009) and O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver (1999) promote the capability of single women to form their own household without relying on a (male) partner or on the state, as a standard for comparing gender equity in welfare states. However, Daly and Rake (2003) conceive of a more nuanced dimension of power relations. Such subtle differences are noticeable in, for example, the policy road map to gender equality—that is, whether a government is focusing on making women's lives more like men's through equal access to yet continued valorizing of uninterrupted career trajectories, or is instead focusing on making men's lives more like women's, by upgrading caregiving and enabling more flexible working conditions and life trajectories for both men and women (Daly & Rake, 2003; also see Fraser, 1994, 1997).

Empirical research on welfare state attitudes

Within empirical research on welfare state attitudes, many studies draw on a combination of instrumental reasoning, norms, and socialization when researching gender differences, although there tends to be a general emphasis on self-interest incentives. Based on pooled data from eight Western European countries, a gender-differentiated stake in welfare provision was reported in regard to men's and women's attitudes toward various types of policies (Garritzman & Schwander, 2021). For example, women were found to be more likely than men to support policies that mobilize and preserve labor-market skills during career interruptions. Furthermore, in a trade-off scenario, this study found that men generally preferred an expansion of social investment (i.e., support for families) at the expense of social compensation (i.e., unemployment benefits and pensions). The reverse was true for women (ibid.).

In a pooled sample of 13 Western European countries participating in the ESS (2008/2009), Häusermann, Kurar, and Schwander (2016) found that women were more positive than men toward government

responsibility for economic redistribution and job creation. Relatedly, the risk of labor-market vulnerability was highly skewed, with more women being at risk than men. Similarly, there is evidence that more women than men want the government—rather than the family—to be responsible for eldercare (Mair et al, 2016), including financing through collective means. This finding was partially explained by the role strain experienced by women.

Furthermore, a range of life-course events such as divorce seem to influence policy preferences—a finding that is in line with a self-interest argument. Women become more pro-welfare and pro-redistribution when they are in more economically challenging situations (e.g., Edlund et al., 2005). Similarly, parenthood seems to contribute to a gender polarization in political attitudes. In particular, motherhood has been found to have a liberalizing effect on women's attitudes on issues in which mothers have an obvious self-interest, such as the government's responsibility to provide support for families (Banducci et al., 2016) and public spending on families (Lizotte, 2017). Digging deeper into this divide between mothers and fathers, a study using longitudinal Swiss data demonstrated that mothers and fathers primarily differ with respect to social spending on child care, and that spending preferences also evolve across different stages of parenthood, being tied to the current needs of the family (Burclau & Lühiste, 2021). This finding also aligns with a self-interest argument.

However, the role of self-interest in policy preferences also seems to be associated with the prevalence of underlying gender norms of breadwinning and homemaking. Women's social policy preferences are frequently found to be guided by the economic safety net provided by a working partner. Conversely, most men's attitudes are unaffected by the labor-market situation of their partner (Edlund, 2003; Häusermann, Kurer & Schwander, 2016). Moreover, the previously discussed relationship between motherhood and attitudes also holds true for policy preferences with less obvious self-interest; for example, mothers have been reported to show greater support for the government's responsibility to provide social welfare to other needy groups, such as the unemployed, sick, and old (Banducci et al., 2016). Thus, Banducci and colleagues (2016) argue that motherhood is a politically socializing experience that alters the policy preferences of many women, while similar effects are not observed for fathers.

Nevertheless, gender differences in welfare state attitudes continue to pose a puzzle. Studies in the United States have demonstrated that a gender gap in attitudes toward socially compassionate policies—including

spending on minorities, reducing income differences (Eagly et al., 2004), spending on childcare, and preferences for more government services (Lizotte, 2017)—is present even when accounting for parental status and a range of self-interest variables. The researchers take this as evidence for the role of internalized gender norms. However, even under explicit testing, the hypothesis of differences in pro-social values, such as egalitarianism, explaining the gender gap in welfare attitudes was found to be only partially true (e.g., Lizotte, 2020). For example, when studying attitudes toward welfare state polices in a pooled sample of 24 countries, Blekesaune and Quadango (2003) found that more women than men hold that it should be the responsibility of the government to provide for the unemployed, sick, and old. Controlling for egalitarian values reduced gender differences to some extent, yet differences persisted even when taking both values and personal experience of unemployment into account. Aligning with the institutional paradigm delineated above, Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003) argued that the remaining difference between men and women might be due to women's greater risk of benefit dependency, and that women's access to paid employment is partially contingent on the welfare state taking on a larger share of care responsibilities. Similarly, other studies have argued that women are a risk group in terms of welfare benefit dependency, linking this to greater welfare chauvinism among Norwegian women (Capellen & Midtbo, 2016) and to support among Finnish women, when compared with men, for high benefit levels and social spending (Muuri, 2010).

However, a major drawback to the study by Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003) is that it did not examine whether gender differences varied across countries. Thus, the scholars were unable to determine whether gender differences varied according to the welfare state organization of social care or differences in welfare dependency. To the best of my knowledge, no studies have looked at the variability of gender differences in normative support for a welfare state in this manner. However, in terms of linking individual preferences to contextual circumstances, the differences between mothers' and non-mothers' support for government responsibility for childcare and social welfare have been found to be most pronounced in contexts characterized by the absence of government support for parenting (Banducci et al., 2016). Similarly, in line with a self-interest argument, a large cross-country study found that women's preference for government responsibility for eldercare was associated with a higher level of work-family conflict, as experienced by women in more socioeconomically developed countries (Mair et al.,

2016). Moreover, this gender gap in preferences for the government provision of elder care was found to be larger in countries with higher average levels of self-expression values (meaning less social pressure to adhere to gender norms) and greater spending on health care (Mair et al., 2016).

Evaluation of the existing research

One critique that can be offered in relation to both the research on gender differences in welfare state attitudes and the wider literature on gender gaps in political attitudes is a general neglect of men's role changes during the last couple of decades. In terms of the two-part gender revolution, as formulated by Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård (2015), this neglect corresponds to a focus on the first part of the gender revolution (i.e., the orientation of women toward the public sphere of work and politics), with a disregard of the second part (i.e., the reorientation of men toward the family). Shifting to a greater focus on men's social roles is motivated by the existing research. For example, there seems to be no relation between women's labor-force participation or political representation and cross-national gender differences in attitudes (e.g., Fernández et al., 2021; Jaime-Castillo et al., 2016). Similarly, while longitudinal studies in the United States have found that women are displaying more stereotypically "masculine" traits over time (e.g., Twenge, 1997), no signs were found of a convergence of men's and women's preferences in what Eagly and colleagues (2004) term "socially compassionate policies" during the years 1973–1998. Instead, compared with those of men, women's policy preferences tend to demonstrate continued alignment with those of other socially disadvantaged groups such as ethnic and racial minorities.

Similarly, while studies have demonstrated how gender norms may interact with perceived self-interests, or that internalized traits and values lead men and women to hold and express different attitudes, the existing research has neglected what I perceive to be a fundamental aspect of this process: namely, psychological and emotional attachment to gender identities, as experienced by individuals. Such a process of social identification has previously been explored for many other collective identities, such as class, race, partisanship, and religious denomination. In general, the findings indicate that strong identification increases the association between group membership and attitudes, as well as the likelihood of being influenced by the political communication that primes such identities (see the review in Bittner & Goodyear-Grant, 2017b). As a

growing strand of research has begun to demonstrate, attachment to a gender group does indeed account for a large portion of previously recorded gender differences in political attitudes (see e.g., Bittner & Goodyear-Grant, 2017b). I believe that integrating these perspectives with the study of welfare state attitudes would mark a significant step forward in our understanding of the nature of gender differences in welfare state attitudes.

In the more abstract levels of theory, there is a tension between modernization theory and social role theory regarding the expected development of attitudinal gender differences. When predicting the attitudinal differences between men and women based on a cross-sectional snapshot of society, both social role theory and modernization theory expect—albeit not for the same reasons—that women will be positive and men negative to an encompassing welfare state. However, when predicting the direction of the attitudinal gender gaps (which is connected to progression in gender equality) or contextual variation in the size of gender gaps (which is connected to societies' differing levels of gender equality), modernization theory predicts divergence while social role theory predicts convergence.

This difference primarily has to do with differences in the emphasis on ideational versus structural explanations. Modernization theory postulates that the loosened psychological and economic dependence of women on men brought about by modernization provides the necessary conditions for differences (whether instrumental or value-driven) to emerge (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Inglehart, 2018; also see the review in Dassonneville, 2021). Conversely, social role theory emphasizes how more similar life patterns, as given by socio-structural location, lead to more similar socializing experiences and destabilized gender norms (as such norms are based on the observation of gendered social behaviors in a strange loop). This causes men's and women's attitudes to become more similar as gender relations become more equal (e.g., Diekman & Schneier, 2010; Eagly & Diekman, 2006).

This tension between modernization theory and social role theory is not negligible. The institutional perspective, on which this thesis primarily relies, is in fact limited to the role of welfare states in reacting to and shaping the localized expressions of wider social and economic developments, such as a progression toward gender equality. In order to understand the wider impact of the ongoing gender revolution, as it is filtered through the institutional design of the welfare state, it is necessary to address the tension between these more universal expectations as well.

Finally, the few studies that have investigated cross-national variation in attitudinal gender gaps either focus on the relationship between parenthood and social policy preferences, or examine single issues such as attitudes toward elder care. Thus, while these studies represent a step forward in understanding contextual differences, they do not map out variability in the size of the gender gap beyond the issues of parenthood or in relation to generalized support for the welfare state. Therefore, we still lack basic, empirical knowledge of patterns in attitudinal gender differences across contexts. However, if we broaden the scope to look at attitudinal outcomes aside from welfare state attitude, research demonstrates that policies that promote gender specialization in caregiving and employment are associated with smaller gender differences in attitudes toward and perceptions of fairness regarding the gender division of labor (e.g., Edlund & Öun, 2016; Öun, 2012, 2013). Conversely, attitudes differ more where policies promote dual social and economic roles. In part, this has to do with policies that are either politicizing or depoliticizing in regard to gender inequalities (ibid.). Drawing on these insights, it seems highly plausible that, if the welfare state plays a part in conveying norms about gender relations, this should then affect the saliency of gendered interests and the relationship between these interests and welfare state attitudes. However, this normative feedback perspective has not yet figured in the research on gender differences in welfare state attitudes.

An integrated approach to gender differences in welfare state attitudes

In the following discussion, I present my own theoretical framework, which draws upon different aspects of institutional and social identity theory, while being infused with many of the previously mentioned insights into the nature of attitudinal gender gaps. Before specifying my own arguments, I offer a set of working definitions. First, I take *institution* to mean the "the formal rules, compliance procedures and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of the polity and economy" (Hall 1986:19). More specifically, enacted social policies can be viewed as the concrete manifestations of such institutions (Pierson, 1993). Policies determine issues such as who is eligible, how claims are to be made and on what grounds (Daly & Rake, 2003).

Second, under this definition, the *welfare state* can be conceptualized as a form of governance that draws together aspects of democracy and capitalism with the aim of providing some form of social protection for citizens against common life-course risks (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Korpi & Palme, 1998; Marshall, 1950; Pierson, 2006). Welfare states can also be conceptualized as ideological and normative, with the power to shape patterns of behavior and to influence social relations, such as those between men and women. They do so by valorizing social roles and organizing life into stages centered on work and family (e.g., Daly & Rake, 2003).

Third, *attitudes* can be conceptualized as beliefs (Rokeach, 1973), evaluations, or judgements (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). As such, attitudes are focused on specific social objects (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). However, the attitude object, while specific, may be relatively abstract, such as a set of social or economic relations (e.g., welfare, capitalism, or gender relations). *Attitudes toward the welfare state* can thus be conceptualized as the beliefs, expectations, and evaluations that people hold in relation to the welfare state as a concept, a set of institutions or, more narrowly, in relation to specific social programs or policy areas (e.g., Chung et al., 2018; Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Meuleman et al., 2020; Svallfors, 2012).

Fourth, when theorizing *gender relations*, I follow Daly and Rake (2003:37) in viewing gender as a form of social practice—that is, as a dynamic set of relations that are continually shaped and remade by the actions of men and women, as well as by institutions such as the family,

welfare state, and labor market. More specifically, gender relations are made up of the interrelated dimensions of resources, social roles, and power.

Fifth, *gender identity* is a fluid concept that includes non-binary and non-conforming identities. However, I delimit my analysis to deal with gender as consisting of the social and cultural meanings (i.e., masculinity or femininity) that people adopt following the ascribed classification of individuals as belonging to a sex category (e.g., male or female) (Wood & Eagly, 2015). The internalization of such meanings give rise to gender identities (e.g., man or woman) that affect people's understanding of themselves in relation to their surrounding social world.

Sixth, as with any social identification, the emotional significance and centrality of *gender identity* in an individual's self-concept may vary situationally, according to the saliency and relevance of gender (e.g., Sinclair, Hardin & Lowery, 2006), or between individuals, according to more deep-rooted tendencies to self-categorize as a man or woman. The latter tendencies are a stable attribute of individuals' psychological makeup (see the review by Eagly & Wood, 2015). I refer to this transsituational tendency to self-categorize as a man or woman as an individual's "strength of gender identification."

The role of institutions, self-interest, and gender norms

Figure 1

Theoretical model of the processes leading to gender differences in welfare state attitudes.

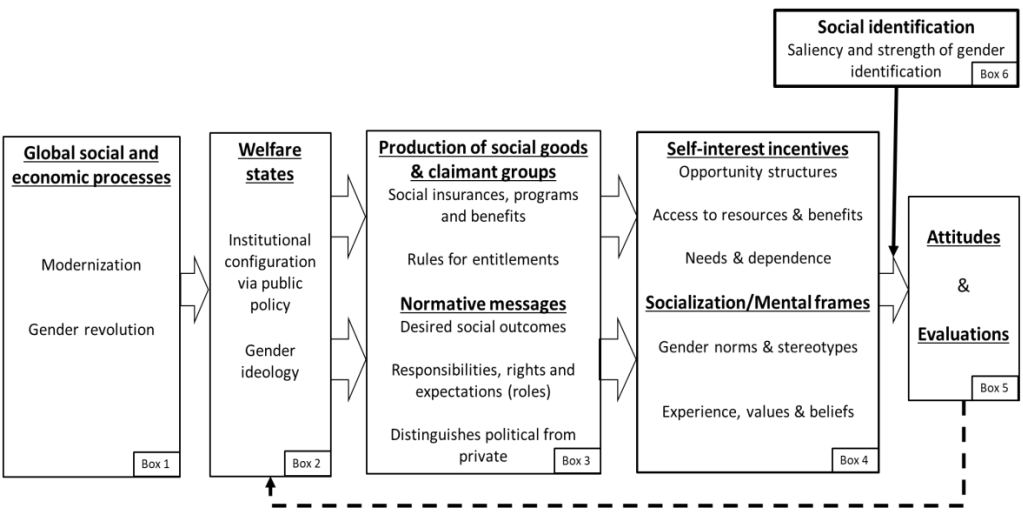

Figure 1 presents a theoretical model that covers the relationship between institutional configurations (i.e., the welfare state), and gender differences in welfare state attitudes. This model incorporates both globally occurring changes in gender relations and the group-level process of social identification. To start with, the latter part of the 20th century has seen a rapid expansion of women's economic and social roles. This is evidenced by a previously unseen increase in women's labor-force participation and political representation, with some gradual changes also occurring in men's involvement in their families (Goldscheider et al., 2015). These phenomena are global in the sense that they affect societies across the world, although they have different consequences in different places. This gender revolution tangibly affects the relationships between individuals as well, since family members must find ways of balancing the dual responsibilities of acquiring economic means while caring for each other during childhood, sickness, and old age.

My view is that the ways in which the domains of work and family are reconciled within modern conditions is central to our interpretation of prevailing gender relations, as these ways directly relate to the domains of productive and reproductive tasks, which are in turn the building blocks of the gender division of labor (e.g., Bhattacharya, 2017). As previous research has not found any clear relationship between attitudinal gender differences and the expansion of women's social and economic roles through engagement with paid work and politics (e.g., Eagly et al., 2004; Fernández et al., 2020; Jaime-Castillo et al., 2016), I expect that focusing on the expansion of men's social roles will be a more fruitful approach to better understand the modern gender gap in political attitudes.[2] More specifically, I argue that the gender division of unpaid care and domestic labor may function as a proxy for progression in the second part of the gender revolution (Goldscheider et al., 2015)—that is, men's involvement with their families.

Regarding attitudes toward the welfare state, the previously described social role theory expects a convergence in political attitudes to follow the growing similarity in men's and women's life patterns (e.g., Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Eagly & Diekman, 2006; Eagly et al., 2004). Modernization theory instead expects that the gender gap in attitudes will widen due to the connection between (1) women's "objectively" greater self-interest in welfare state expansion; (2) the symbolic valorization of the women's movements by the political left; and (3) the gender-differentiated pace in the internalization of overall societal value change toward less strict gender norms (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Inglehart, 2018; also see the review by Dassonneville, 2021). Taking this a step further, I argue that, regardless of whether attitudes are diverging or converging, the ways in which changing gender relations are related to political attitudes are bound to be shaped by the institutional configuration of the welfare state.

Next, I consider the role of institutions in more detail. As states construct social policies in response to the wider social and economic consequences of modernization and gender revolution, they draw on and make modifications to existing gender ideologies (Box 2) (e.g., Daly & Rake, 2003). Although it is obviously possible for states to do little, leaving it to families and market forces to solve the dual demands of

[2] Similarly, in the explorative phase of writing this thesis, I investigated the relationship between gender differences in welfare state attitudes and numerous measures corresponding to women's role expansion, such as vertical labor-market segregation, horizontal labor-market segregation (men vs. women in science, technology, and engineering vs. education, health, and welfare), the difference in men's and women's risk of poverty rates, women's representation in parliament and in executive positions, and so forth. The results mimic those of previous research in that these measures are not correlated with the gender gap in welfare state attitudes.

employment and caregiving, most European states rely on more identifiable "family models" (e.g., Daly, 2011; Gornick & Meyers, 2008). In practice, many hybrid versions of family models exist; however, there is a theoretical dividing line between family models built on gender specialization in breadwinning and homemaking (e.g., Lewis, 1992) and family models in which both men and women combine earning with caregiving (Gornick & Meyers, 2003, 2008; Korpi, 2000; Korpi, Ferrarini & Englund, 2013). Welfare states then put family models into practice by determining the criteria for eligibility to different social goods, thereby distributing entitlements and resources (Box 3) (e.g., Daly & Rake, 2003).

One way to theorize how welfare states make use of policy configurations to promote different family models is through the concept of familism.[3] Policies and programs are familistic in terms of the extent to which they make individuals reliant on family relations for access to care (Leitner, 2003; Lohmann & Zagel, 2016). In turn, familism affects gender relations to the extent that the model for caregiving within families relies on gender specialization. For example, many states offer long and unpaid parental leave in conjunction with a lack of public infrastructure for childcare and legal obligations to provide for elderly parents. This results in a wide gender disparity, where parental leave is almost exclusively used by women (e.g., Lohman & Zagel, 2016). Thus, the construction of policies that offer long but unpaid maternal/parental leave while compensating families with children from loss of income through tax credits and direct cash transfers have been deemed to reconstruct a gender ideology in which specialization in productive and reproductive work is viewed as being innate to men and women (Daly & Rake, 2003; Leitner, 2003; also see the review by Lohman & Zagel, 2016). Similarly, by employing a two-tiered system of claims-making, in which family-related benefits focus on the individual's role within family (e.g., mother/wife) while employment-related benefits are based on individual contribution, familistic policies contribute to normatively upholding a feminine/private and masculine/public dichotomy (e.g., Daly and Rake, 2003; also see Fraser, 1994, 1997).

Conversely, policies are considered to be defamilizing (i.e., individualizing) when they locate care responsibilities outside of the

[3] Here, *familism* entails a continuous dimension for appraising policies, similar in principle to the concept of commodification of labor. As such, it is not equivalent to the regime typologies often found in the (earlier) comparative literature on welfare states (e.g., Esping-Andersen, 1990). However, in the explorative phase of writing, I did investigate whether gender differences in welfare state attitudes differed across different welfare state typologies (e.g., Korpi's [2000] typology incorporating social stratification along the lines of both class and gender). I found no systematic connection.

family, such as by providing access to affordable childcare and eldercare. Alternatively, policies are defamilizing when they allow care to be performed within the family with minimal economic punishment, such as individualized parental leave with good replacement levels. By reducing intrafamilial dependency on access to care and increasing the opportunities for mothers to engage in paid work (and to derive welfare benefits tied to such labor-market participation), defamilizing policies contribute to altering economic power relations and bargaining positions within families (Daly, 2011; Leitner, 2003; Lohmann & Zagel, 2016). Making caregiving arrangements a public concern also makes caregiving political, rather than a strictly private matter.

The process of distributing enlistments and resources, together with normative signals, thus creates gendered opportunity structures (e.g., Korpi, 2000; Korpi et al., 2013). In this way, welfare states affect the different capacities and incentives that women and men have for individual action (Öun, 2012) (Box 4). Through the valorization of the social roles that are generally available to men and women, and by the organization of life into stages centered on work and family (e.g., Daly & Rake, 2003), the welfare state influences patterns of socialization whereby boys and girls learn what type of social behavior is typical for and generally expected of them as they try to achieve status as men and women in a particular society (e.g., Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Eagly & Diekman, 2006; West & Zimmerman, 1987; 2009). These socialization patterns then influence the different choices and courses of actions that individuals take. The aggregate results of individuals' actions ultimately form life patterns and experiences, which are the dual basis for self-interest according to one's social situation and for internalized normative views on the justifiability of prevailing social conditions (e.g., Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Svallfors, 2007), which include normative views on and perceptions of gender relations (Edlund & Öun, 2016; Öun, 2012, 2013).

As this thesis focuses on attitudes, the interplay between instrumentality/self-interest and internalized normative views is essential to the present line of argument (Box 4). It is within this interaction that context—by which I mean the totality of the institutional configuration—interacts with individuals' appraisal of their own self-interest in relation to wider political issues. Although women's and men's self-interest incentives to support or oppose social policies can be interpreted in a straightforward manner (as discussed earlier), the relationship between self-interest and attitudes is subject to the influence of normative

messaging from enacted social policies. Such normative messaging can function either to emphasize or to downplay the importance of self-interest, as social inequalities may be communicated as more or less "natural," more or less justifiable, and more or less as having a political rather than private nature (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Svallfors, 2007; Öun, 2012) (Box 3).

Ultimately, this back-and-forth between self-interest and normative views results in individuals' evaluations of the workings of social policy. It also results in the more ideological attitudes that people hold toward the welfare state as a political project (Box 5) (e.g., see the review by Chung et al., 2018). With respect to gender differences, Öun (2012) demonstrated that policy configurations that convey gender specialization as corresponding to innate qualities of men and women offer justification for unequal gender relations; in this way, they contribute to a perceived fairness of the gender division of labor by both men and women, even under circumstances in which the gender division of labor is factually unequal (Öun, 2013). Thus, inequalities that are accompanied with normative messages may be less likely to be recognized as unfair and thus less likely to influence policy preferences, even by the groups that are most negatively affected by the status quo (e.g., Öun, 2012, 2013; also see general arguments in Mettler & Soss, 2004; Svallfors, 2007). Conversely, attitudinal gender differences are more marked when the enacted policies emphasize dual roles as earner and caregiver (ibid.).

In summary, gender differences in self-interest are more likely to translate into gender differences in welfare state attitudes if inequalities are normatively conveyed as being of a political rather than private nature and as being out of touch with an ideal version of society. Similarly, a gender-norm perspective expects the process of socialization, life patterns, and experience, which are all informed by the institutional makeup, to be associated with gender differences in attitudes, if such attitudes (whether for or against social welfare) meaningfully align with stereotypical views about women (as being warm and nurturing) and men (as being assertive and independent) (e.g., Diekman & Schneider, 2010). Thus, both an instrumental (self-interest) perspective and a gender-norm perspective underscore the importance of the totality of the institutional environment in which men and women live out their daily lives in regard to the type of attitudes they come to hold (e.g., Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Svallfors, 2007). Theorized in this way, political attitudes are not only an ex-ante factor on the input side, informing policymakers and influencing the subsequent enactment of social policies (after the due democratic process

of campaigning and holding elections, etc.) (e.g., Brooks & Manza, 2007), but are also a post-ante factor on the output side. Once policies are enacted, they shape public opinion and mass politics through the feedback effects embodied in the types of experiences they produce (Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Mettler & Soss, 2004).

Social identification with a gender group

Within a social identity approach to the study of attitudes, the process of social identification plays a crucial role in explaining why and how belonging to a social group affects the attitudes we express (e.g., Hogg & Smith, 2007; Smith & Hogg, 2008). Having gone through the arguments about how the welfare state interacts with wider societal developments to inform gender differences in attitudes, I now turn to how this process may be subject to moderation by the group-level process of social identification with a gender group (Box 6).

In psychology, attitudes are conventionally seen as a form of individual cognitive structure that pertains to the judgement or evaluation of a specific attitude object (e.g., Ajzen 2001; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). This view of attitudes is recognized within social identity theory. However, attitudes are also viewed as having a normative and expressive function, which relates them to people's social identities. More specifically, attitudes are often the result of group processes that underlie the translation of in-group norms into individual conduct (Hogg & Smith, 2007; Smith & Hogg, 2008). For example, according to Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe (2004), aspects such as the emotional significance of group membership or a sense of common fate with the in-group requires prior self-identification with a social group.

Within social identity theory, social groups (e.g., ethnic, religious, organizational, or gender groups) are viewed as a form of category prototype (see the review by Hogg & Smith, 2007; Smith & Hogg, 2008). A prototype is a basic mental representation made up of a fuzzy set of descriptive and prescriptive attributes pertaining to, for example, dress, speech, emotions, and attitudes. Thus, prototypes are normative in the sense that they encompass what type of attitudes are expected from a member of the in-group. Through the psychological process of self-categorization (Turner et al., 1987), people who subscribe to membership in a particular social group transform their self-conception to match the identity described by the category. This includes perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and conduct. Self-categorization thus depersonalizes attitudes, so that they conform to the in-group prototype in a manner

consistent with genuine attitude change (Hogg & Smith, 2007:96).[4] However, as people tend to subscribe to membership in many different social groups, the importance of which may vary situationally according to context, any given prototype and in-group norm may not always be active (Hogg & Smith, 2007). Therefore, the influence of a particular social identity on attitudes depends on the saliency of this identity within the situation or in relation to the attitude object (Hogg & Smith, 2007; Smith & Hogg, 2008). Although the saliency of gender varies in different situations (e.g., Sinclair et al., 2006), the tendency to self-categorize as a man or woman is a trans-situationally stable psychological feature that differs between individuals (see the review by Eagly & Wood, 2015). For the purpose of this thesis, I define the strength of gender identification as a dispositional and transsituational attachment to an individual's self-identified gender group.

Beyond gendered self-interests and norms, I suggest that there is a question of how attentive people are to these things (Figure 1, Box 6). According to the institutional perspective delineated above, the relationship between gendered self-interest and attitudes may vary because the institutional context either makes gender relations salient in relation to the attitude object or normatively downplays such a connection. Similarly, a gender-norm perspective expects men and women to hold different attitudes to the extent that the normative content of gender role stereotypes either aligns with or opposes the goals of social equality that are embedded in the welfare state. Thus, while being slightly dissimilar in terms of their specified mechanisms, these perspectives are nevertheless similar in that they rely on people's perceptions of and attachment to their gender identity. In summary, I expect that the welfare state attitudes of individuals who have a strong gender identification are more likely to be influenced by gendered self-interest and to adopt gender-stereotypical attitudes. However, in the last section of the theoretical framework, I will identify important aspects of the complex interplay between social identification, gender identity, norms, and attitudes that may lead to gender disparities in the relative importance of the strength of gender identification to attitudes.

The political significance of masculinity threat

Interactionist perspectives within psychology have long posited that gender is not inherent to individuals as, for example, a specific attribute to possess. Rather, gender is a social process that is continually

[4] That is, attitudes do not merely reflect superficial behavioral compliance.

done and redone (e.g., West & Zimmerman, 1987, 2009). Within this process of doing gender, the interactional accomplishment of gender is judged with respect to the interplay between a socially recognized sex category and the wider cultural accountability standards for gender performance (i.e., gender norms).[5] Thus, an individual's achieved manhood or womanhood, in this social meaning, is an inherently unstable construct that is constantly under threat of being unraveled (e.g., Messerschmidt, 1993, 2018). However, due to how society valorizes masculinity and femininity, the social significance of one's achieved status as a man is not necessarily the same as that of a woman (see the review by Pfeffer, Rogalin & Gee, 2016).

Pressure to conform to cultural notions of gender exists for both men and women, and sanctions for non-conformance are frequently imposed on both (Pfeffer, Rogalin & Gee, 2016). However, the risk of being unable to claim full membership in the high-status category of men seems to be especially associated with a range of damaging emotions, physiological responses, and social behaviors (see the reviews by DiMuccio & Knowles, 2021; Pfeffer et al., 2016; also see Connell, 1995). Overcompensation—such as the assertion of stereotypically masculine traits and behaviors—is a common strategy among those who seek to (re)claim their status as a "real man." Similar compensatory strategies are not frequently observed among women who are subject to gender status threat (ibid.).

Lately, researchers have begun take an interest in the relationship between threatened masculinity and political attitudes (see the review by DiMuccio & Knowles, 2021). Studies have demonstrated that men who were subjected to masculinity threat were more negative toward gender equality (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016) and more accepting of discrimination disadvantaging women and gay men (Weaver & Vescio, 2015). This was particularly true for men who strongly identified with their gender group (Weaver & Vescio, 2015). Similarly, men threatened with a loss of their breadwinner status were less likely to vote for a woman candidate (Cassino, 2018), with the intermediary variable of preference for a masculine president being a significant predictor for support for Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Carian & Sobotka, 2018).

Although I know of no work addressing gender differences in welfare state attitudes from the perspective of masculinity threat, the implications are unmistakable. Some welfare states exhibit a very close

[5] For example, consider the manner of dress, speech, physical appearance and attitudes that are required for a Western male to pass as a "real man" in the eyes of his peers.

connection between expansion of the welfare state and women's expanded social and economic roles (e.g., Lister, 2009; Stanfors & Goldscheider, 2017). One prime example is the Swedish welfare state, where the public sector has often functioned as a vehicle for state feminism and progress in gender equality through the gender mainstreaming of social policies (e.g., Borchorst & Siim, 2008; Klinth, 2002; 2013; Lundqvist, 2007; Svensson & Gunnarsson, 2012). Considering that some men may perceive an emergent gender-inclusive model of social citizenship as a threat to a masculine breadwinner role, I argue that welfare state expansion could be perceived as a form of masculinity threat. Especially if—as in Sweden—it is amplified by a strong discursive coupling between the concept of welfare and goals for gender equality (e.g., Borchorst & Siim, 2008; Svensson & Gunnarsson, 2012). Furthermore, the Swedish welfare state discourse features an extensive problematization of (toxic) masculinity as a hindrance to achieving a modern and egalitarian society (Klinth, 2002, 2013; Lundqvist, 2007). Under such circumstances, I expect social identification with a gender group to be more meaningfully related to the welfare state attitudes of men than to those of women (Figure 1: Box 6).

Method

Analytical strategy

To recapitulate, the overarching aim of this thesis is to contribute new empirical evidence and a more comprehensive explanation of why men and women differ in their attitudes toward the welfare state. The first two papers address the first two research questions, covering the contextual variation of gender differences in welfare state attitudes, while the last two papers are concerned with the third question, covering the process of social identification.

The first article is a comparative investigation of the interplay between gender relations, the institutional configuration of welfare states, and gender differences in attitudes toward the government's responsibility to provide social welfare in Europe. By comparing countries with different family policies (i.e., degrees of familism) and differences in the gender division of unpaid labor (i.e., gender relations), I trace how gender differences in attitudes relate to the proposed feedback effects of social policy (e.g., Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Svallfors, 2012). While this perspective does not provide conclusive evidence on causality, the correlation between the unpaid division of labor and gender differences in attitudes does help to empirically evaluate the merits of the theoretical arguments about the relationship between progress in gender equality and attitudinal gender differences (Figure 1: Box 1), as well as the moderating role of welfare states in framing this relationship (Figure 1: Boxes 2 & 3). In practice, I make use of a combination of country-level ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and multilevel analysis (hierarchical linear regression) (e.g., Hox, 2011). Using multilevel modeling, with individuals nested within countries, I allow for attitudinal gender differences that vary across countries in both intercept and slope. I also interact individuals' gender with the aggregate gender division of unpaid labor, and finally include a three-way interaction term in order to study whether the relationship between gender, the division of unpaid labor, and welfare state attitudes varies under different institutional configurations.

In the second paper, I employ a longitudinal perspective to study the development of gender differences in attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state (Figure 1: Box 5). This study relies on harmonized survey data and a repeated cross-sectional design, together with regression-based techniques, to track the attitudes that people hold toward the Swedish welfare state. While the single-country design cannot reveal differences

between institutional pathways, the merits of this design is that it clearly demonstrates the direction in which gender differences are trending—whether toward convergence, divergence, or a status quo. The availability of high-quality data covering several dimensions of attitudes toward the welfare state over a long period of time (1981–2018 for the longest running time series) outweighs the potential drawbacks of being unable to make cross-country comparisons. Although gender differences are not the central analytical theme of this paper, as its main focus is on broad developments of welfare state attitudes in Sweden, the paper nevertheless provides empirical evidence on the development of attitudinal gender differences.

The third and fourth papers focus on the process of social identification within the context of the Swedish welfare state (Figure 1: Boxes 4 & 6). More specifically, I examine whether women's and men's normative support for the welfare state (measured as their social spending preferences) and views on the deservingness of welfare recipients (measured as their suspicion of welfare overuse) are related to social identification with their gender group. I use regression-based techniques to study the interaction between attitudes, gender, and an index measuring the strength of gender identification among the Swedish population in a nationally representative sample collected in 2018.

The strategy behind analyzing outcomes as different as social spending preferences and suspicion of welfare overuse is that they have been framed differently within the Swedish welfare state and policy discourse. Regarding social spending preferences, the expansion of the Swedish welfare state has been thoroughly permeated by a gender perspective. Indeed, the emergent model of gender-equal social citizenship can be tied to the efforts of the women's movements and of other political actors working within the framework of the women-friendly state (e.g., Lister, 2009). However, in contrast to the gendered and racialized stereotypes of "welfare queens" in the United States, for example (see e.g., Lundström, 2011), the overuse of welfare services by target groups has never been debated in Sweden through a gendered prism.

The key issue, then, is that the institutional and the gender-norm perspectives differ in their predictions, depending on this variability in the salient connection between gender and welfare. According to an institutional perspective, a strong gender identification should make individuals more attentive to the gendered connotations of an expanding welfare state (i.e., social spending). However, gender differences in people's suspicion of welfare overuse should not be meaningfully related

to social identification due to the lack of a salient connection with gender. In contrast, the gender-norm perspective expects similar results with respect to both social spending preferences and suspicion about welfare overuse. This has to do with how the long-term goals of social equality that are embedded in the welfare state conflict with the normative contents of a masculine gender role stereotype; at the same time, being suspicious of the welfare overuse of potential social outgroups is aligned with the orientation of masculinity toward social dominance. In contrast, a feminine gender role stereotype is well aligned with goals for social equality and with trusting potential outgroups. According to a gender-norm perspective, the strength of gender identification—taken as a measure of the likelihood of an individual adopting gender-stereotypical attitudes—should serve to emphasize these attitudinal differences in both cases.

Lastly, the literature on masculinity threat expects that, when the welfare state can be perceived as a potential threat to the normative connection between masculinity and breadwinning, the result should be negative views of the welfare state among men with a strong gender identification. This makes social identification a more meaningful process for men than for women. Indeed, the gender-equal model of social citizenship that is emerging in Sweden can be viewed as undercutting traditional norms of masculine breadwinning. Thus, according to the masculinity threat perspective, social identification with a gender group should only meaningfully relate to the welfare state attitudes of men.

Data

The first article, which compares European countries, is based on survey data from the fourth round of the ESS, which was collected in 2008–2009. I constructed an achieved sample of 21 countries (n=38 319), based on data availability for the contextual variables (i.e., gender division of unpaid labor and degree of familism). The ESS module covers individuals' attitudes toward the government's scope and responsibility to provide for jobs, healthcare, standards of living for the old and unemployed, childcare, and paid leave for the care of sick family members. I also made use of secondary data from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Multilinks database on intergenerational policy.

For the second article, which studies trends in Sweden, I created a longitudinal dataset covering attitudes toward the welfare state in Sweden. I harmonized data from all available rounds of the SWS surveys, covering the years 1986, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2010, and 2018, as well as the Swedish sample of two rounds of the International Social Survey

Programme (ISSP) for 1996 and 2006. I included two additional surveys: Taxes in Sweden, from 1981, and Changing Welfare, from 2014. This compilation resulted in a dataset covering 37 years (1981–2018) and containing 10 unique measurement points. For the third and fourth articles, I only used data from most recent SWS survey (2018).

The SWS is a long-running postal survey aimed at gauging the adult Swedish population's attitudes toward the welfare state (see e.g., Svallfors, 2011). As stated above, I also utilized two rounds from the ISSP Role of Government module (1996, 2006), which is a semi-replicated postal survey that is administered in several countries. The two additional surveys, Taxes in Sweden (for a description, see Hadenius, 1986) and Changing Welfare (see Hardell, Johansson Sevä & Öun, 2020) were collected by mail.

The Changing Welfare survey (2014) was constructed by staff working at the Department of Sociology at Umeå University, while the construction of the most recent (2018) version of the SWS surveys was done by myself in collaboration with one of my supervisors (Ingemar Johansson Sevä) and a professor in the department (Jonas Edlund). This survey was based on the previous versions but included additions, such as four questions designed to capture the respondents' strength of gender identification. The survey was fielded by Kantar Sifo in the first half of 2018. The other datasets were retrieved from the Swedish National Data Service and from GESIS/The Liebnitz Institute for the Social Sciences in the spring of 2017. All rounds of data after 1986 were collected using a random probability sampling design targeting the Swedish adult population (18–79 years old, with some rounds having an upper sample age limit of 74 or 76). The Taxes in Sweden survey instead used a clustered sampling design to oversample the self-employed. This was corrected for using design weights where applicable.

The total number of respondents for the pooled and harmonized dataset was n=15 486 (varying from n=964 in 1981 to n=3 842 in 2010). Reflecting an internationally observed negative trend of household nonresponse (de Leeuw, Hop & Luiten, 2018), the target response rates ranged from 76 percent in 1992 to 33 percent in 2018. The samples contained slightly more men than women in the early rounds (1981, 1986) and slightly more women in the later rounds (2006, 2014, 2018). However, these discrepancies were not large and were thus unlikely to cause bias. Starting in 2002, the samples contained fewer young people in relation to middle-aged and older people than was expected by the target frame. The distribution of respondents across a variable based on homogeneous

density population in each region (H-region) was fairly consistent across all rounds and aligned with the expected distribution (information on region was not available in 1981 and 2014).

Operationalizations of key variables

Welfare state attitudes. I conceptualized welfare state attitudes as multidimensional. This reflected the multifaceted nature of welfare states, as the welfare state is comprised of many different areas toward which individuals can have more or less consistent attitudes (Mauleman et al., 2020). Thus, attitudes toward the welfare state were measured as several separate dependent variables (e.g., Svallfors, 2011, 2012). In the different studies, the dependent variables included attitudes toward the government's scope and responsibility to provide social welfare (Paper I); social spending preferences (Paper II and III); support for taxes and collective forms of financing (Paper II); attitudes toward collective organization (i.e., service delivery) (Paper II); evaluations of welfare state performance and feelings of subjective risk (Paper II); suspicion of welfare overuse (Paper II and Paper IV); and personal willingness to pay taxes (Paper II).

To increase the validity of each dependent variable, and thus the reliability of the findings, I primarily relied on indices as a way to measure each dimension of welfare state attitudes. That is, in all of the articles, I combined several survey questions aimed at measuring the same latent dimension of welfare state attitudes (e.g., social spending preferences). I occasionally also performed investigations into separate policy areas and programs (e.g., not only toward social spending in general, but also broken down into specific attitudes toward spending on labor-market policies, family policies, educational policies, etc.).

Family policies and familism. To measure the country level of familism, I constructed an index following the empirically and theoretically evaluated guidelines provided by Lohman and Zagel (2016). All indicators were taken from the Multilinks database on intergenerational policy (averages for the years 2004 and 2009). The index was based on information on (a) allowance and taxes (child allowance for one child or three children [share of net average income], tax deduction or tax credit for children [yes/no], eligibility condition for child allowance—universal benefit [yes/no]); (b) parental leave (length of unpaid leave [months]); and (c) support for the elderly (children's legal obligation to support parents [yes/no]).

Gender division of unpaid labor. To measure the division of unpaid labor, I used an indicator from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2017). This indicator measured gender inequalities in terms of the allocation of time spent doing care and domestic work. The index was based on the self-reported daily involvement of women and men in caring for and educating their children or grandchildren, the elderly, and/or disabled people, as well as their involvement in cooking and housework. As the weighted index was not presented in time units, but rather in the level of gender equality in time allocation, it proved to be a good measurement of between-country differences in the division of unpaid labor. The index itself comprised a total of 13 questions (which are available for inspection in EIGE, 2017: 84). The specific score that was utilized represented an average based on measurements made in 2003 and 2007.

Social identification with a gender group. To measure the strength of gender identification, I followed guidelines from Eagly and Wood (2015) and adapted a subscale to Luhtanen and Crockers' (1992) Collective Self-Esteem scale: the Importance to Identity subscale. In the SWS survey, the four questions used to construct the strength of gender identification index were: *If you think about your sex category or the gender you identify most strongly with, how important would you say that this is for your self-perception? My sex/gender identity… (a) overall has very little to do with how I feel about myself; (b) is an important reflection of who I am; (c) is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am; (d) is an important part of my self-image.* Answers: *(1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Disagree somewhat, (4) Neutral, (5) Agree somewhat, (6) Agree, (7) Strongly agree.* Questions (a) and (c) were reverse-coded. In both the third and fourth studies, an index was created by taking the mean of these questions. A similar version of the Importance to Identity subscale was previously demonstrated to function well within a Swedish context for studying attitudes toward gender-fair language (yielding larger differences among strong identifiers than weak identifiers) (Gustafsson Sendén, Bäck & Lindqvist, 2015).[6]

[6] A short discussion on the aptness of this approach is probably needed. Within the burgeoning literature on the relationship between non-binary gender and political attitudes (see e.g., Bittner & Goodyear-Grant, 2017a, 2017b; Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2021; Magliozzi et al., 2016; Solevid et al., 2021), there are two main approaches to operationalizing gender identity. The first is to use gender-stereotypical traits, either using standardized scales such as Bem's Sex Role Inventory (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2021; Lindqvist et al., 2020) or by asking respondents to rate their level of femininity and masculinity (e.g., Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017a; Magliozzi et al., 2016; Solevid et al., 2021). The second approach is to ask respondents to what degree they identify with their gender group. This has been done through the use of a "feeling thermometer," where respondents freely assess the strength with which they identify with their gender group along a single item continuum (Bittner & Goodyear-

Grant, 2017b). Another approach is that taken within this thesis, which is to rely on indices such as the Importance to Identity subscale and Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) Collective Self-Esteem scale (Lindqvist et al., 2020; Lindqvist et al., 2016; Morgenroth et al., 2021; see the review by Eagly & Wood, 2015).

The traits-based approach has obvious advantage in being able to distinguish between gender-conforming and non-conforming individuals. However, a drawback is that there is no self-evident basis for inferring how valued or important such gender identity is to an individual's self-concept. Although open-ended questions asking people to self-rate their masculinity/femininity on continuous scales can be viewed as a measure of gender identification (e.g., Magliozzi et al., 2016; see the review by Wood & Eagly, 2015), this method does not explicitly prompt respondents to reason about the emotional significance or centrality of these traits (or identification) relative to their own self-concept. Thus, while measurements of masculinity and femininity may very well correlate with attitudinal outcomes, they do not necessarily illustrate the likelihood of social and political events being interpreted by individuals through a gendered prism. Therefore, I prefer to measure social identification with a gender group by using the Importance to Identity subscale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), as it directly asks respondents about their emotional attachment to and the psychological centrality of gender identity in their concept of self.

Summary of the studies

Paper I: The gender gap in welfare state attitudes in Europe: The role of unpaid labour and family policy *[Published in the* Journal of European Social Policy*] [Sole author]*

The aim of this paper was to investigate the relationship between the division of unpaid labor, family policy configuration, and gender differences in attitudes toward the welfare state. Starting from an institutional perspective and building on the notion that welfare states represent a possibility to mitigate work-family conflict, I argued that the division of unpaid labor could be conceptualized as a gendered measure of welfare state performance. Therefore, a gender gap in welfare state attitudes could reflect differences in interest between men and women in supporting an encompassing welfare state, as well as possible differences in solidarity with welfare recipients (leading to further differences in support of the welfare state). Furthermore, I argued that familistic policies, which build on and promote a gender-specialized division of labor, were prone to establish a mental frame for evaluating welfare state performance in which the gender division of unpaid labor was not likely to be perceived as problematic, even if it was in fact unequally performed.

Based on data from 21 countries participating in round four (2008/2009) of the ESS, and using a mix of country- and individual-level regression models and multilevel models, I found a clear relationship between the aggregate gender division of unpaid labor and gender differences in an index measuring support for the government's role in providing for jobs, healthcare, standards of living for the old and unemployed, childcare, and paid leave for the care of sick family members. A more equal division of unpaid care and domestic work was correlated with women being more supportive of the government's responsibility for providing social welfare, in comparison with men. This pattern held when controlling for individual-level economic risk and resources, cultural factors such as trust and values (traditionally related to the support of an encompassing welfare state), and beliefs about welfare state efficiency and consequences for society in general.

Furthermore, I found that the initially gauged relationship between the division of unpaid labor and attitudes toward the welfare state was moderated in turn by the institutional environment. Among countries with low levels of familism, gender equality in the division of unpaid labor accounted for nearly half of the variation in the gender gap in attitudes toward the welfare state. No distinguishable pattern was discernible for

highly familistic countries. A multilevel regression model that accounted for a three-way cross-level interaction between gender, the aggregate division of unpaid labor, and the country level of familism, reduced the random slope for gender—that is, it reduced the between-country differences in the relationship between gender and attitudes toward the welfare state.

Paper II: Support for the Swedish welfare state: The role of socioeconomic and sociocultural conflict in four decades of public opinion. ***[Submitted to a journal] [Co-authored with Maureen A. Eger, Joakim Kulin, and Ingemar Johansson Sevä]***

The aim of this article was to investigate the development of attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state during the last four decades. The main motivation, which was related to a previously observed decrease in class differences in attitudes, other measures of decreasing class politics, and welfare state reconfiguration, was centered on investigating whether the Swedish welfare state had become less contested over time or was instead subject to new political conflicts. Gender differences were studied as part of this potentially larger movement toward changing conflict lines, and robust empirical evidence was found for the development of gender attitudes over time and the patterning of gender differences across generations. In addition to empirical evidence, a merit of this paper is that it provides knowledge about the sociopolitical context, which is needed for a wider discussion on where gender differences fit in with the contemporary sociopolitical conflict surrounding the Swedish welfare state.

The analysis covered general trends in public opinion, the electoral relevance of different attitude dimensions, the magnitude of socio-structural divisions, and what types of underlying political-ideological conflicts (conceptualized as economic egalitarianism vs. views on immigration) had structured attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state at different points in time. Using a repeated cross-sectional design with harmonized survey data, we tracked seven different dimensions of attitudes toward the welfare state for the years 1981–2018 (for the longest running time series).

In the following discussion, I will only focus on results that pertain to gender differences. Gender differences in normative support for the welfare state (i.e., support for social spending, collective financing, and the public organization of services) were found to be quite substantial and in line with predictions; that is, women were found to be more positive toward the welfare state than men were. However, gender attitudes did not

display any clear pattern of either convergence or divergence. Instead, the differences in attitudes between men and women fluctuated without clear trends. This was most evident for attitudes toward social spending, whose differences were roughly the same in 1981 and 2018. Furthermore, gender differences in normative support for the welfare state did not differ between generations. However, younger generations did display slightly larger gender differences in their willingness to pay taxes (women more, men less) and their suspicion of welfare overuse (men more, women less). Interestingly, suspicion and willingness to pay taxes were also the most politicized aspects of welfare state attitudes. While normative support for the welfare state (i.e., support for social spending, collective financing, and organization) has become decoupled from political party sympathies over time, suspicion and willingness to pay taxes have developed to explain more of the variation in political party sympathies than any other welfare attitudes.

Paper III: Not all men, nor all women. Strength of gender identification and social spending preferences in Sweden. ***[Revised and re-submitted to a journal] [Sole author]***

The aim of this paper was to contribute to the analysis of the gender gap in welfare state attitudes by focusing on the group-level process of social identification. Drawing upon a social identity approach to gender, I proposed that individuals' strength of gender identification, which indicates a dispositional and transsituational attachment to one's self-identified gender group (e.g., see the review by Eagly & Wood, 2015), could contribute to nuancing previously recorded differences in welfare state attitudes between the broad social categories of men and women. More specifically, I focused on the gender gap in attitudes toward social spending in Sweden, which were defined as preferences for the tax-based welfare effort of the public sector in the areas of social assistance, basic education, elder support, employment policy initiatives, healthcare, housing benefits, and support for families and children.

I formulated three expectations regarding the interplay between gender identity, social identification, and social spending preferences. According to institutional theory, social identification may influence social spending preferences due to a heightened attentiveness to gendered self-interest and positioning in relation to the welfare state. According to a gender-norm perspective, welfare state attitudes may be experienced as more feminine or masculine in character, with the strength of gender identification functioning as a proxy for the tendency of individuals to adopt gender-stereotypical attitudes. Both the institutional and the gender-

norm perspectives predicted that women would be more and men would be less willing to increase social spending, and that these differences should be most pronounced among strong identifiers. The third expectation was derived from the literature on masculinity threat and political attitudes. I argued that the expansion of the Swedish welfare state, due to an emergent gender-equal model of social citizenship, could be perceived as a threat to the symbolic connection between norms about masculinity and breadwinning, inducing a kind of status loss for men. I also highlighted the problematization of masculinity norms in the Swedish welfare state discourse. Given this perspective, I expected that social identification with a gender group would be more meaningfully related to social spending preferences among men than among women.

The results, which were derived from the 2018 SWS survey, demonstrated that women had stronger preferences for increased social spending, although the views of most men were actually quite closely aligned with those of women. Social identification with a gender group was related to social spending preferences among men. Men with an above-average strength of gender identification were significantly less willing to increase social spending, compared with women and other men. These results proved to be consistent when analyzed separately for individual spending areas such as spending on families, education, and social assistance.

Paper IV: Suspicion of welfare overuse in Sweden: The role of left-right ideology, anti-immigrant attitudes, and gender ***[Published in* Scandinavian Political Studies*] [Co-authored with Ingemar, Johansson Sevä, and Ragnar Lundström]***

The aim of this last study was to explore hitherto undertheorized aspects of individual-level differences in people's suspicion of welfare overuse in Sweden. Thus far, suspicion of welfare overuse has received little attention in the literature on welfare state attitudes and virtually no attention in the literature on the Swedish welfare state. Yet it is a frequent claim within the welfare state literature that widespread suspicion about welfare overuse poses a serious threat to the legitimacy of large and tax-funded welfare states, such as Sweden. In this paper, we focused on three areas as potential explanations for why individuals differ in how suspicious they are about welfare overuse: namely, elite political rhetoric, sociocultural attitudes about immigration, and gender.

In this summary, I will focus only on the undertheorized and underexplored issue of gender. We suggested that, according to a gender-norm argument, gender differences could be explained by the different

tendencies of individual men and women to adopt gender-stereotypical attitudes. Being suspicious of outgroups is aligned with a masculine gender role stereotype but opposed to a feminine gender role stereotype. According to this perspective, the more strongly men or women identify with their gender group, the more men and women should differ from each other in their suspicion of welfare overuse.

On the other hand, according to an institutional argument, gender differences could be related to inequalities in women's and men's positions in relation to the welfare state, due to lingering instabilities in women's economic roles. This inequality could promote a heightened sense of reliance on the welfare state among women in comparison with men, which would promote identification and solidarity with welfare recipients among women and lead to less suspicion (from women) of welfare overuse. However, as welfare overuse has never been debated from a gender perspective in Sweden, this institutional perspective did not predict that the attitudes of men and women would differ according to social identification with a gender group in any meaningful way.

Using data from the 2018 SWS survey, gender differences in the suspicion of welfare overuse were observed, with women being found to be less suspicious than men. These differences were observed even when controlling for occupational class, educational attainment, region of residence, welfare recipiency, partisanship, social and institutional trust, and anti-immigrant attitudes. However, gender differences were not more pronounced among people with a strong gender identification, so the gender-norm argument was refuted. Instead, we argued that gender differences were indicative of the status of gender relations and of men's and women's different positions in relation to the welfare state, with women generally having a greater understanding of the situation of being reliant on welfare state activity than men do.

Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to offer new evidence and a more comprehensive explanation for why men and women differ in their attitudes toward the welfare state. In particular, I focused on the interplay between instrumental reasoning and internalized normative views, arguing that it is within this interaction that context—that is, the institutional configuration of welfare states and prevailing gender norms—interacts with how individuals appraise their own self-interest in relation to wider political issues. In the four research papers, I therefore focused on the contextual variation in attitudinal gender differences that exists between welfare states and on individual differences that relate to the psychological process of social identification with a gender group. As a result, this thesis contributes novel evidence on the interplay between gender relations, institutional configuration, social identification, and welfare state attitudes, as well as on the longitudinal development of attitudinal differences in Sweden. Moreover, this thesis represents a joining of institutional theory about policy feedback processes with a social identity perspective that emphasizes the psychological and emotional importance of gender identities. In this way, it brings together perspectives that have previously been theorized in relative isolation with regard to attitudinal gender differences.

Previously, feminist comparative research on the welfare state demonstrated that welfare state arrangements shape opportunity structures and life patterns while differing in their valorization of the social roles that are thus made available to men and women (Ciccia & Sainsbury, 2018; Daly & Rake, 2003; Lewis, 1992). For a long time, these insights did not enter the institutional literature on how the feedback effects of social policy shape gender differences in political attitudes; however, this has begun to change. Importantly, the insight that institutional configurations convey normative messages through social policies (e.g., Mettler & Soss, 2004; Svallfors, 2007) has been used to demonstrate that welfare state arrangements affect how women and men appraise their own situations, thereby influencing their attitudes toward and perceptions about things such as the gender division of labor (e.g., Edlund & Öun, 2016; Öun, 2012, 2013). In this thesis, I built on and expanded this work to include the attitudes that men and women hold toward the welfare state itself.

I have obtained the following findings: In all the surveyed European countries (except in France), women were more positive than men toward social welfare being the government's responsibility.

However, with respect to the first and second research questions, which ask about the variability of attitudinal differences between contexts, this thesis demonstrates that gender differences in attitudes toward the welfare state are not a universal phenomenon (Paper I). Rather, the gender gap in attitudes varied according to the prevailing gender relations and how these gender relations were either politicized or depoliticized through social policies. In countries such as Greece or Portugal, which scored low in terms of gender equality in unpaid labor, there were almost no gender differences to speak of in welfare state attitudes. Conversely, countries such as Sweden, which scored high on gender equality, demonstrated a significant gender gap that could not be explained by differences in labor market or family situation, nor by differences in values or ideological beliefs. Importantly, this relationship between the gender division and unpaid labor and the gender gap in attitudes was only valid among countries that lacked an overall familistic institutional design. That is, only in those countries whose social policy does not actively promote gender specialization in employment and caregiving could we see a relationship between the equality of unpaid labor and gender differences in attitudes.

Thus, this thesis provides new insights into how gender relations—and the ways in which gender relations are framed within social policy—affect the gender gap in welfare state attitudes. More specifically, if a welfare state places the responsibility for caregiving onto the family and relies on a gendered division between employment and unpaid care labor, there seems to be no systematic connection between gender relations and attitudes toward that welfare state. Such a familistic institutional design is achieved by offering long and unpaid parental leave (which is most frequently used by mothers), offsetting the loss of income during child rearing by offering head-of-household tax credits for a dependent spouse and cash transfers for the care of children (instead of formal child care), and making adult children legally responsible for the care of their parents as they grow old. Conversely, there is a much stronger connection between prevailing gender relations and welfare state attitudes in countries with low levels of familism, where the state either actively promotes dual social and economic roles for parents or actualizes a conflict between employment and caregiving by not actively supporting a gender-specialized family model.

Thus, if policies convey gender specialization in productive and reproductive tasks, at least periodically over the life course, as something that corresponds to innate qualities of men and women, there appears to be a diminishing effect on the potential relationship between prevailing

gender relations and attitudes toward the welfare state. If, instead, the welfare state promotes dual responsibilities in earning (or at least models itself around a reality in which all adult family members perform paid work to some extent), the gendered positionalities of men and women in relation to the welfare state seem have a greater effect on attitudes. Most importantly, in states where men's roles have changed the most, as signified by the relatively greater share of unpaid labor performed by men, the gap in support for the welfare state between women and men is also at its widest. These findings are in line with institutional theories that emphasizes how welfare state both structure self-interest (e.g., Daly & Rake, 2003; Pierson, 1993) and construct normative standards for appraising the political significance of such self-interest (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Svallfors, 2007; Öun, 2012).

Another feature of the current research on gender differences in welfare state attitudes is that it has been lacking a clear picture of longitudinal trends. Thus, scholars have been at loss when it comes to where gender differences are headed—whether toward convergence, divergence, or a status quo. Admittedly, a few longitudinal studies have demonstrated how transitions across life stages affect gender differences in policy preferences (e.g., Burclau & Lühiste, 2020). Still, long-term data has been lacking. This thesis makes a significant contribution to the field by offering nearly four decades of observations (1981–2018) covering the development of gender differences in attitudes toward the Swedish welfare state for a total of seven attitude dimensions, including normative support and evaluation. From a theoretical standpoint, we recall that social role theory expects overlapping life patterns to lead to more similar experience, and thus to more similar attitudes among women and men (e.g., Diekman & Schneider, 2010). Conversely, modernization theory postulates that greater gender equality should lead to a continued divergence of political attitudes (at least initially), due to the connection between women's emancipation and the political projects of the left, as well as gender differences in the internalization of modern values (e.g., Dassonneville, 2021; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Inglehart, 2018).

With regard to how attitudinal gender differences have developed in Sweden, the simple answer is that they have not changed very much during the last four decades (Paper II). The results of the longitudinal analysis in this thesis therefore align with other research that has found a plateau in the gender divide in left-right political ideology (Dassonneville, 2021). Moreover, the patterning of attitudinal gender differences in normative support for the welfare state does not look significantly different

across generations, even though Sweden is an international outlier in terms of the change in men's social roles and the norms governing masculinity (e.g., Stanfors & Goldscheider, 2017), with most of this change having happened during the last couples of decades (e.g., Ma et al., 2020). However, younger generations do demonstrate a slightly stronger tendency for women to be more willing to pay taxes and less suspicious about welfare overuse than men (when compared with gender differences in previous generations).

Thus, the attitudinal gender divide in Sweden—where women support social spending, collective financing, and public organization of the welfare state, while men are more suspicious of welfare overuse and less willing to pay taxes—seems to be a rather stable phenomenon. However, it is possible that gender differences in welfare state legitimacy, however stable they appear, may currently be more politicized than they used to be. Other studies demonstrate a clear longitudinal development toward divergence in voting behavior and opinion, with the left-right gender divide now amounting to a mobilized gender dimension of Swedish politics (Oskarson & Ahlbom, 2021). Interestingly enough, the welfare attitudes in which younger generations differ more than previous generations—namely, suspicion and willingness to pay taxes—are also the most politicized aspects of welfare state attitudes, as these attitudes have developed over time to explain more of the variation in political party sympathies than any other welfare attitude (Paper II). Future studies of welfare state attitudes would thus do well to use weighted measures, with respondents being given the opportunity to indicate not only what their attitudes are, but also how important this attitude is to them.

While we have no conclusive longitudinal evidence in favor of a divergence in attitudes between women and men, there is even less evidence for a connection between similar life patterns and diminishing attitudinal differences. However, if we take into account the cross-sectional evidence that gender equality of unpaid labor is associated with larger attitudinal gender differences in European countries (Paper I), there are more factors in favor of gender equality having been coupled with attitudinal divergence rather than convergence—at least in the past.

From an institutional viewpoint, it makes sense that partially overlapping life patterns do not automatically dampen gender differences in welfare state attitudes. Even with observable changes in life patterns—and we are still far from gender parity in the uptake of parental leave, part-time work, and unpaid work, even in gender-egalitarian Sweden (e.g., Altintas & Sullivan, 2017; Daly, 2011; Ma et al., 2020)—deep-seated

differences may remain in the stability of the earner role (e.g., Lister, 2009). That is, there may be lingering differences in how reliant women and men are on a continuance of welfare state activity to be able to combine paid work with family responsibilities. Given this, it makes sense for women to be more invested than men in individualized welfare policies, even in gender-egalitarian welfare states. Provided that the intersection between gender, family, and work is salient and politicized (which can be enhanced or suppressed, depending on the normative contents of social policy), women's different investment in individualized welfare policies should translate into gender differences in attitudes toward the welfare state, accentuating the influence that gender norms may have on the welfare state attitudes of men and women. Indeed, I argue that it is the influence of lingering norms about women's caregiving capabilities that continue to infuse women's roles as earners with a kind of uncertainty that is largely unfelt by men, even if some men may instead fear status loss from a decoupling between masculinity and breadwinning on a symbolic level (Paper III).

Moving on to psychological aspects, research on welfare state attitudes has thus far lacked a theory on group-level processes that can explain why gender affects the attitudes of individual men and women. Although there has been a move within political and social psychology to reexamine many attitudinal gender gaps with different non-binary operationalizations of gender, this methodology has not yet been featured in the core literature on welfare state attitudes in Europe. This thesis offers a significant contribution by integrating a social identity approach (e.g., Smith & Hogg, 2008), which focuses on the role of social identification with a gender group, with the more classical approach of institutional theory, which focuses on self-interest and policy feedback mechanisms.

Papers III and IV offer several interesting insights into the interplay between gender identity, social identification, and welfare state attitudes (i.e., the third research question). First, when looking at the deservingness dimension of suspicion about welfare overuse, Swedish men were found to be more suspicious than women (Paper IV). This attitudinal difference could not be explained by gender differences in material risks or resources, values, political orientation, previous experiences of welfare services, or differences in the tendency to trust others. However, neither was it related to the process of social identification with a gender group. Second, when looking instead at the normative dimension of support for the welfare state, measured as social spending preferences, gender differences were significantly amplified

among individuals with a strong gender identification (Paper III), with women being more pro-social spending than men. The differences between men and women with weak or average strength of gender identification were negligible to small. Importantly, social identification with a gender group was only meaningfully related to social spending preferences among men. This in turn indicates that observable gender differences in social spending preferences (in Sweden) are primarily driven by a segment of men for whom gender identity is an especially central aspect of their self-concept.

The conclusion I draw from these studies is that neither norms nor instrumental reasoning alone can explain why social identification with a gender group should make men and women hold different attitudes. While gender norms and gendered self-interest do play a part, I suggest that they do so within the context of masculinity threat and the process of social identification with a gender group. This postulation requires a unified theory that encompasses both norms and the institutional context. I will elaborate further:

From a theoretical perspective, I investigated three possible outcomes. First, social identification with a gender group could function as a proxy for the tendency to adopt gender-stereotypical attitudes. According to a straightforward interpretation of a gender-norm perspective, social identification with a gender group should amplify gender differences in both pro-welfare attitudes and suspicion of welfare overuse, as the goals about social equality and being sympathetic toward other needy groups are more aligned with a feminine gender role stereotype (warm, nurturing, caring) than with the normative contents of masculine gender role stereotype (independent, assertive, dominating) (e.g., Diekman & Schneider, 2010).

Second, social identification could function as a proxy for attentiveness to gendered self-interest and positionality in relation to the welfare state. Here, the institutional perspective only predicted a meaningful relationship between social identification and dimensions of the welfare state that have been debated from a gender perspective. With respect to the Swedish case, welfare overuse has never been debated from a gender perspective (e.g., Lundström, 2011). Conversely, Swedish welfare state expansion (i.e., social spending) has long been influenced by feminist mobilization and ideas about the women-friendly state (e.g., Hernes, 1987), making gender issues a highly salient feature of Swedish welfare state debate (e.g., Svensson & Gunnarsson, 2012).

Third, according to the literature on masculinity threat (e.g., DiMuccio & Knowles, 2021; Pfeffer et al., 2016), men facing the symbolic loss of breadwinner status can be expected to be more sensitive to gendered self-interest and to be prone to engage in a process of overcompensation that includes the adoption of stereotypically masculine attitudes (see the review by DiMuccio & Knowles, 2021). In Sweden, the coupling of welfare state expansion and a gender -inclusive model of social citizenship offers the possibility of undercutting the normative connection between masculinity and breadwinning. Similarly, in the Swedish case, masculinity itself has been extensively problematized in relation to the welfare state, with norms about masculinity having been cast aside as a hindrance to achieving an overall egalitarian society (e.g., Klinth, 2002, 2013). Therefore, I expected the strength of gender identification to be more meaningfully related to the welfare attitudes of men than to the welfare attitudes of women. With respect to social spending attitudes, this expectation turned out to be accurate, as men with a strong gender identification were found to be significantly more negative toward social spending when compared to both women and other men.

In summary, I argue that a strong gender identification can be seen as signifying an increased attentiveness to gendered self-interest in relation to the welfare state, as well as an increased emotional responsiveness in connection with this awareness. Drawing on a combination of normative institutional theory and the literature on masculinity threat, any dimension of the welfare state that can reasonably be perceived as a form of masculinity threat may result in a meaningful connection between social identification and attitudes. This would explain why social spending preferences are related to the strength of gender identification among men, while being suspicious about welfare overuse is not. Whereas the potential misuse of welfare services by target groups offers no real threat to men's social status or society's valorization of masculinity, the coupling of welfare state expansion with a gender-inclusive model of social citizenship does offer the risk of undercutting the normative connection between masculinity and breadwinning. Drawing on a gender-norm approach, such a masculinity threat can activate a process of overcompensation in which men adopt gender-stereotypical attitudes to reassert their masculinity.

This is why it is so important to account for emotional and psychological attachment to a gender group—that is, the process of social identification: It explains why some men are more ready both to perceive masculinity threat and to react to it by adopting stereotypically masculine

attitudes. As previous research has demonstrated, such attitudes tend to be negative when it comes to issues of social equality (e.g., Carian & Sobotka, 2018; Cassino, 2018; Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016; Vescio & Weaver, 2015). The finding that men with a strong gender identification are more negative toward social spending, compared with both women and other men, aligns well with such research.

Directions for future research

I can perceive some ways in which the findings of this thesis may inform the future study of gender differences in welfare state attitudes. Regarding the saliency of gender and welfare issues in relation to the process of social identification, future research would do well to compare the relationship between the strength of gender identification and welfare state attitudes across countries with dissimilar emphases on and experiences of social policy as a vehicle for state feminism. This type of multilevel comparative analysis would allow for a more complete integration of the institutional perspective with social identity theory. However, it would require the development of cross-national surveys including both questions about welfare state attitudes and measures of social identification with a gender group. Another methodology that could be employed for this purpose is survey experiments, which would allow the researcher to manipulate the framing of social policies in a gender-neutral versus a masculinity-threatening condition, or to downplay or upgrade the political significance of gender equality in prevailing social conditions. Such experiments would bring the clear benefit of implications in terms of the causality of relationships.

Traditional surveys can also be made useful by including items designed to further determine whether the relationship between social identification, gender, and welfare state attitudes is related to political consciousness, self-stereotypification, or a special mix of the two. Here, I especially advocate for the inclusion of questions that deal with the many nuances of social identification. For women, a strong gender identification might entail a feminist consciousness as well as adherence to more conservative notions of femininity.[7] For men, claiming strong attachment to their gender identity may be quite sensitive and may partly depend on political interpretations of this question. To capture this complexity, surveys could include questions about feminist identification, assessments of masculinity and femininity, and views on the consequences of welfare policies for the roles of men and women within society.[8]

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[7] Even if, in terms of attitudinal outcomes, both feminists and women embracing conservative notions of femininity might be similarly inclined to support socially compassionate policies (but for different reasons).

[8] Moreover, I think that the full account of how gendered positionalities in relation to the welfare state are experienced can only be fully understood through a qualitative analysis in which we ask people in different countries to reason on the presence of the welfare state in their everyday life. Some such research already exists but, as far as I am aware, it very rarely engages with gender differences in normative support for the welfare state.

On a final note, this thesis has demonstrated that, when researching political attitudes, it is necessary to account for the wider social and political context, as well as the relative appreciation that individuals have for their own social identities. The variation in the gender gap in welfare state attitudes according to prevailing gender relations and social policy—as well as the way in which some attitudes are connected with men's strength of gender identification—indicates that attitudinal gender differences are neither binary nor universal. Translated into the language of welfare state legitimacy, this means that when we asking how men and women feel about welfare issues, we are asking only part of the question. We need to understand what type of welfare state men and women have attitudes toward, how men and women relate to each other, how the welfare state affects these gender relations, and how this in turn relates to the emotional and psychological aspects of gender identity. I hope that these insights contribute to a more refined future analysis of the gendered legitimacy of the welfare state.

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