Why deservingness theory needs qualitative research. An analysis of focus group discussions on social welfare in three welfare regimes.

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Abstract. This article argues that the ever-growing research field of welfare deservingness is in need of qualitative research. Using data from focus groups conducted in three different welfare regimes, we aim to unravel which deservingness criteria citizens apply when discussing social welfare distribution, and what concrete meaning such abstract criteria have to them. Our analyses show that the focus group participants applied the criteria of control, reciprocity and need, but not attitude and identity. Participants also articulated a number of alternative normative criteria (i.e. equality/universalism, cost awareness, social investment), which are different from deservingness in that they refer to the broader context instead of characteristics of welfare targets. Furthermore, our findings suggest the existence of an institutional logic to welfare preferences, as the participants to some extent echoed the normative criteria that are most strongly embedded in the institutional structure of their country's welfare regime. Whereas financial need was the guiding criterion in liberal UK, reciprocity was dominant in corporatist-conservative Germany. In social-democratic Denmark, it proved impossible to single out one dominant normative criterion. Instead, the Danish participants seemed torn between the criteria of need, reciprocity, and equality/universalism.

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Introduction

In the present-day Europe of permanent austerity, where the financial sustainability of the welfare state is continuously being scrutinized, the redistributive issue of how and to whom the ever-more scarce welfare resources are to be allocated peaks high on the political agenda once more. In such a context, in-depth knowledge of the normative criteria underpinning citizens' welfare distribution preferences is of crucial importance to all actors in the political arena. According to welfare deservingness theory, citizens reckon with five criteria - the so-called 'CARIN-criteria'- to justify what constitutes a fair distribution of social welfare funds among various policy target groups: **c**ontrol, **a**ttitude, **r**eciprocity, **i**dentity, and **n**eed (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Despite the considerable progress made by an ever-growing body of research contributing to our understanding of the relationship between popular deservingness opinions and welfare policy preferences, we argue that the further development of the research field is impeded by the relatively limited knowledge of its fundamentals, i.e. the CARIN-criteria. Two issues, to which qualitative research might offer a potential solution, are of particular importance in this regard. A first is that the top-down character of the research process through which the CARIN-criteria have come into being - first deduced from existing literature, subsequently tested in survey research- makes it difficult for us to claim with any certainty that people actually apply (all of) these five criteria, or perhaps even others. A second issue is that we do not really know what concrete meaning such abstract deservingness criteria have to people, and how such criteria are applied by them.

In an attempt to scrutinize people's use of deservingness criteria more accurately, we adopt a qualitative approach to the study of welfare deservingness, in which we analyze data from focus groups (FGs) conducted in three different European countries: Denmark (DK), Germany (DE), and the United Kingdom (UK). The FG participants were invited to freely discuss and rank six different hypothetical vignettes (i.e. an unemployed person, a pensioner, an average-income family with children, a low-income worker, a relatively well-off worker, and an immigrant) in terms of their welfare deservingness. The open-ended structure of the FG discussions provides a fruitful opportunity to grasp which deservingness criteria people spontaneously articulate when justifying welfare preferences, and what meaning is given to the different criteria. We conclude that the FG participants in the three countries made explicit reference to the deservingness criteria of need, control and reciprocity in a number of different ways, but not to attitude and identity. Additionally, reference was made to three alternative criteria that extend beyond the deservingness framework because they refer more to broader

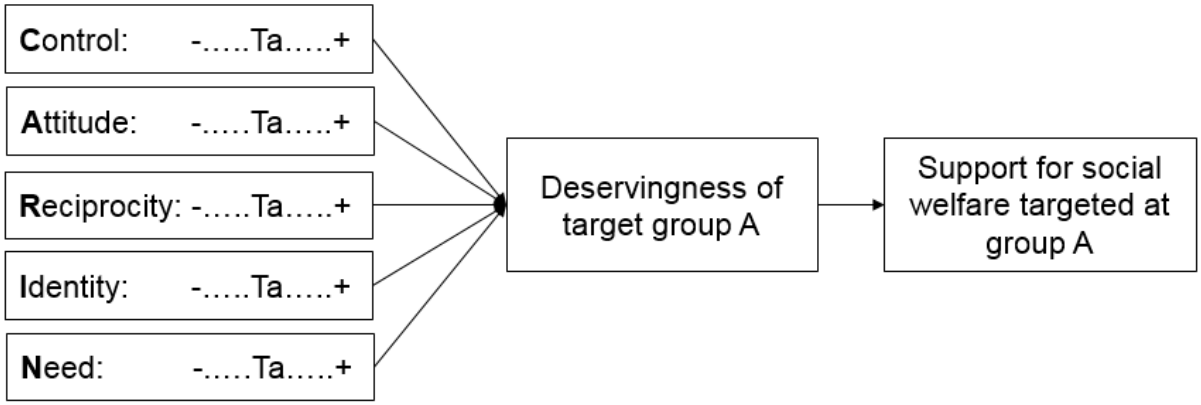
society instead of characteristics of welfare targets: equality/universalism, cost awareness, and social investment (only in Denmark). In the following, we shall refer to them as 'context-related criteria'. Our analyses further show how the normative criteria used by selected groups of citizens discussing social welfare relate to the criteria embedded in the welfare regimes they live under (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1990). In liberal UK, the need criterion proved to dominate the discussions; in corporatist-conservative Germany this clearly was the reciprocity criterion. The FG participants in social-democratic Denmark mostly applied the criteria of universalism/equality, reciprocity, and need.

The remainder of the article is divided into four sections. A first section elaborates on welfare deservingness theory and argues that it needs (cross-national) qualitative research to develop further. A second section describes in further detail the FG data and analytical strategy. A third section depicts the deservingness discussions of the FGs in the selected countries. A fourth and final section concludes and offers some possible avenues for future research.

Why welfare deservingness theory needs (cross-national) qualitative research

The core claim of the welfare deservingness model, as depicted in Figure 1, is that public support for social benefits and services is to a large extent contingent on the perceived deservingness of their respective target groups among the general public (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). A target group's overall welfare deservingness, in turn, depends on how citizens evaluate that group on five crucial deservingness criteria, and the importance they attach to such criteria in opinion formation. A first of the so-called 'CARIN-criteria', **c**ontrol, refers to the idea that those perceived to have little or no personal control for getting in or for getting out of their situation are judged to be more deserving of social welfare. A second criterion, **a**ttitude, denotes the assumption that those that are seen as grateful and compliant are judged to be more deserving of social welfare. A third criterion, **r**eciprocity, refers to the thesis that those with higher perceived contributions to society in the past, present or future are deemed to be more deserving of social welfare. A fourth criterion, **i**dentity, brings up the issue that those that are perceived as belonging to one's in-group are deemed to be more deserving of social welfare. A fifth and final criterion, **n**eed, refers to the idea that those who are perceived to have high financial or health needs are deemed to be more deserving of social welfare.

Figure 1. The current basic welfare deservingness model



Note: Ta = position target group A on 'negative – positive' dimension of a deservingness criterion.

A rapidly growing body of research has tried to put deservingness theory to the empirical test (Buss, 2018; Jeene, van Oorschot, & Uunk, 2013, 2014; Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; Kootstra, 2016; Laenen, 2018; Larsen, 2006; Petersen, 2012; van Oorschot, 2006; van Oorschot, Roosma, Meuleman, & Reeskens, 2017). To this end, most have relied on quantitative techniques of data gathering and data analysis - regression analysis of survey data in particular. Within this survey-dominated research field, two major analytical approaches have emerged (Meuleman, Roosma, & van Oorschot, 2017). A first approach is to measure the CARIN-criteria and their effects on policy preferences with standard survey items that attempt to capture respondents' initial perceptions of target groups on the different deservingness dimensions. A second approach is to use vignette experiments in which respondents are asked to rate the welfare deservingness of hypothetical but specific claimants that differ on a number of characteristics supposedly related to the CARIN-criteria. Despite the progress being made, 'several components are still underdeveloped or warrant further clarification' (van Oorschot et al., 2017, p. 350). We argue that two issues in particular impede the further development of welfare deservingness literature - both of which are the result of the top-down character of previous research, to which more bottom-up qualitative research might offer a way out.

A first and perhaps most fundamental issue is that we cannot, on the basis of earlier work on welfare deservingness, say with any certainty that ordinary people actually apply the five -and only those five- deservingness criteria identified in the CARIN-model. The current deservingness framework is the result of a deductive process in which researchers have first derived from the existing literature (e.g. Cook, 1979; De Swaan, 1988) which criteria people may find important when deciding who should get what from the welfare state (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). Later, predefined survey items or vignette experiments with fixed-response

options have been used to assess how these criteria are related to welfare distribution preferences (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). However, in doing so, deservingness scholars are in danger of stepping in the treacherous pitfall of blindly assuming that what the people think is in close correspondence with what academics believe the people think. On the basis of such top-down survey research alone, it remains difficult to tell which criteria citizens actually apply when forming opinions about welfare distribution. It is possible, for example, that not all five CARIN-criteria are (equally) important to people, or that criteria unrecognized as yet in the deservingness literature also play a role in opinion formation.

A second major issue is that we know relatively little about what concrete meaning abstract deservingness criteria have to people. So far, survey researchers have made use of expert knowledge to translate the CARIN-criteria into specific items or vignette attributes. However, once again, expert knowledge might differ from popular perception. It is possible that certain items or attributes that, according to researchers, fall under the heading of a particular deservingness criterion, are interpreted otherwise by respondents. The number of children in the household of a benefit recipient, for example, is typically considered to be an indication of *need* in the eyes of deservingness experts, but could just as well be understood by people as a sign of reduced personal *control* over finding a job, as having (young) children might hamper the recipient's job-seeking behavior. Additionally, deservingness researchers face the problem that certain items or attributes may relate to multiple deservingness criteria because they might mean very different things to different people (Meuleman et al., 2017). For example, suppose that a vignette describes a recipient who has an additional income besides the welfare benefit. Whereas individual A might perceive this information as an indication of a lower neediness [*need*], individual B might interpret having an extra income as fraudulent behavior and thus as a sign of ungratefulness towards society [*attitude*], yet individual C might even cheer to the fact that the recipient is at least working and contributing something to society [*reciprocity*].

What the deservingness framework needs in order to tackle these issues, according to van Oorschot & Roosma (2015, p. 25), is 'qualitative research, e.g. in the form of in depth interviewing or forum groups, in which people are asked to freely discuss and reveal what kind of criteria they are inclined to apply to specific needy groups', as this kind of research 'could be very helpful in discovering which attributes of target groups indicate particular deservingness criteria and whether current deservingness research is overlooking particular criteria used by the public' (Meuleman et al., 2017, p. 350). Unlike survey-based research with predefined items and fixed-response options, the open-ended questions asked in qualitative

research offer much more room for spontaneous reactions on the part of respondents (Goerres & Prinzen, 2012). As a result, in-depth interviews or FGs should provide fertile ground to grasp which deservingness criteria people actually apply when deciding who should get what from the welfare state, how these criteria are applied, and what these criteria really mean to people. However, to our knowledge, only two previously published studies have approached the issue of welfare deservingness from a qualitative perspective. Both Kremer (2016) and Osipovič (2015) analyzed the attitudes of labour migrants, residing in the Netherlands and the UK respectively, towards the welfare entitlements of newly arriving immigrants. Both show a strong and persistent preference for conditioning access to social welfare on past contributions in terms of work and payment of (payroll) taxes. In practice, this entails excluding newly arriving migrants from welfare, at least for some time, because they are perceived to have contributed little to the host society. When discussing the social rights of migrants, notions of reciprocity thus appear to outweigh other deservingness considerations, such as need or identity. In this article, we extend the rather narrow scope of previous qualitative work by studying how citizens living in different countries feel about welfare distribution to a much broader range of target groups: the unemployed, the elderly, families with children, low-income workers, well-off workers, and immigrants.

The cross-national design of our study has the additional advantage that we may scrutinize the oft-cited idea that deservingness considerations play out differently in different institutional settings - welfare regimes in particular (Laenen, 2018; Larsen, 2006; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). According to normative institutionalism, welfare policies act as institutions once enacted (Lowi, 1964), determining to a large extent which criteria prevail among the public. Citizens, in fact, learn through life-long socialization to adapt their normative beliefs to the norms entrenched in the institutions they live under (Mau, 2004; Rothstein, 1998). However, looked at from the perspective of policy responsiveness (Burstein, 2003; Page & Shapiro, 1983), the opposite causal chain, running from opinions to policies, sounds just as plausible. In a democracy, the political actors responsible for welfare state design have powerful electoral incentives to take the wishes of the general public into consideration. Therefore, it might well be that people's normative beliefs are also a driving force behind welfare state development. Combined with the 'adaptation through socialization' thesis, a more likely scenario of continuous covariation emerges (Weissberg, 1976), in which public policy and public opinion are both cause and effect. What all these causal scenarios have in common though, is that there should be a correlation between the normative criteria entrenched in the institutional context

of welfare regimes and the normative beliefs held by their inhabitants. Building on Esping-Andersen's (1990) regime trichotomy, the typical expectation in comparative welfare state research is that the criterion of reciprocity is most strongly embedded, and thus supported, in insurance-based conservative regimes, the principle of equality/universalism is most prominent in citizenship-based social-democratic regimes, and the criterion of need prevails in poverty-based liberal regimes (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). In Larsen's (2006) institutional framework, the relatively strong reliance on means-tested social assistance in the liberal world of welfare is, in addition to focusing public attention on the issue of financial neediness, also responsible for invoking intense public deservingness discussions in terms of welfare recipients' control, attitude, reciprocity, and identity. As the universal policies dominant in social-democratic regimes, it is argued, do not divide the population in net payers and net receivers of the welfare state (Rothstein, 1998), such deservingness discussions should more or less be absent in public debates and in the minds of citizens. Larsen (2006) suggests that such discussions might also be less relevant in the corporatist-conservative regime because of the insurance-based character of its social security tradition.

Research design

In order to study people's use of deservingness criteria and social welfare preferences, we analysed data from FGs conducted in autumn 2016 in three European countries (Denmark, Germany, and the UK), by academic research teams within the NORFACE funded project "Welfare State Futures: Our Children's Europe" (WelfSOC). For each country, we analysed four FGs that were formed on the basis of relevant socio-demographic characteristics: a middle class group, a working class group, a group of elderly people, and a group of young people. In each FG, participants were presented six vignettes with different target group representatives: an unemployed person, a pensioner, a family with children on an average income, a low-income worker, a relatively well-off worker, and an immigrant. First, respondents were asked to express their opinions on what welfare benefits and services each of the representatives should be entitled to. After discussing each case separately, participants were asked to rank the six vignettes in terms of their welfare deservingness. See Appendix I for further details on the contents and participants of the FGs.

Making use of the software NVivo 11, we examined the FG transcripts by means of a directed content analysis, a qualitative approach that starts from existing theory or previous research to identify key concepts as initial codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2006). This particular coding

approach seemed most applicable for the study at hand because there exists, as discussed in the theoretical section, already a relatively large body of literature on the normative deservingness criteria people apply when making distributive decisions (Saldaña, 2009). Five predefined codes were derived from the theoretical perspective of welfare deservingness: control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, and need. In addition to the a priori coding scheme, ample room was left for the bottom-up recognition of arguments that could not be appointed to one of the five predefined codes, but were nevertheless used as justifications for granting or withholding welfare entitlements. As we shall see in the results section, this led to the identification of three additional codes that we have grouped under the heading of 'context-related criteria': equality/universalism, cost awareness, and social investment (only in DK). These context-related criteria are different from deservingness criteria in that they do not pertain to the characteristics of welfare targets (e.g. their neediness or contributions) but refer instead to broader society and its welfare system.

The coding process followed three steps. First, each researcher independently coded the texts according to the theoretically defined principles, while also leaving room for other codes to emerge. In doing so, we left open the possibility to assign multiple codes to a single quote. Second, the reliability of the codes was discussed among the researchers. A code was accepted if and only if at least 2 out of 3 members of our research team were in agreement. In an attempt to limit researchers' bias in interpreting the FGs transcripts as much as possible, we coded only those statements given by respondents in which the following three core elements were recognized: (i) a ***personal*** claim of fairness on (ii) the topic of ***entitlement to social welfare*** benefits and/or services (e.g. pensions, healthcare, childcare), for which (iii) the person gives a ***justification*** as to why the welfare entitlement should or should not be granted. Personal opinions about the fair distribution of other benefits and burdens -such as wages, taxes or work obligations- were excluded from the analysis, as were factual statements that refer to the actual state of affairs instead of the ideal situation people had in mind. We report here an example of a statement made by a respondent that was coded as 'reciprocity':

> *"I think* (i) personal claim *it's terrible that someone who's worked for 30 years* (iii) justification related to reciprocity *only gets one or two years of unemployment money (ii)* welfare entitlement*, whereas a Hartz IV person gets what they get. This goes more deeply into it, but I think it's unfair if everyone gets what they get unconditionally rather than having something to do with earning it."* (DE-MC-8)

Results

United Kingdom

In the British FGs, conversation was dominated by the criterion of ***need***. There was widespread, sometimes even tacit, agreement among the participants that welfare resources ought to be allocated according to individual, mainly financial, need. When confronted with different vignettes representing different target groups, the British respondents first and foremost pondered such questions as: How needy is this person? How much money is coming in, and how much money is going out? What is the household income or salary? Does that income stem from a single earner or from multiple earners? What costs or expenses do people have? How much are they paying in rent and energy bills (e.g. heating)? How many dependants (e.g. children, elderly relatives) are reliant on the income? On the basis of such fine-grained financial assessment, in which the incoming revenues are weighed against the outgoing costs, it is decided which welfare benefits and services ought to be awarded; with the simple rule of thumb being that higher needs should give rise to higher levels of social protection. For example, when questioned about the relevance of age in distributing benefits and services, one respondents replies:

> *"Yes I think the age does matter. There are some young people that live by themselves and it doesn't really matter about age but if they are living at home why would they need more money if their mum and dad are paying for the rent and they only have to pay for say their bus travel or the new clothes that they want when an older person would be having to worry about bills and rent and council tax or whatever accommodation they are in?"* (UK-YO-4)

The preponderance of the need criterion in the UK discussions manifested itself even more strongly in the ranking exercise that the participants were asked to perform. Although the rank orders the FGs ultimately decided on were quite diverging, the process leading them to the preferred ranking was quite similar across the groups - with need being the guiding principle in all of them. If there was any discussion at all in the UK FGs, it was primarily about the issue of who needs it most. In other words, although the preferred distributional norm was shared across almost all participants, the concrete need perceptions differed quite strongly between participants. For example, whereas some considered the elderly to be a target group facing particularly high needs, others maintained that they are relatively well-off: "*They have probably got a pension. They are as sound as a pound. Don't worry about them!*" (UK-YO-1). The following response to the moderator's inquiry of why the immigrant is put into his

particular position in the rank order exemplifies the ranking reasoning of most British participants:

> *"We need more information but they [immigrants] need the help. They are in that place because the people above probably need it more and the people below don't need it."* (UK-WC-1)

The dominance of the need criterion reflects the relatively strong reliance on means tested social assistance benefits found in the Anglo-Saxon liberal world of welfare (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1990). Means testing proved to be very popular among the FG participants (e.g. "*I think everything should be means tested*" (UK-YO-7); "*Means testing is good"* (UK-MC-5), and was mentioned in relation to a broad range of benefits and services: childcare, pensions, travel benefits, unemployment benefits, child benefits, tax credit, etc. Quite often participants felt that citizens with incomes above a certain, yet often undefined, upper threshold should not be granted rights to (some) welfare entitlements, as "*there has to be a cut-off at some point, doesn't there?"* (UK-WC-1). On the other hand, some of the participants claimed that due to the exponential growth of the cost of living, such high-earners should nonetheless be included in the scope of the welfare state. In addition to financial need, health needs were, albeit far less frequently, also cited as arguments in favour of granting welfare entitlements. More specifically, health needs were mentioned for delivering benefits and services to the elderly (old-age care and pensions) and the sick (disability benefits and mental health services).

Next to the need criterion, two other deservingness criteria were referred to, albeit considerably less frequent and less decisive: control and reciprocity. Arguments explicitly referring to the criteria of ***attitude*** and ***identity*** were almost completely absent from the debates. The criterion of ***control*** was alluded to in three different ways. First and foremost, individual control over being (part-time) unemployed was considered important for either granting or withholding welfare entitlements:

> *"I think if they are able to work full time and they choose to work part time, I think they should be penalised. I don't think they should get help."* (UK-WC-3)

> *"I think asylum seekers are not allowed to work so then they have to be getting more money just to survive because they are not allowed to go and get any income."* (UK-YO-10)

Although most discussions revolved around one's personal responsibility for being out of work, individual control over one's own health was also mentioned as a reason for withholding certain benefits and services from those who have made poor lifestyle choices, such as unhealthy eating and drug abuse. Such arguments concerning personal responsibility for being healthy were only found in the UK FGs, not in Denmark nor Germany. For example, when asked whether health makes a difference in terms of the benefits and services unemployed people should be entitled to, one of the respondents replies:

> "*I am going to be really controversial but it depends on why they are not in good health. If I felt for example there was somebody who had cancer or it was an illness they couldn't control then fine but I have a next door neighbour who takes drugs and who is not in good health. I would have an issue with that*." (UK-MC-9)

A third way in which reference was made to the control criterion is by linking it to children. Children were generally regarded as some kind of innocent third party (Houtman, 1997; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017), from whom society should not take away any welfare benefits and services because of the choices made by their parents, as "*it is not really fair to punish the children for what the parents decide to do or don't do*" (UK-MC-3). Because of its close connection to the issue of personal responsibility, we did not assign a separate code to this type of reasoning.

The criterion of ***reciprocity*** was primarily referred to as past contributions instead of future contributions, and served as an argument for either granting or withholding social welfare entitlements. On the one hand, past or present contributions were mentioned as reasons why different target groups, such as the elderly, low-income workers and well-off workers, who have been putting money into the welfare pot by working and paying taxes, should be granted benefits and services. For example, while ranking the different vignettes, one respondent notes that "*the 70 year old has worked for a good part of their life and they deserve something back*" (UK-WC-1). On the other hand, immigrants were denied access to social rights because people felt they had not yet contributed enough to British society. If migrants work and contribute to society, however, most respondents felt they should also be entitled to all welfare benefits and services.

> "*My son lives in New Zealand and they have lots of different countries but they [immigrants] are not entitled to anything until they have worked and proved themselves. I don't think that is a bad thing"*. (UK-OL-4)

Leaving room for a bottom-up recognition of justifications that could not be appointed to one of the five CARIN-criteria led to the identification of two alternative context-related criteria that extend beyond the deservingness framework because they do not refer to characteristics of welfare targets but to broader society. A first context-related criterion, ***equality/universalism,*** was typically discussed in terms of equal access (not equal levels) to welfare services (not benefits); healthcare in particular. Most participants agreed that access to the NHS should be universal and free for all because healthcare is considered to be a basic human need. Equality was also often mentioned as an argument for granting welfare entitlements to immigrants, whom should be treated equally in terms of benefits and services because it is a human right. For example, when asked what migrants should be entitled to, a respondent replied:

> "*Healthcare 100% and I don't care if someone has come from a different country and they have got a heart problem and it doesn't matter if they are paying into our system, I think it's a basic human right to have healthcare and they should definitely get access and no checks and nothing given to them*." (UK-YO-6)

Also during the ranking exercise, some participants expressed a basic attitude of equality which states that everyone should get the same, mostly high-level, welfare benefits and services: "*Everybody is equal to access whatever"* (UK-MC-9). Such expressions of all-embracing unconditionality were rather rare, though. A second, albeit marginal, context-related criterion we encountered in the FG data was that of ***cost awareness***, which was referred to in two main ways. First, it was used as a reason for excluding migrants from welfare benefits and services, the NHS in particular:

> *"We would all like to help everybody but at the moment it just can't be done. We haven't got the facilities. We haven't got anything here have we? We just seem to be taking money out that we just haven't got and ruining the National Health Service which should never be ruined."* (UK-OL-4)

Next to the financial feasibility of the welfare state, cost awareness was also mentioned as an argument in favour of means testing, and thus, de facto, in favour of a distribution according to financial need. Because people think public resources are scarce, they feel that the welfare state apparatus has to make sure that those resources are geared towards those who need them the most. Here one might recognize the main trait for which means testing is extensively praised for in social policy literature (van Oorschot, 2002): its ability to institutionalize a cost-efficient distribution of welfare between society's rich and poor. However, some of the respondents also

pointed to one of the most cited arguments against means testing, i.e. its high administrative cost. Nevertheless, as this is commonly cited as a mere side-note, the policy instrument of means testing remains rather popular among the FG participants.

Germany

The discussions in the German FGs were dominated by the criterion of ***reciprocity***. A recurring idea among the participants was that an individual has to get out from the welfare state according to what (s)he paid (or pays) in. When the moderator presented the different vignettes with target group representatives, a frequent response among the German participants was to seek answers to the questions: How much did this person contribute to the system? For how long? How long has this person worked? Is (s)he still working? Welfare resources, particularly in-cash benefits, should be allocated according to the contributions paid in the past, with the idea that those who paid more deserve to receive more social welfare compared to those who paid in for a shorter period, or not at all. For example:

> "*If we talk about long-term unemployment, it depends on what he paid into the system, regardless of need, that's what he should get out of it, and that's OK. If I work and pay in more, then I want to have that back*." (DE-WC-4)

The emphasis on work is central to these statements. The condition for being entitled to social welfare is that the person has worked for a certain period of time. The dominance of the 'past reciprocity' argument reflects the insurance-based character of the German welfare state, and that of other continental European countries (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1990). In these Bismarckian systems, developed around the principle of social insurance, individuals pay contributions through work to ensure themselves against possible future risks. The reciprocity criterion is not only used to justify the grant of social benefits, but also to exclude from social welfare those who have not contributed enough to the system. This is the case for the immigrant vignette, who cannot receive the same benefits as a German citizen "*because he hasn't paid anything into the country and his parents haven't paid anything […]. Therefore he's not given anything to the state*" (DE-WC-7). Only after a certain amount of years spent working in the country, immigrants are entitled to receive welfare benefits. Although being mostly conceived as past reciprocity, the idea of future reciprocity is also present among German respondents. The state should invest in education and further training to give individuals the chance to find better jobs, thus allowing them to pay in more into the welfare system. Investments were thus not seen as something that the whole society can benefit

from, but more as personal investments. Future reciprocity played a role particularly with reference to the family, low-income worker, and the unemployed. The purpose of supporting the low-income worker, for instance, can be seen in the following statement:

> *"So that he gets better education/training and can get a better job, better earnings and can then better pay into the public funds – that's the order of it in my view."* (DE-OL-5)

The criterion of reciprocity seemed to be challenged by two other deservingness criteria, equally emerging in the debates: need and control. As in the UK, the criteria of ***attitude*** and ***identity*** were almost fully absent from the German discussions. ***Need*** was mostly used as an argument to exclude from social welfare those who are able to carry on with their own resources. Need was thus mainly conceived as financial need, with almost no reference to health needs in the German FGs. Although most of the time participants did not explicitly mention which kind of support the wealthier should be excluded from, some participants claimed that nursery schools in particular should be based on income: "*It's unfair, they have so much money, and so why should they get everything for free?*" (DE-OL-3). This use of the need criterion is more visible in the ranking exercise, in which the well-off worker is placed among the last positions by all the four groups: "*He's doing well, so there's no need*" (DE-YO-4); "*[He] can take care of himself and provide for his own needs*" (DE-MC-3). In some cases, need was used to justify the granting of welfare entitlements. Need then seemed to challenge the reciprocity criterion, as those who have not paid enough in the past cannot be left alone in poverty:

> *"I'm talking about this idea of getting out what I paid into the system – that's going to vary, because one person who is 22 hasn't paid much of anything into the system, and if he is unemployed, should he go hungry or beg on the street?"* (DE-WC-10)

The ***control*** criterion was used as justification for both granting and withholding welfare entitlements, and especially referred to the individual responsibility for finding a job. If a person was unemployed for reasons beyond his control, then (s)he is entitled to welfare support, and vice versa. In this regard, age and health were the two major conditions mentioned as reasons for why the individual should or should not receive social welfare. For instance, referring to age, some argued that the unemployed person should be granted welfare entitlements "*because he's 45 and could possibly has difficulty finding a new job depending on his situation*" (DE-MC-5), while the low-income worker should not be the focus of the welfare state "b*ecause he's still young maybe and still has a number of possibilities that could*

play a role later on" (DE-MC-8). Concerning health, one was considered deserving of social welfare in case of disability, because a physical condition may prevent someone from working, and thus providing for oneself:

> "*If he's ill, then he should receive help. If there's a 55 year old woman who has problems with her whole body, then you can't expect her to work. You have to support her, because she's not a slave or something.*" (DE-YO-8)

On the contrary, being in good condition was used as a justification for withholding welfare entitlements, as reported with reference to the unemployed: "*because if someone is physically in a position to work and there is work they can do, then I'm of the opinion they should go to work*" (DE-MC-6). The German participants also applied context-related criteria reaching beyond welfare deservingness. The criterion of ***equality*/*universalism*** was to a certain extent used by the German participants in a different way compared to the British, and, as we shall see below, the Danish ones. In the German groups there was little reference to equal access to healthcare service, but equality was more related to some specific benefits, such as pensions. Quite in contrast with the idea that welfare benefits should be based on contributions made in the past, some participants (particularly in the elderly FG) argued for equal pension levels:

> "*I'm in favour of a uniform or equal pension amount where everyone gets the same amount, like everyone gets 1500 euros. That's OK*" (DE-OL-7); "*Right, that's a good idea. I'd sign up immediately.*" (DE-OL-8)

As in the UK, equality was also used as argument for guaranteeing equality of access to the welfare state for immigrants, although without reference to which specific benefits or services: "*If he is allowed to live here in Germany, then he's entitled to the same rights as everyone else here*" (DE-YO-10). Finally, we identified the criterion of ***cost awareness***, which was mainly interpreted as a concern towards the fiscal sustainability of the welfare state and the affordability for the state to maintain its system when resources are limited. In particular, participants referred to a fear related to immigration in Germany: "*Too many people [are] coming here, and we can't possibly support them all adequately*" (DE-YO-4). Some of the participants expressed a deep concern about the impossibility, for the migrant, to receive adequate support from the welfare state, due to the limited resources.

Denmark

The Danish FG discussions differed from those held in Germany and the UK in two important respects. First, there was not one single normative criterion that stood out as being most dominant – in contrast to need and reciprocity in the British and German FGs, respectively. Rather, it seems that the Danish participants were torn between the criteria of need, reciprocity, and equality/universalism. This struggle between different criteria may be exemplified by what we call the 'AP-Møller-debate'. Danish respondents often spontaneously discussed whether AP Møller, the now deceased founder of the largest Danish multinational enterprise and archetypical representative of the well-off upper class in Denmark, ought to be entitled to social welfare. A lot of Danish participants argued that rich people should be excluded from receiving welfare benefits -child allowances and pensions in particular- because they do not have a need for it:

> "*I don't think that it makes sense for us to give a small state pension to some of the richest people in Denmark. That is, if they have all these millions at the bottom of the savings trunk, then I would think that they couldn't care less about what they get.*" (DK-YO-1)

However, as a counter-argument, some participants claimed that it is unfair to exclude the wealthy, either because they have paid (often proportionally high) taxes and therefore deserve something back from the welfare state [reciprocity], or simply because they are residents/citizens of Denmark and should therefore be entitled to all welfare rights [equality/universalism]. For example, when asked whether rich people should be granted a retirement pension, one of the respondents claims that they should not because they are not needy, with which another respondent disagrees because he feels they have paid high taxes and should not be discriminated against.

> *"I think it should be considered. I know what people say. We all served this country and so forth, but I still think from each according to his ability to each according to his need."* (DK-OL-7)

> *"I can completely understand your argument about having a high income, but at the same time, as you say [points to another participant], people pay taxes their entire lives and you still pay high taxes when you have a high income, even once you've retired. They pay lots of money. So I can completely understand, when you say, we can get rid of them. But you can't just do that."* (DK-OL-6)

Also when asked to rank the different vignettes, the Danish participants applied the three different rationales - of need, reciprocity and equality/universalism - instead of following one guiding principle. There was also quite some reluctance and resistance to rank the vignettes. Despite the explicit instructions of the researchers to rank the vignettes in terms of their welfare deservingness, many Danish respondents initially refused to do so, as "*in a welfare state, everybody deserves to get help*" (DK-WC-4), and, thus, "*it is very un-welfare-state-like to rank them like this*" (DK-YO-3). After further probing and discussion, however, two competing rank order justifications emerged. Some suggested that the ranking should perhaps be based on what one has contributed to society. However, most Danish respondents felt uneasy about the idea of distributing welfare resources in proportion to one's past contributions, and, ultimately, decided to rank according to the need criterion. The struggle between both deservingness criteria is exemplified by a respondent's reaction to the statement that the vignettes "*should be ranked according to who has contributed the most*" (DK-MC-5):

> "*The whole point of a welfare state is that you don't have to deserve something, because you have contributed. You should deserve something because you need it.*" (DK-MC-1)

A second distinctive feature of the Danish FGs is that the deservingness criteria were, more so than in Germany and the UK, often used as arguments to justify why people ought to be entitled to welfare benefits and services, instead of warranting why they should *not* be entitled to it. Perhaps most remarkable in this regard is the well-nigh absence of statements in which people were denied certain welfare rights because they are deemed to be in ***control*** over the situation they find themselves in - control over being unemployed in particular. Out of a basic belief that people are truly willing to work but are often not able to because of scarce job opportunities or bad health, most Danish respondents opted for the second of two scenarios described by a respondent:

> "*I feel like there are two scenarios. One of them is that he [the unemployed vignette] wants to be unemployed and doesn't feel like working, in which case I still think he should be entitled to benefit, but that it should be low and he should be activated into looking for work just as happens today. If he is not unemployed through choice, then I think that he should be supported and be entitled to a higher rate of benefit than those, for example, who don't feel like working."* (DK-WC-3)

Concerning the ***need*** criterion, the Danish participants seemed to share a basic belief that no resident of Denmark ought to be poor, and, therefore, all sorts of welfare benefits (e.g. housing

benefits, pensions, social assistance) should be given in order to prevent poverty. As having children in particular was considered to be very expensive by most, it was deemed necessary that families with children receive support from the welfare state. Especially single parents, whose financial resources are perceived to be low, are granted more favorable welfare entitlements, such as cheaper childcare and higher rates of child allowances. This is reflected in the common desire among the Danish participants to graduate child benefits according to claimants' household income: the higher the income, the lower the benefit. As mentioned earlier, some participants also argued that rich people ought to be excluded altogether from child allowances and, albeit to a lesser extent, pensions. In practice, cutting off people whose earnings exceed a certain maximum level would imply the implementation of a means test. However, the Danish respondents hardly ever explicitly recommended means testing as being a suitable policy instrument, and did also not propose the idea of excluding the rich in policy areas other than child allowances and pensions. Next to financial needs, adverse health needs were quoted as a reason why (mostly older) people ought to be entitled to care services:

> "*I think that something like home help, we shouldn't be slack with this. I think one should take it pretty seriously if people have something, often physical, which means that they cannot manage certain things -either domestic chores in regard to taking care of themselves- then I really think that they must get support with that.*" (DK-WC-4)

The criterion of ***reciprocity*** was primarily used as a justification for distributing welfare resources to pensioners, for having worked many years, and to well-off citizens, for having paid large amounts of taxes. Depending on the timing of contribution, reciprocity was also used to either grant welfare entitlements to migrants, or to withhold them from this group. If judgements were made on the basis of past contributions to Danish society, the general tendency was to deny migrants access to benefits and services. When the focus shifted instead to potential contributions in the future, migrants were considered to be much more deserving of social welfare. Such considerations of past and future reciprocity are exemplified in the following statement:

> "*I find it hard to see how someone from Poland has earned anything for the Danish society. (…) I think you have to earn something before you can benefit from it. Or at least benefit and then earn. There should just be some equality, I mean, I think that immigrants should also get something out of the welfare state, because that person will come to benefit later on, which is why it is also fair enough that such a person gets student benefits, because that*

person will most likely remain in Denmark and thus work and pay taxes here. So I think it should be like that." (DK-YO-5)

Closely linked to but somewhat different from the criterion of future reciprocity is the context-related criterion of ***social investment***, which appeared quite often in the Danish FGs. Although both follow a return-on-investment reasoning, the reciprocity argument is about granting benefits and services to people because they, as individuals, are anticipated to pay back society in terms of tax contributions. Instead, the social investment argument involves the allocation of welfare resources so that people can become fully participating citizens, which, in the long run, will benefit society as a whole. Compared to Germany, where the argument was that people who receive welfare benefits are likely to become workers whose social insurance contributions will eventually flow back to the social security system, the Danish respondents made much more reference to the advantages of the welfare system for society as a whole. To achieve the much-desired goal of a better society, spending on education and training (for all, but for unemployed and lower-educated people in particular), and child-related benefits and services was strongly promoted.

"*I think that society will be making a huge mistake if it seriously starts setting limits on higher education. We talk constantly about getting better qualified because it is so hard to find a qualified workforce and all that. I think that precisely here it would be a really good investment for society to reach, if it was necessary in some cases and give two extra 'student benefit clips' or whatever was needed for people to advance towards the dream they have and get a higher education.*" (DK-WC-5)

The criterion of ***equality/universalism*** was referred to in a number of different ways in the Danish FGs. As mentioned earlier, the Danish reluctance to rank the different vignettes, despite being explicitly instructed to do so, may be interpreted as an indirect expression of the Nordic 'passion for equality', or the universalistic approach of the social-democratic welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Such desire for equality was also reflected in the widespread agreement that access to welfare services -healthcare, nursery care and education in particular- should be equal and universal, as these services are "*part of the package when you live in Denmark*" (DK-WC-1). The following statement, which was endorsed by most respondents in the FGs, points to the tacit agreement that the universality of such welfare services is perhaps even non-negotiable:

"When you [refers the moderator] say service, we haven't at any point talked about equal access and free access to hospitals and doctors. Because it's implicit. That's not what's meant in any of the questions, right?" (DK-OL-3)

Furthermore, equality/universalism was used as an argument to justify why the rich should also be included in the Danish welfare system, and why migrants ought to have the right to welfare benefits and services:

"*It's not okay to treat people differently, I think. If we have a person, who has come to our country, who we call an immigrant and who doesn't have a job, then they should have the same possibility to receive financial help, and that is missing, I think.*" (DK-OL-4)

The Danish participants also applied the context-related criterion of ***cost awareness***, which, as was the case in the UK, appeared in two different shapes. First, some respondents justified welfare retrenchment (e.g. in retirement pensions or dental care) out of a belief that the welfare state project is increasingly becoming unaffordable. Second, cost awareness served as an argument against means testing, as the administrative cost necessary to operate the means test was estimated to be higher than the potential gains. Just like in the British and German FGs, hardly any explicit reference was made to the deservingness criteria of ***attitude*** and ***identity***.

Conclusions and discussion

This article identified two major gaps in the welfare deservingness framework that are thought to impede its further development. A first gap is that the deductive nature of prior research in the deservingness field makes it difficult to tell to what extent people actually apply the five deservingness criteria that scholars have derived from existing literature. Perhaps people only use some of these so-called 'CARIN-criteria' (van Oorschot et al., 2017), or apply other criteria that are not yet recognized in deservingness literature. A second gap is that we know relatively little about what concrete meaning such abstract criteria of desert have to people. What substance do people give to those criteria when deciding who should get what from the welfare state? Qualitative research in which citizens are invited to freely discuss and motivate their deservingness opinions, offers a way forward in addressing these gaps, thus enhancing our understanding of people's use of deservingness criteria, and, ultimately, of the relationship between deservingness and public support for social welfare. To that purpose, we analysed data from FGs conducted in three different welfare regimes -Denmark, Germany, and the UK- in which the participants discussed and ranked six different vignettes in terms of their welfare deservingness. Our main conclusion resulting from these analyses is threefold.

First, when openly discussing matters of welfare distribution with their peers, the FG participants made explicit reference to the deservingness criteria of control, reciprocity and need, but not to the criteria of attitude and identity. Caution is warranted, however, against the premature conclusion that attitude and identity simply do not matter when welfare deservingness is being judged. As for identity, it could be that the degree of openness inherent to the FG design yielded a particular social desirability bias which prevented the participants from articulating arguments concerning identity considerations. The attitude criterion, instead, might suffer from the problem of entailing everything and nothing at the same time. On the one hand, attitude is 'everything' because it is a kind of all-encompassing concept covering a myriad of different types of law-abiding and norm-conforming behaviour (e.g. gratitude, docility, compliance, honesty, etc.). On the other hand, attitude is also 'nothing' because its broadness implies that it is less distinct from the other deservingness criteria. Our analyses also provide deeper insight into the specific substance people give to the different deservingness criteria – which may be a useful point of departure for future research aiming to operationalize those criteria in quantitative surveys or vignette experiments. With regards to the criterion of need, a distinction can be made between two different interpretations. First and foremost, the FG participants discussed the *financial* needs of the vignettes in terms of incoming revenues (e.g. household income) and outgoing costs (e.g. rent). Though far less frequent, need was at the same time also interpreted as pertaining to the *health needs* of the vignettes. In a similar vein, reciprocity was interpreted in two distinct ways. On the one hand, reciprocity was thought of as contributions made in the past. On the other hand, reciprocity was often understood as potential contributions in the future. This distinction between 'past' and 'future' reciprocity is particularly relevant for the category of immigrants; whose perceived deservingness is dependent on the time perspective of choice. That is, people who conceived of reciprocity as past contributions were more likely to exclude migrants from the welfare system; but those who stressed the future aspect of reciprocity seemed more inclined to grant migrants access because of the potential contributions they were expected to make as tax-paying workers. The control criterion was mainly framed as the personal responsibility people have over their work status (i.e. are you to blame for being unemployed?), but was also related to one's health status (i.e. are you to blame for being in bad health and thus not able to work?).

Second, we found that the FG participants also applied three alternative normative criteria: equality/universalism, cost awareness, and social investment. What sets these so-called 'context-related' criteria apart from the deservingness framework is that they are not related to

the characteristics of welfare targets (i.e. How needy are they? How much do they contribute? How responsible are they for their situation?), but to characteristics of the broader welfare system or even of society in general. The criterion of equality/universalism refers to the practice of making benefits and services unconditional and equal to all, and was mostly mentioned in relation to healthcare. Cost awareness arguments reflected concerns about matters such as the affordability of the welfare state and the administrative cost of means-testing. The social investment argument, found only in Denmark, denotes the idea that the welfare state should invest in people through benefits and services so that society as a whole will thrive. Important to note is that the social investment perspective is different from what we have called 'future reciprocity', as the latter is about doling out social welfare to people on the condition that they, as individuals, pay back that support at a later point in time through work and (payroll) taxes.

Third, our analyses suggest the existence of - to put it in the words of Larsen (2006) - an 'institutional logic' to welfare preferences. In discussing issues of fair welfare distribution, the British, Danish and German FG participants appeared to echo the normative criteria that are most strongly embedded in the institutional structure of their respective welfare regimes (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1990). In liberal UK, there was widespread, sometimes even tacit, agreement among the FG participants that welfare resources ought to be allocated according to individual, mainly financial, need. In corporatist-conservative Germany, reciprocity stood out as the most-liked distributive rule among the FG participants. Based on the idea that people should get out what they have paid into the social security system, the distribution of welfare resources was considered fair if it was more or less proportional to the amount of contributions people have made in the past, or, alternatively, are expected to make in the future. In social-democratic Denmark, it proved impossible to single out one dominant normative criterion guiding the FG discussions. Instead, the Danish participants seemed torn between the criteria of need, reciprocity, and equality/universalism. It must be noted, however, that our analyses definitely do not constitute a hard test of the regime argument, as we do not study representative cross-sections of the population. Instead, our more-modest contribution is to show how the normative criteria used by a selected group of citizens discussing welfare distribution relate to the criteria embedded in the welfare regimes they live under.

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Appendix I Additional methodological information about the focus groups

General information

The focus groups (FGs) were conducted in October 2016 as part of the NORFACE-funded cross-national research project "Welfare State Futures: Our Children's Europe" (https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/welfsoc/), and had the aim of exploring citizens' views on the issue of 'Solidarity, responsibility and deservingness: Who should get what from what source and why?' The FGs we have scrutinized were organized and conducted by the *Breaking Blue Research* agency in London (UK), by the *Qualitative Research Unit of Ipsos Germany* in Berlin (DE), and by the *Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies of Aalborg University* in Copenhagen (DK). All 2-hour sessions were audio recorded and recordings were fully transcribed. The German and Danish transcripts were translated into English to ease cross-national comparison. The FG data will be deposited at the UK Data Archive at the beginning of August 2018 with a one year embargo on other researchers accessing it.

Recruitment and selection

The FG participants were recruited by the above-mentioned agencies on the basis of a number of selection criteria determined by the WelfSOC co-ordination team. In each country, four relatively homogenous groups consisting of about eight participants[1] were formed using the following recruitment guidelines:

- **Middle class**: completed higher education (i.e., 3 years or more), an income level equivalent to 150% of national median wage for a full-time worker over 25, homeownership for the majority of the participants, maximum two students or unemployed, variation in their marital status (e.g. married/partner, single parent, parent with primary school children, parent with teenage children, empty nest parents, persons without children etc.).
- **Working class**: less than 3 years higher education, the presence of at least 4 persons in the group without higher education, household income level below the third decile (e.g. under £348 weekly for UK), maximum two students or unemployed and variation in marital status.

[1] Unfortunately, there was an unexpectedly large amount of cancellations and non-show ups in Denmark, which is why most of the Danish focus groups only had 5 participants.

- **Old age pensioners**: age 62 to 75 years (with majority age 67+), variation in pension benefit level (with at least two persons on lowest pension level/minimum pension), sufficient hearing as a condition for participation, some participants from single person households (widow, divorced etc.) and some childless participants or with children who live far away.
- **Young adults**: age 18 to 35 (with the ideal aim to achieve an as even age distribution as possible), three students, at least three parents and with some variation in family status.

Furthermore, some common criteria for all groups were agreed upon: a gender balance, exclusion of politicians and persons working as market analysts; a balance between left and right-wing participants; and inclusion of members of ethnic minorities. Table 1 reports for each country separately the list of participants from all FGs with their main socio-demographic characteristics.

Structure of the focus groups

The FGs were structured along three subsequent stages. First, a warm-up exercise was initiated in which the moderator probed the participants to brainstorm about what comes to mind when thinking of 'the welfare state'. The moderator ended this brainstorming session by making clear how the researchers of the WelfSOC project define the welfare state. In a second stage, the moderators presented six different vignettes to the participants: an unemployed person, a pensioner, a family with children on an average income, a low-income worker, a relatively well-off worker, and an immigrant. The moderator then invoked some first reactions to the vignettes and continued to ask what kinds of benefits and services such a person should get from the welfare state, and why they think that should be the case. The vignettes were deliberately described very broadly, so as to learn what kind of information (e.g. concerning the person's gender, age, education, behaviour, etc.) participants would need to make judgements about the vignettes. In a third and final stage, participants were asked to rank the six vignettes in terms of their welfare deservingness. In the UK and Denmark, participants were instructed to come up with a group consensus ranking. In Germany, the participants first ranked individually, and subsequently discussed their rankings in a group setting. The moderator always asked the participants to explain and justify their choice of ordering. Table 2 provides examples on how the FG topic, the vignettes and the ranking exercise were introduced in each of the countries.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the focus group participants

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Education	Work status	Income	Migration background	Political orientation
Germany					(monthly in €)		
Middle class group							
DE-MC-2	34	female	secondary	PT employed	1200-2200	yes (Ukraine)	SPD, Left Party
DE-MC-3	44	female	tertiary	FT employed	>3500	yes (Turkey)	conservative-liberal
DE-MC-4	41	female	secondary	PT employed	2100-4200	no	FDP
DE-MC-5	57	female	tertiary	FT employed	>3500	no	CDU, FDP
DE-MC-6	34	male	secondary	FT employed	1700-3500	no	CDU, SPD, FDP
DE-MC-7	35	male	tertiary	FT employed	1700-3500	no	SPD, Green Party, Left Party
DE-MC-8	48	male	secondary	PT employed	1700-3500	no	FDP, CDU, SPD
DE-MC-9	49	male	tertiary	FT employed	>3500	no	Green Party, Left Party
Working class group							
DE-WC-2	34	female	secondary	PT employed	<1200	no	SPD, AfD
DE-WC-3	34	female	secondary	FT employed	<2100	no	conservative
DE-WC-4	44	female	secondary	PT employed	<1200	no	SPD, FDP, Green Party
DE-WC-5	52	female	secondary	PT employed	<1200	no	Green Party, SPD, CDU
DE-WC-7	34	male	secondary	FT employed	<1200	no	SPD, AfD, Pirates
DE-WC-8	48	male	secondary	PT employed	<1200	no	CDU, AfD
DE-WC-9	47	male	secondary	PT employed	<2500	yes (Turkey)	conservative
DE-WC-10	55	male	secondary	"mini-job"	<1200	no	indifferent
Young group							
DE-YO-1	19	female	secondary	student	/	yes (Thailand)	conservative-liberal
DE-YO-3	25	female	secondary	student	/	no	Left Party, Green Party, Pirates
DE-YO-4	26	female	tertiary	trainee	/	no	CDU, FDP
DE-YO-6	18	male	secondary	self-employed	/	no	Left Party, FDP
DE-YO-7	19	male	secondary	trainee	/	no	SPD
DE-YO-8	25	male	secondary	student	/	yes (Bangladesh)	Left Party, Green Party

DE-YO-10	34	male	tertiary	FT employed	/	no	conservative
Elderly group							
DE-OL-2	63	female	secondary	retired	2500-3500	no	SPD
DE-OL-3	69	female	secondary	retired	2500-3500	yes (Poland)	Green Party
DE-OL-4	71	female	secondary	retired	<1200	no	FDP
DE-OL-5	64	female	secondary	retired	1200-2500	yes (Poland)	CDU
DE-OL-6	64	male	tertiary	retired	>3500	no	Green Party, SPD
DE-OL-7	63	male	secondary	retired	2500-3500	no	AfD
DE-OL-8	73	male	primary	retired	>3500	no	Left Party, Green Party, SPD
DE-OL-9	73	male	secondary	retired	2500-3500	no	"Everything except CDU and AfD"
Denmark					(yearly in DKK)		
Middle class group							
DK-MC-1	>65	male	tertiary	retired	300.000-400.000	no	left-wing
DK-MC-2	35-64	female	tertiary	PT employed	300.000-400.000	yes	n/a
DK-MC-3	43	female	n/a	FT employed	>400.000	no	right-wing
DK-MC-4	65	male	tertiary	retired	>400.000	no	left-wing
DK-MC-5	73	male	tertiary	retired	>400.000	no	right-wing
Working class group							
DK-WC-1	47	female	tertiary	FT employed	200.000-300.000	yes	right-wing
DK-WC-2	69	female	n/a	retired	200.000-300.000	no	left-wing
DK-WC-3	33	male	primary	FT employed	100.000-199.000	no	n/a
DK-WC-4	22	female	secondary	student	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-WC-5	22	female	secondary	FT employed	100.000-199.000	no	right-wing
Young group							
DK-YO-1	21	male	secondary	student	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-YO-2	23	male	secondary	student	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-YO-3	23	male	tertiary	unemployed	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-YO-4	23	female	secondary	student	<100.000	no	left-wing
DK-YO-5	24	female	secondary	student	100.000-199.000	no	left-wing
Elderly group							
DK-OL-1	65	female	tertiary	retired	100.000-199.000	no	left-wing
DK-OL-2	80	male	tertiary	retired	300.000-400.000	no	right-wing
DK-OL-3	68	female	tertiary	retired	n/a	no	left-wing
DK-OL-4	65	female	tertiary	retired	200.000-300.000	no	left-wing

DK-OL-5	81	male	tertiary	retired	200.000-300.000	yes	left-wing
DK-OL-6	72	male	primary	retired	100.000-199.000	no	left-wing
DK-OL-7	71	female	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UK							
Middle class group							
UK-MC-1	30	female	tertiary	self-employed	£90k+	white British	right
UK-MC-2	65	male	tertiary	employed	£70k - £89,999k	white British	right
UK-MC-3	30	male	tertiary	employed	£70k - £89,999k	White British	central
UK-MC-4	29	female	tertiary	employed	£70k - £89,999k	White British	left
UK-MC-5	30	male	tertiary	employed	£60k - £69,999	multiple ethnic British	left
UK-MC-6	31	male	tertiary	employed	£37K - £49,999	white British	central
UK-MC-7	48	male	tertiary	employed	£60k - £69,999	black British	left
UK-MC-8	51	female	tertiary	self-employed	£70k - £89,999k	white British	right
UK-MC-9	41	female	tertiary	employed	£90k+	black British	left
UK-MC-10	28	female	tertiary	employed	£37K - £49,999	white British	left
Working class group							
UK-WC-1	38	female	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white British	left
UK-WC-2	23	male	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white Spanish	central
UK-WC-3	54	female	n/a	employed	up to £19K	white British	left
UK-WC-4	46	male	secondary	self-employed	up to £19K	Asian British	left
UK-WC-5	31	male	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white British	central
UK-WC-6	39	female	secondary	employed	up to £19K	black British	central
UK-WC-7	20	male	secondary	employed	up to £19K	Asian British	right
UK-WC-8	29	male	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white British	left
UK-WC-9	33	female	secondary	employed	up to £19K	white Portuguese	central
Young group							
UK-YO-1	25	male	tertiary	student	£50k - £59,999	white British	left
UK-YO-2	25	female	tertiary	PT employed	£37k - £49,999	white British	right
UK-YO-3	20	female	secondary	student	£90K Plus	multiple ethnic British	central
UK-YO-4	21	female	secondary	student	up to £19k	multiple ethnic British	right
UK-YO-5	32	male	tertiary	employed	£50k - £59,999	white British	central
UK-YO-6	30	male	secondary	employed	£25k-£30,999	black British	left
UK-YO-7	34	male	secondary	employed	£70k - £89,999k	white British	right
UK-YO-9	24	female	tertiary	employed	£50K-£59,999	white British	left

UK-YO-10	28	female	tertiary	employed	£37K - £49,999	white British	central
Elderly group							
UK-OL-1	67	female	secondary	retired	up to £19k	white British	left
UK-OL-2	71	male	secondary	retired	up to £19K	white British	left
UK-OL-3	72	female	secondary	retired	£19K - £24,999	white British	left
UK-OL-4	73	male	secondary	retired	£19K - £24,999	white British	right
UK-OL-6	67	female	tertiary	retired	up £19,000	black British	right
UK-OL-7	63	male	tertiary	retired	£25k - £30,999	white British	central
UK-OL-8	73	female	tertiary	retired	up to £19k	white British	left
UK-OL-9	63	male	tertiary	retired	up to 19K	black British	left
UK-OL-10	65	male	secondary	retired	£19K - £24,999	white British	left

Note: education = highest level attained; income = monthly net household income in Germany, yearly gross personal income in Denmark, and … in the UK; migration background in the UK is a combination of ethnicity and nationality.

Table 2. Examples of how the warm-up exercise, the vignettes and the ranking exercise were introduced in the different countries

	UK	Germany	Denmark
Stage 1: warm-up exercise	When you hear the words "welfare state", what issues do you think about? What does the welfare state mean to you and what problems and challenges do you think the welfare state faces in the future? Could you give me your first name and some thoughts on that question?	We're going to be talking here about the social welfare state of the future. If you let your thoughts run free, what do you think of when you think of the social welfare state? That term? Spontaneously. It can be anything at all.	But before we meet these here six citizen types we have, then I would like to ask you all very briefly what comes to mind when we say 'welfare state'. I mean, what does the welfare state mean to you? What are the first things that pop into your head when we put on slides like these (refers to the screen). So, if we could just take a very short round, where we just state our age and then very briefly some thoughts about what is the welfare state. So that's how we'll get this started.
Stage 2: discussion of the vignettes representing different target groups	**V1**: We are going to talk about an unemployed person of working age in good health. **V2**: We are next going to be talking about a 70 year old who is in good health. **V3**: We are now going to talk about a family with children. Imagine a family on an income of £28,100 a year with children aged under three where everybody is in good health. We chose that number because that is the medium income in the UK. **V4**: We are now going to talk about low-income worker. A low-income worker has been someone who is on the minimum wage or on less than £13,500 a year. **V5**: The next one is someone further up that scale of income so someone who is earning £40K a year. What kind of benefits or services would a person like that be entitled to? **V6**: What sort of services and benefits do you think people who are immigrants should get access to and why?	**V1**: We have Udo, who is 45 years old and in good health. He's been unemployed for some time. **V2**: Gisele is 70 years old and in good health. She does not work anymore. **V3**: The Meinberg family has two children under 3 years of age, the family has 2,940 euros available per month. **V4**: Hannes is 30 years old and earns a gross income of 1400 euros a month, and after taxes and social security payments, he has 1045 euros net left over. **V5**: Jens is 30 years old and earns gross income of 4,500 euros a month. After taxes and social security payments, he's left with 2,660 euros. **V6**: Adrian has immigrated to Germany.	**V1**: Imagine an unemployed person of working age, who is in good health. **V2**: Imagine a 70 year old who is in good health. **V3**: We have a family in good health and with an average income and with a child under three years (Additional, not in the elderly group: y an average income, we are thinking of something in the range of about DKK 29,000 a month earned by the family once taxes have been paid and after having received any state subsidies) **V4**: The next type of citizen is a person in a low-paid job and here we are imagining an income of about DKK 23,000 a month. **V5**: The next person is in a well-paid job, which means someone who earns in the region of DKK 55,000 a month before tax. **V6**: The last citizen type is an immigrant

Stage 3: ranking exercise	We have got written on these pieces of paper each of these categories of person that we have been talking about. I would like you to take this all as a group and decide together how you would rank these people in terms of their level of entitlement to the services and benefits.	Please put these in order of who the state should concentrate on in the future. You are the policy makers and must decide where the money and provisions from our state are to be invested in first place, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth place. Please create a rank ordering based on which cases the social welfare state should focus on.	Can you try to place them on some kind of a scale going from plus to minus, where plus indicates someone who to a high degree needs our help, the welfare state's help, and where minus indicates someone who to a very low degree deserves to get help.