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– An investigation at the case of the Unconditional Basic Income –

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1. Introduction

The welfare state literature commonly assumes that welfare retrenchment is unpopular. This assumption goes back to Pierson's (1994, 1996) seminal work on "The new Politics and the Welfare State", where he claims that the welfare state has enjoyed broad popular support since its inception, and that voters generally favour the maintenance of the status quo in welfare policies. Thus, the retrenchment literature commonly expects that welfare retrenchment is perceived negatively by the population. In so doing, this literature relies on the logic that broad popular welfare state support directly translates into unpopularity of welfare retrenchment. This is despite the fact that this logic is not inevitable (Giger, 2012). Rather, as supported by the literature on the basis of welfare state support, a more nuanced analysis would take account of a number of factors and processes determining attitudes at the individual level. In particular, three frequently integrated approaches to explaining individual attitudes can be distinguished within this literature: social identification (Krosnick, 1990), self-interest (Taylor-Gooby, 1983, 2001; Cook & Barret, 2002) and justice-related values (Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Andress & Heien, 2001). Furthermore, authors like Slothuus (2007) have emphasised a "dynamic" perspective on welfare state opinion, stressing the role of framing effects of the media or other external factors, such as economic pressure on public perception of welfare policies.

Following Giger's (2012, p. 698) call to examine more carefully individual level mechanisms when assessing the link between public perception and welfare policies, this paper sets out to analyse individual attitudes towards the unconditional basic income (UBI). In choosing the UBI, which is defined as a minimum income scheme granted to every citizen without means-testing, this paper genuinely responds to Giger's call to extend the scope of the analysis beyond welfare retrenchment. In fact, it will be argued that - if we are to fully understand the (un)popularity of welfare reform - it is useful to analyse both welfare retrenchment and expansionary policies. Classifying the UBI as a social policy in a strict sense is a difficult endeavour, since its scope is usually debated well beyond its function to provide social security¹. For the purposes of the present analysis, it is reasonable though to argue that the UBI has more similarity with an expansionary policy than with a welfare cut.

To specify some of the factors which determine individual attitudes towards welfare policies, we conducted two exploratory studies. While Study 1 explores the link between individual justice ideologies and attitudes towards the UBI, Study 2, adopting a "dynamic" welfare attitude perspective, explores the possibilities for welfare preference recalibration through public debate. Study 1 draws on the data from a sample of 1283 German-speaking individuals. A cluster analysis run on a random sample ($N = 227$) shows that individuals can be clustered into three groups on the basis of their justice ideologies (Wegener & Liebig, 1993; Liebig, 1997). The results further show that individuals high in Egalitarianism tend to support the UBI, while individuals

¹ See, for example, www.grundeinkommen.ch or <http://blog.freiheitstattvollbeschaeftigung.de/>

high in Individualism tend to oppose the UBI. Yet, attitude towards the UBI is not unequivocally related to justice ideology. This pattern holds for each of the three groups derived from the cluster analysis, but is particularly strong in the largest cluster, characterised by moderate Individualism and moderate Anti-Ascriptivism, which comprises individuals opposing the UBI, supporting the UBI as well as individuals without a clear position towards the UBI. The fluidity of the clusters led us to assume that welfare attitudes may be recalibrated through public debate.

We tested this assumption with Study 2 which draws on qualitative data from an online debate triggered by a newspaper article on the UBI. Upon publication on ZEIT ONLINE, the online version of the largest German-speaking weekly paper, in January 2012, 230 commentators left 1441 comments; an incidence of online participation without precedent for ZEIT ONLINE. Using content analysis, our findings are three-fold. First, commentators can be clearly separated in opponents and supporters of the UBI who do not change position throughout the debate. Second, opponents and supporters vary as to the issues they discuss: while supporters discuss the UBI largely with regard to work motivation, happiness, the democratic polity, relations between citizens and fiscal reform; opponents stress potential abuses of the UBI, human idleness and risks to the supply of low-quality jobs. Third, an analysis of the level of dogmatism in individuals' argumentations shows that both UBI supporters and UBI opponents argue fairly closed-minded. Overall, the finding from Study 2 suggests that the potential for public debate to offer a social space, where individual attitudes towards the UBI may be recalibrated, is limited.

This paper is structured as follows: The next section (2) presents Study 1 and Study 2 elaborating on Rationale, Theoretical Background, Methodology and Results respectively. Section (3) discusses the main findings from both studies in light of the research question and elaborates on the limitations of the research.

2. The present studies

To specify some of the micro-level foundations of public perception of the UBI, we conducted two studies based on the two assumptions that, first, there is a link between justice-related values, and attitude towards the UBI and, second, that public debate may offer a social space, where individuals recalibrate their attitudes towards the UBI. While Study 1 explores the link between individual justice ideologies and attitudes towards the UBI, Study 2, adopting a "dynamic" welfare attitude perspective, explores the possibilities for welfare preference recalibration through public debate.

2.1. Study 1

2.1.1. Rationale

The proposal of an unconditional basic income granted to every citizen without conditionality as a means to secure an individual's existence breaks with the normative foundations of the welfare state. The UBI would decouple social solidarity - as in financial support from the State - from an individual's participation in the labour market and thus from paying social contributions. Rather than targeting social support to those in need, the UBI would be granted as a genuine citizen right. Hence, the question arises: How is such a radical welfare reform perceived by the public?

As the UBI has been introduced in few states only², empirical studies on the UBI in general and on individual attitudes towards the UBI specifically are rare. Yet, some inferences to the UBI may be made from research on the social acceptance of basic income schemes in general. Andress et al.'s (2000) longitudinal study on a German sample showed that there is broad consensus in the population on the necessity of the welfare state *per se*. As Lipsmeyer (1999) argues, there may even be consensus on the breadth of a universal (albeit not unconditional) basic income. Lippl (2001) and Liebig and Mau (2002) further show, on the basis of German samples, that universal basic income schemes broadly appeal to the public. However, these studies also highlight that individuals give primary importance to the principle of equity or proportionality. For example, in order for an individual to receive social assistance s/he should contribute to the national economy by participating in the labour market. This suggests a strong normative consensus in the population on the principle of reciprocity at the heart of existing welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

As these empirical findings suggest, attempting to understand individuals' attitudes towards any basic income scheme must take account of the normative foundations of late-Capitalist societies in-built in individuals' everyday normative beliefs and value judgments. As the example of the principle of equity illustrates, those normative foundations recur in particular to principles of distributive justice. One approach to unravel those norms and values is suggested by Lerner (1977), who has argued that individuals apply different principles when judging a social situation or societal order as just. In this regard, Deutsch (1975) has proposed three principles of distributive justice that individuals rely on: the principle of equality, equity and needs. Each principle is closely linked with the specific goal which social relations serve. As Deutsch (1975) notes, when social relations aim at economic productivity, equity instead of equality is expected to be the most relevant principle. By contrast, in social relations aimed at fostering social relationships, equality is the most relevant principle. The needs principle applies where individual well-being is at stake.

Building on early distinctions between Non-Egalitarianism and Egalitarianism (e.g., Kluegel and Matejou, 1995; D'Anjou et al. 1995), Wegener and Liebig (1993) and Liebig (1997) differentiate between four justice ideologies: Egalitarianism, Individualism, Ascriptivism and Fatalism. Defined as collective systems of normative ideas a justice ideology constitutes a normative description of a just society. As such justice ideologies influence social perception and behaviour (Liebig, 1997). While the typology is based on Deutsch's principles of distributive justice, it goes beyond by specifying procedures and institutional competences for distribution (the state versus the market) (Wegener, 1999). Egalitarianism is a justice ideology that is based on both the principle of equality and the principle of need, and aims to establish an equal distribution of goods via governmental intervention. By contrast, Individualism accepts the unequal distribution of goods, which is justified on grounds of equity and proportionality, and via the free market regarded as the legitimate institution for the distribution of goods. Ascriptivism, too, accepts the unequal distribution of goods. Yet, it justifies inequalities differently than Individualism, namely with a person's right to a distributive outcome that is social status-maintaining. Fatalism does not specify a concept of a just society. Rather, it is characterised by doubts and resignation as concerns the possibility of a just distributive order.

Attempting to theorise the relationship between justice ideologies and individuals' attitude towards the UBI, one should have a closer look at the constitutive features of the UBI in order to examine which principles

² It has been implemented as an actual policy, for example, in Iran, Alaska, and Namibia. Yet, the UBI's design and its funding vary substantially from case to case, as do its functions. In Switzerland, a popular initiative for a *Bedingungsloses Grundeinkommen* (UBI) (proposing 2500 CHF per citizen) has collected 100000 votes in favour of the proposal of the UBI in August this year, so that Parliament will consider the possibility of a people's referendum on the UBI.

individuals may apply to position themselves to the proposal. Arguably of utmost priority in this context is the UBI's quality of being granted unconditionally, that is, to each and every individual. Liebermann (2010) for example, argues that the UBI should be seen as a universal citizen right or as an expression of an individual's citizen status. To add that the amount of the UBI would not be adapted to an individual's specific situation (e.g. employment status, household size) but would be fix in amount, it is plausible that the proposal of the UBI has a clear dimension of equality. At the same time, needs concerns are covered, too. Hence, a first hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals high in Egalitarianism will tend to support the UBI.

Conversely, more equity-oriented individuals who believe first, in the responsibility of each individual to secure his/her own existence, and second, in the market as the legitimate institution for the distribution of goods in society, a state-guaranteed basic income is likely to contradict their conception of what is right in society. This is despite the fact that the UBI, in its formal constitution, does not provide for the creation of a society according to Socialist ideals aimed at the suppression of inter-individual differences. On the contrary, as most supporters of the UBI contend, the UBI would create the conditions for self-determination in individuals' lives. In fact, it should be considered a means to help individuals thrive, develop their capabilities (Sen, 1984) and pursue their personal aspirations in their careers and beyond. Thus, our second hypothesis read:

Hypothesis 2: Individuals high in Individualism tend to oppose the UBI.

Moreover, from socio-structural considerations in empirical justice research and the literature on the basis of the welfare state, an additional hypothesis may be derived with regard to the link between an individual's position in the social structure and his/her justice-related values. As Wegener and Liebig (2000), Legewie (2008), Gerlitz (2008) have shown, individuals occupying a position high in the social structure (high social status) – meaning individuals disposing of high incomes and employed in the services' sector – tend to favour Individualism rather than Egalitarianism. Moreover, Andress and Heien (2001), comparing Norway, Germany and the US, found that socialisation processes – defined as both an individual's present social status as well as his/her past socialisation experiences in a distinct social milieu - explain differences in individual welfare attitudes across countries. Therefore, our third hypothesis read the following:

Hypothesis 3: The higher the position in the social structure the stronger will be Individualism.

Building on the socio-structural argument, rational choice theorists have pointed to the importance of self-interest for an individual's attitude towards welfare policies. Cnaan et al. (1993) and Cook and Barret (2002) have shown that support of the welfare state is high in those receiving welfare transfers, such as women, the elderly, young families with children and persons with low income. The empirical evidence on the attitudes of taxpayers is mixed. Papadakis and Bean (1993) show that the middle class, despite contributing as taxpayers, is generally in favour of the welfare state, since it benefits strongly from it using education and health services. However, Taylor-Gooby (1983, 2001) and Cnaan et al. (1993) have argued for the contrary, namely that the middle class would oppose the welfare state by channelling its anger to the working class. As regards the self-employed, Wilensky (1975) and Swaan (1988) argue that self-employment furthers opposition to the welfare state. In sum, we expected that:

Hypothesis 4: Support of the UBI will be higher in consumers of the welfare state than among the self-employed.

2.1.2. Method

Participants and Procedure

Study 1 draws on the data from an online survey conducted between February and March 2013 among a German-speaking sample ($N = 1283$). Forty percent of the participants were female and 60% male. The majority (58%) of the participants had Swiss nationality, 42% were non-Swiss nationals. The mean age was 41.29 years ($SD = 13.24$), ranging from 15 to 82 years. The questionnaire was principally disseminated via the internet platforms of the Swiss UBI community comprising www.grundeinkommen.ch and www.bien.ch. Further access was possible for Alumni of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland³.

Measures

Justice Ideologies. In order to assess individuals' justice beliefs we employed the validated instrument for the assessment of principles of distributive justice from the International Social Justice Project (Wegener, 1993). Four scales consisting of 11 items distinguish between four *Justice Ideologies*: Egalitarianism, Individualism, Ascriptivism and Fatalism.

Belief in a Just World (BJW). To measure individuals' general belief in justice in the world, we used D'Albert et al.'s (1987) validated 6-item scale to measure Lerner's (1965) BJW concept.

Life Aspirations. We also measured individuals' life aspirations or life goals. As a sub-theory of self-determination theory⁴, an influential psychological theory of motivation, Goal Content Theory (GCT) holds that individuals pursue longer-term goals through their activities. GCT distinguishes between two types of life goals: intrinsic (e.g., social relationships, personal growth, community engagement) and extrinsic life goals (e.g., fame, appearance, wealth). We used an adapted and translated version of the life aspiration index by Kasser & Ryan (1996).

Socio-Demographics. To account for the influence of differential processes of socialisation on individual attitude towards the UBI we measured age, gender, income, household composition, employment level, employment status, political identification and religious identification.

Attitude towards the UBI. The following two items were used to distinguish between UBI supporters, UBI opponents and undecided persons. The item for participants with Swiss nationality was "If the referendum on the UBI was actually to happen and you had to give your vote on the UBI in three days, how would you vote?" Possible answers were "in favour", "against", "don't know". The item for non-Swiss participants was "Are you in favour of a society with UBI?" Possible answers were "yes", "no", "don't know". We defined supporters as those who answered either of the questions with "in favour" or "yes"; opponents as those who answered either of the questions with "against" or "no". Those who answered with "don't know" were classified as undecided persons intending respondents who do not (yet) have a clear position towards the UBI.

³ Study 1 was conducted in collaboration with a master student from this University.

⁴ Is one of the most influential psychological theories of individual motivation developed by Deci and Ryan (2000). SDT has been extensively researched in education, employment and happiness studies; it has found practical application e.g. in education and parenting, organizations, health and medicine, and psychotherapy.

2.1.3. Results

In order to test our hypotheses on the link between justice ideologies and attitude towards the UBI, we conducted an exploratory cluster analysis on the basis of a random sample ($N = 227$). The sample comprised two groups of equal size of UBI opponents ($N = 81$) and UBI supporters ($N = 81$) and 66 undecided persons. In order to run a non-hierarchical cluster analysis, which is recommended for large sample sizes (Schendera, 2010), the number of clusters must be known. Hence, we first run a hierarchical cluster analysis to determine the number of clusters, which suggested a solution of three clusters. The final cluster solution (Table 1) was validated with a discriminant analysis (Figure 1) that reproduced the clusters well. First, as can be seen from the position of clusters in the two-dimensional space in Figure 2, the canonical discriminant functions discriminate well between Cluster 2 and 1, and 1 and 3 respectively, which is a necessary for meaningful comparisons between clusters. Second, a more precise measurement of the cluster quality is the probability of an individual to be misclassified, i.e. to belong to a cluster other than determined by the cluster algorithm. To identify misclassified persons, we only considered the 25% respondents with the highest probability to belong to a cluster other than determined by the algorithm (hereafter referred to as secondary membership). We found that no person had a probability $> 50\%$ belonging to a cluster other than that determined by the algorithm. The range of 25% respondents analysed in Cluster 1 was 19% - 49% with every second person having a secondary membership in cluster 3 and every third person having a secondary membership in cluster 2. The range in cluster 2 was 14% - 43%. Only 9 persons had been misclassified with a probability $\geq 20\%$. The range in cluster 3 was 5% - 46%, only 6 out of 63 persons were misclassified with a probability $\geq 20\%$. The 25% respondents in cluster 2 and 3 have a secondary membership with cluster 1. In sum, the discriminant analysis confirms a high reliability of cluster membership determined by the cluster algorithm.

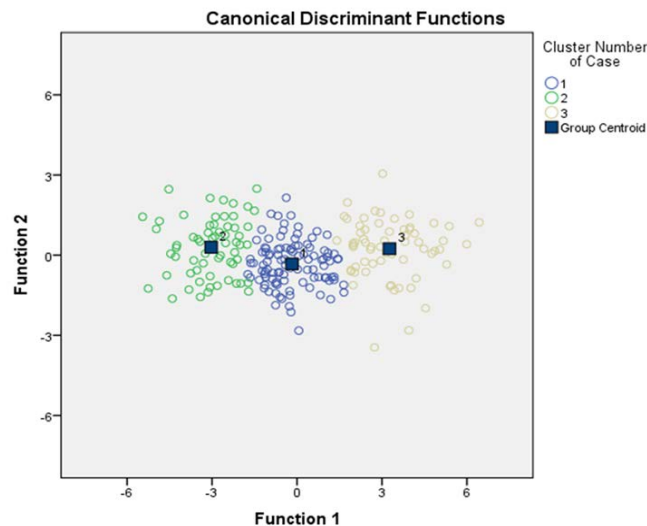


Figure 1. Canonical Discriminant Functions of three Cluster Solution ($N = 227$).

	Final Cluster Centers			
	1 (N = 102)	2 (N = 62)	3 (N = 63)	
<i>Justice Ideologies</i>				
Egalitarianism	.10	1.08	-1.27	
Individualism	.76	.28	1.40	
Ascriptivism	-.67	-1.19	.39	
<i>Life Goals</i>				
Wealth	2.44	1.78	2.94	
Image	2.31	1.90	2.27	
Personal growth	4.30	4.58	4.03	
Social relationships	4.45	4.69	4.32	
Community	3.63	4.26	3.11	
<i>BJW</i>	2.09	1.74	2.64	
<i>Socio-Demographics</i>				
Gender	<i>female</i>	49%	40.3%	15.9%
	<i>male</i>	51%	59.7%	84.1%
Age		<i>M</i> = 45.09	<i>M</i> = 44.81	<i>M</i> = 43.21
		<i>SD</i> = 11.62	<i>SD</i> = 12.13	<i>SD</i> = 11.87
Income ⁵		<i>M</i> = 2.00	<i>M</i> = 1.84	<i>M</i> = 2.48
		<i>SD</i> = .65	<i>SD</i> = .61	<i>SD</i> = .59
Employment level	0 %	9.8%	9.7%	3.2%
	1-80 %	42.2%	50.0%	20.6%
	81-100 %	48%	40.3%	76.2%
Employment status	<i>self-employed</i>	20.6%	33.9%	27.0%
	<i>in superior position</i>	21.6%	12.9%	30.2%
Number of children	<i>none</i>	52%	51.6%	47.6%
	≤ 2	38.2%	32.3%	44.5%
	3	6.9%	8.1%	6.3%
Political identification	<i>none</i>	79.4%	82.3%	61.9%
Religious identification	<i>none</i>	54.9%	58.1%	42.9%
<i>Attitude towards UBI</i>				
pro		34%	68%	14%
contra		27%	10%	68%
undecided		39%	22%	18%

Table 1. Final cluster solution of non-hierarchical cluster analysis showing three final clusters. Table also displays socio-demographic characteristics and distribution of attitudes towards the UBI in each cluster (pro, contra, undecided) (N = 227).

⁵ 1 = low income (yearly income below 26.000 Swiss francs); 2 = medium income (yearly income between 26.001 - 104.000 Swiss francs); 3 = high income (yearly income beyond 104.001 Swiss francs).

The cluster analysis shows that individuals can be sub-divided into three groups with justice ideologies discriminating well between groups: Group 1 is composed of individuals moderately supporting Individualism (.76) and moderately rejecting Ascriptivism (-.67) while fairly indifferent towards Egalitarianism (.10). Group 2 is composed of individuals embracing Egalitarianism (1.08) and rejecting Ascriptivism (-1.19). Further, individuals in group 2 lightly favour Individualism (.28). Group 3 comprises individuals strongly supporting Individualism (1.40) and leaning towards Ascriptivism (.39), while strongly rejecting Egalitarianism (-1.27).

With regard to the hierarchy of life aspirations we find that, across all groups, intrinsic life aspirations are rated as more important than extrinsic life aspirations. Yet, the relative importance of extrinsic versus intrinsic life aspirations varies from group to group. Each intrinsic life aspirations - deep social relationships, personal growth and contributing actively to community - is judged very important in group 2. Group 1 and group 3 value deep social relationships and personal growth, too, but judge engagements for community as less important. By contrast, individuals in group 1 and in group 3 judge extrinsic life aspirations, wealth and fame, more important.

The majority of supporters of the UBI is in group 2⁶ which generally perceives the world as unjust ($\emptyset = 1.74$), while the majority of opponents of the UBI is in group 3⁷ which generally perceives the world as just ($\emptyset = 2.64$). While group 2 comprises a majority (68%) of UBI supporters, it also consists of ten percent of individuals who are against the UBI and 22% of individuals who have not (yet) taken position with regard to the UBI. We find a similar pattern for group 3 where the majority (68%) opposes the UBI, 14% are UBI supporters and 18% are undecided. Group 1 comprises 40% individuals who are undecided with regard to the UBI, UBI opponents (30%) and UBI supporters (30%) taking equal shares. The BJW ($\emptyset = 2.09$) of individuals in group 1 lies between the BJW of group 2 and group 3.

As regards the socio-demographic characteristics of the three clusters, our findings suggest no substantial differences as regards gender, age and number of children. We find differences with regard to income, employment level and employment status, political and religious identification. Individuals in group 3 earn on average more than individuals in group 1 and in group 2. While individuals in group 3 generally dispose of high incomes, individuals in group 1 and in group 2 dispose of medium incomes. Individuals in group 3 also tend to have a job with a higher employment level (most frequently a job with a workload of 81-100%) than individuals in group 1 and in group 2. Unemployment is also more widespread (ca. 10%) in group 1 and in group 2 than in group 3 (3.2%). Moreover, individuals in group 3 are more often employed as employers with a superior function than individuals in group 1 or in group 2, where self-employment is more frequent. In terms of political and religious identification, individuals in group 3 tend to report political identification (38.1%) and religious identification (57.1%) more often than individuals in group 1 (political/religious: 20.6%; 45.1%) or in group 2 (political/religious: 17.7%; 41.9%).

⁶ Individuals in this group (high in Egalitarianism) list the following two issues when asked directly 'what is fair about the UBI?': 1) UBI as a guarantee for a dignified life, and 2) UBI as a means to expand equal opportunities.

⁷ Individuals in this group (high in Individualism) list the following three issue when asked directly 'what is unfair about the UBI?': 1) UBI provides an incentive to idleness, 2) financial support should only be granted in return for individual contribution, and 3) UBI as a threat to the social recognition of individual achievements.

2.1.4. Main finding

Our finding confirms the well-established link between an individual's position in the social structure and his/her dominant justice ideology. Yet, as is shown by the fluidity within the clusters, individual justice ideologies are not unequivocally related to an individual's attitude towards the UBI. Therefore, we assumed that there may be scope for welfare preference recalibration through public debate. Study 2 investigates more closely an instance of such public debate.

2.2. Study 2

2.2.1. Rationale

From the main finding in Study 1, namely that UBI opponents tend to favour Individualism while UBI supporters tend to favour Egalitarianism, we expected these ideological differences to be reflected in the issues UBI supporters versus UBI opponents would judge as salient. Furthermore, we assumed that the principles of justice individuals apply will manifest in their statements. While the principle of equity rather than equality or need should underlie UBI opponents' comments, we assumed that UBI supporters' comments would be guided by equality and needs concerns.

Not only on the level of content, but also with regard to individuals' styles of argumentation did we expect differences between UBI supporters and UBI opponents. Ertel distinguishes between two cognitive styles according to the degree of cognitive closure (1972, 1981). On the one hand, an open-minded cognitive style is characterised by expressions that take account of contingencies and may entail conflicting statements. This argumentation style is also called un-dogmatic. On the other hand, a closed-minded cognitive style is characterised by individuals delineating clear boundaries in their statements and rejecting other lines of reasoning. This argumentation style is also called dogmatic. Ertel identified linguistic indicators for cognitive closure in six categories: alwaysness, allness, extremeness, certainty, exclusion and necessity. The dogmatic quotient (DQ) ranges between 0 and 1.

When analysing dogmatism in individuals' argumentation styles we do not understand dogmatism as a dispositional feature. Rather, following Ertel's later works and borrowing from Rausch's (1966) concept of *Prägnanz* (conciseness), we argue that the degree of dogmatism is contingent on context i.e. the issue discussed, the social setting and processes of social interaction. Ertel's method was predominantly used in German psychology during the 1980s/1990s (see, e.g. Reuter & Wehner, 1992; Berth & Romppel, 1999). Current applications of Ertel's method assessing dogmatism can be found in the field of political communication, e.g. the assessment of political manifestos and speeches. Kercher (2012) – observing the German elections at federal and *Länder* level⁸ – shows for the elections in the *Land* Niedersachsen that the party manifestos of the opposition is higher in dogmatism than the party manifesto of the incumbent government. This may be due to the opposition making particular efforts to convince voters by depicting unambiguous future scenarios and solutions as to how societal issues would look like if they were in government. Yet, assessing the 2012 party conference speeches by Angela Merkel and Peer Steinbrück, the current candidate for chancellor, Kercher finds that Merkel not the opposition is higher in dogmatism (2013). As UBI supporters are opposing the political mainstream in welfare affairs, it seems plausible to assume that they try to defend the UBI by presenting clear advantages of a society with UBI. Thus, their level of

⁸ See website campaignwatchers.de

dogmatism might be higher than the level of dogmatism in UBI opponents. However, in light of Kercher's investigations the opposite may equally apply. Moreover, one could assume that in the social interactions between UBI opponents and UBI supporters, the level of dogmatism in one group may affect the other group's level of dogmatism.

2.2.2. Method

Study 2 draws on qualitative data from an online debate on the UBI which was triggered by a newspaper article on the UBI entitled "*Das bedingungslose Grundeinkommen macht nicht faul*⁹". The newspaper article had appeared in ZEIT ONLINE, the online version of the largest German-speaking weekly paper. It presented the written version of an interview on the UBI with Sascha Liebermann (UBI activist and professor for sociology) and Theo Wehner (professor for work psychology) moderated by Max Neufeind (work psychologist). The moderator raised various issues in relation to the UBI covering the most common issues known from the public debate on the UBI in Germany and Switzerland, ranging from possible consequences of the implementation of the UBI for modern society and work, work motivation, the UBI as an expression of citizen status or rights, the UBI's potential to disentangle income from jobs over the UBI's potential to upgrade human activities such as volunteering or homework to funding matters and similar policy proposals, for example the *Bürgergeld* (citizen's income¹⁰) by the German liberal party.

Data: Participants and Comments

Upon publication on ZEIT ONLINE in January 2012, 230 commentators left 1441 comments; an incidence of online participation without precedent for ZEIT ONLINE¹¹. Two hundred and thirty posters left between one and 172 comments. Half the participants (54.3%) in the debate posted one comment only, 14.3% posted two comments and 7.3% left three comments. 25 posters contributed rather actively to the debate leaving between 11 und 172 comments ($\bar{M} = 36.84$; $SD = 35.14$).

Content Analysis

After immersion into the data through careful reading, a coding scheme was developed on the basis of a random sample of 100 comments. Independently two raters coded each claim made within a comment as to the claim's central statement on the UBI. This implies that one comment can have multiple codes. After discussion and reflection of the two coding schemes, they were merged into one coding scheme which was applied to the whole data set ($N = 1441$). From the application to the whole dataset six thematic categories under which the UBI is debated emerged: 1) the state, the democratic polity and the relations between citizens; 2) the world of work; 3) industrial policy; 4) fiscal policy; 5) migration and 6) the design of the UBI. These six thematic categories can be regarded as sub-debates within the debate on the UBI triggered by the newspaper article on ZEIT ONLINE.

In order to identify UBI opponents and UBI supporters each comment received a code for attitude towards the UBI, that is, each code was classified as either "pro UBI" or "contra UBI" unless the accuracy or length of a comment did not allow for classification. In this case the comment was coded as "undefined". The "pro UBI" and "contra UBI" attitude codes were subsequently added and

⁹ Title translates into "The unconditional basic income does not nurture human idleness"

¹⁰ On its party conference in 2005, the FDP proposed a citizen's income granted to the citizen on the condition of engagement in community volunteering.

¹¹ Already within the first 24 hours 518 comments were posted on ZEIT ONLINE.

averaged for each poster. The result was an unambiguous classification of posters into UBI opponents and UBI supporters in all but four cases, where classification was done by verifying the content of each comment. From this procedure we obtained 100 UBI supporters, 54 UBI opponents and 76 posters whose attitude towards the UBI remained undefined.

2.2.3. Results

Content Analysis

To analyse the issues that UBI opponents versus UBI supporters discuss in relation to the UBI, we first compared the importance of each sub-debate for each group (Figure 3; see Figure 2 for overall importance of each sub-debate). Second, we investigated in detail the issues discussed under the three most important sub-debates which are “the state, democratic polity and relations between citizens”, “modern work and society”, “fiscal and monetary policy”(Figure 4). The comparisons were done by calculating the shares of comments (in %) for UBI opponents and UBI supporters under each sub-debate and for specific issues falling under the sub-debates.

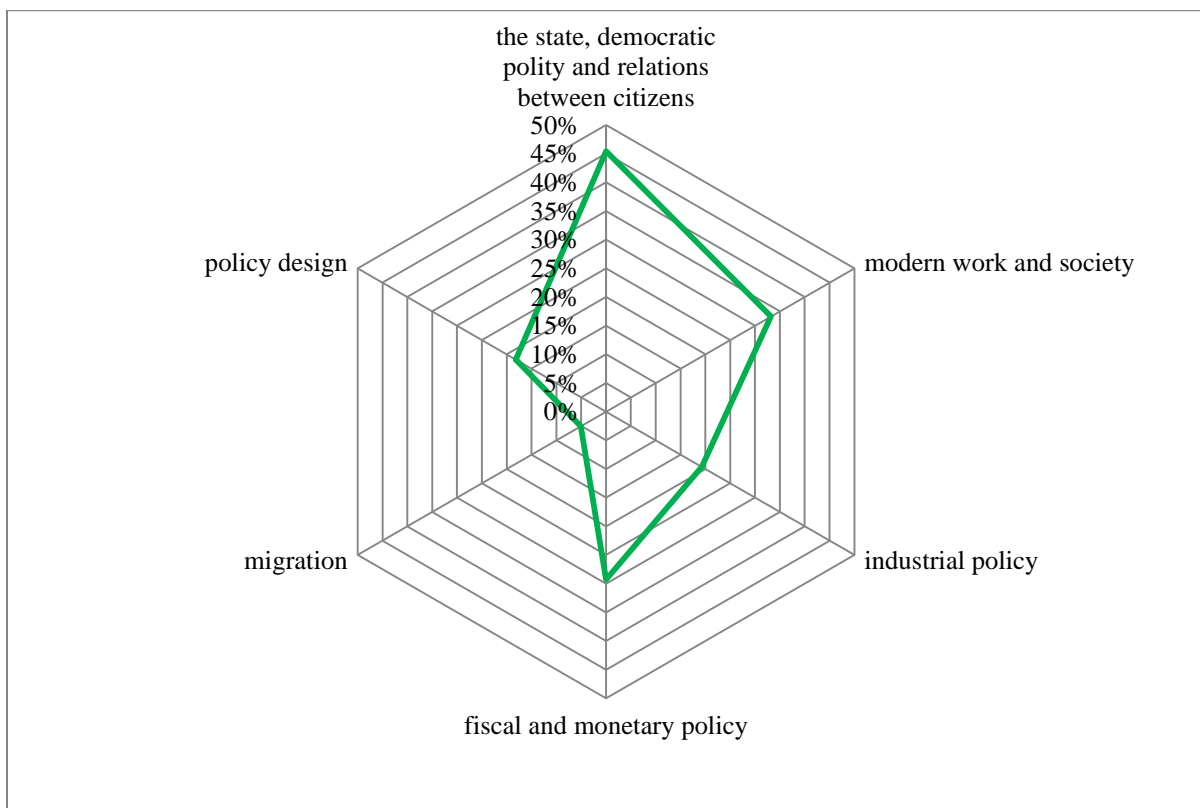


Figure 2. Relative Importance of each sub-debate. Figure shows percentage of comments for each sub-debate (N = 1441).

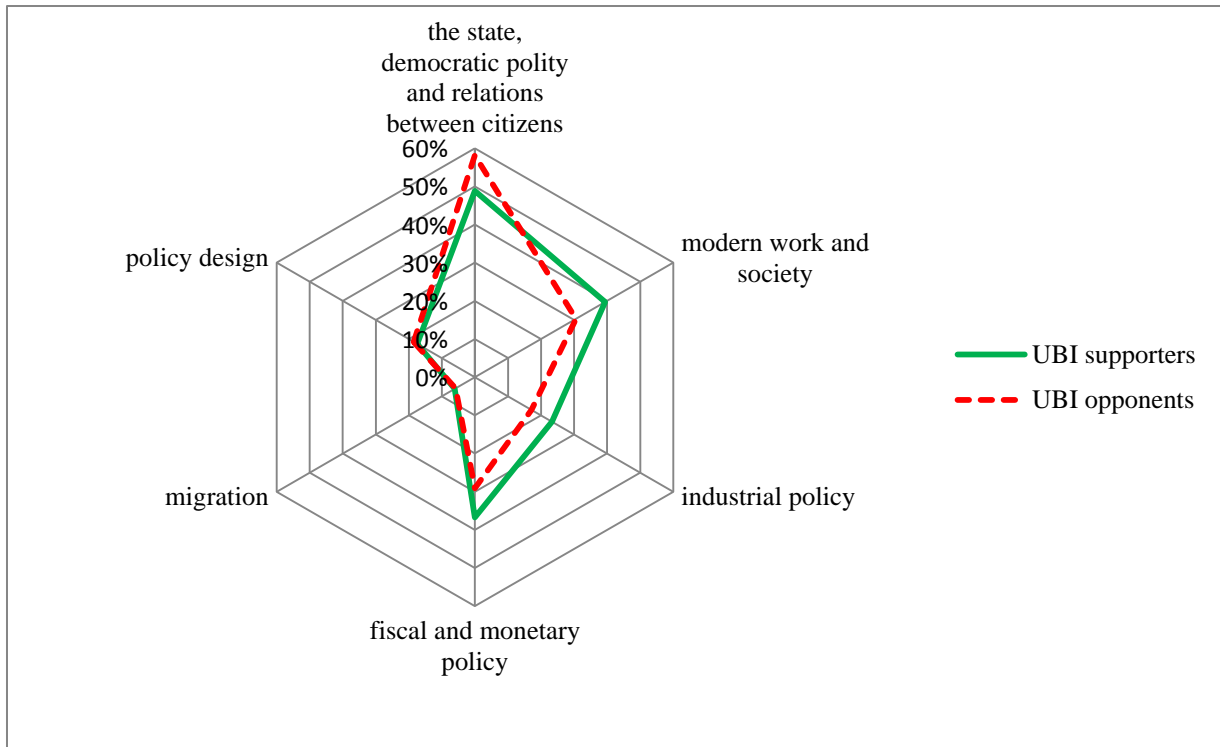


Figure 3. Relative Importance of each sub-debate for UBI opponents and UBI supporters. Figure shows percentages of comments for each sub-debate (N = 1441).

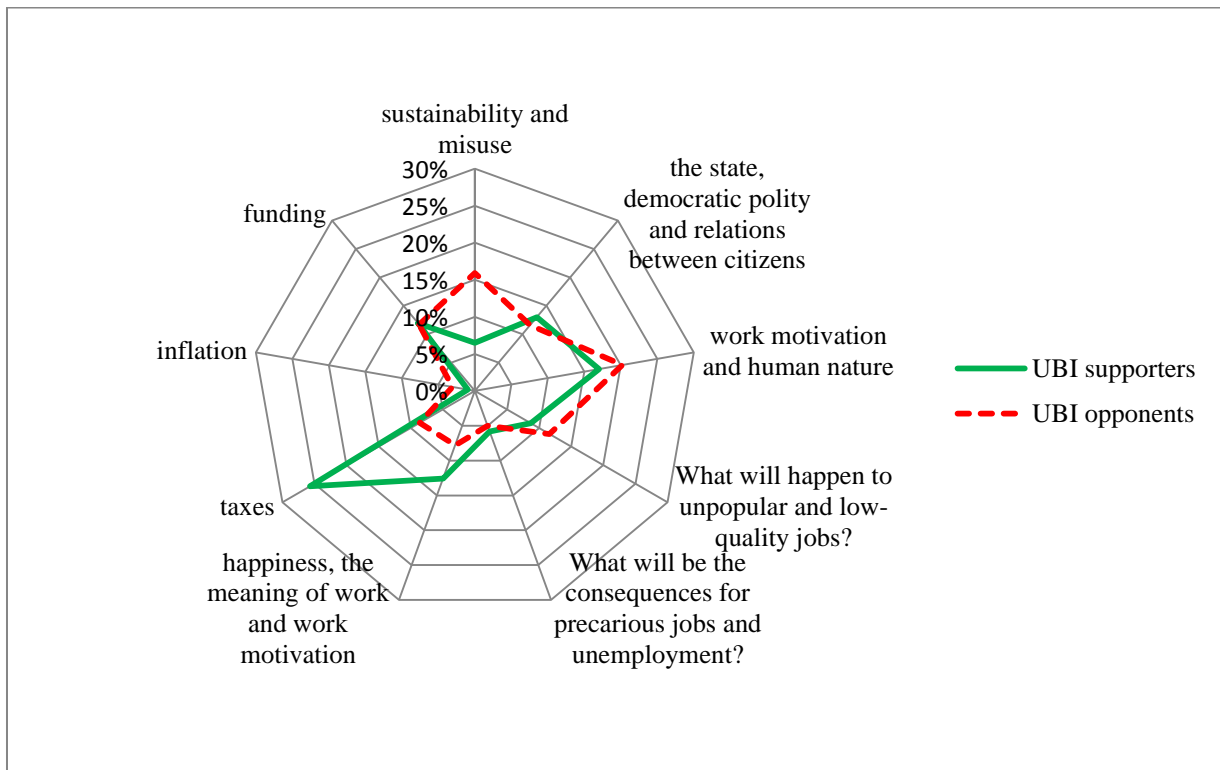


Figure 4. Relative Importance of dimensions within the three most important sub-debates for UBI opponents and UBI supporters. Figure shows percentages of comments for each dimension (N = 1441).

Two main findings result from the content analysis. First, posters can be clearly separated into UBI opponents and UBI supporters who do not change position throughout the debate. Second, opponents and supporters differ on the breadth in which specific issues are discussed: while supporters discuss the UBI largely with regard to work motivation, happiness, the relations between citizens and fiscal reform, opponents stress potential abuses of the UBI, human idleness and risks to the supply of low-quality jobs.

The following extracts are meant to illustrate how UBI opponents versus UBI supporters typically discuss under the two sub-debates “the state, the democratic polity and relations between citizens” and “modern work and society”

UBI opponents	UBI supporters
“The working and tax-paying population does not accept that people who are able to work receive financial support without any contribution in return”	“We live in a world where automation is an on-going process, which means that the full employment economy with good pay will never be possible again. [...] With a basic income enough people will look for jobs, because having a job also means social participation, self-confirmation and social recognition”
“The state has not only the right to demand citizens’ contributions. On the contrary, there would be no point in having the State if he did not do so”	“The idea [of the UBI]– if I understand it correctly – is that every person does what he/she is best at or which is most fun for this person. [...] Unpopular and hard jobs (canal construction, care of the elderly) would have to be paid a lot better in order to be done. [...] An interesting thought experiment which quickly shows who we need most (often low-paid people)”
“If in a society, where we all depend on each other, people would only be doing those things that are fun, exciting and satisfying to them, our society would simply stop functioning”	“I don’t know a single person who would quit his/her job the next day, only because he’d have an UBI. I would be pleased if anyone doing an undignified and superfluous job (call-center agent who is obliged to sell rubbish via phone calls) could speak up against his/her boss and quit. Who believes that the majority of the population would be idle, has not understood human nature”
“With a basic income which would guarantee a minimum living standard I would only pursue my hobbies, by the way, hobbies useful for society, and I’d strive for self-realisation. I would quit my current job, but I would still work. I wouldn’t be doing anything of value for society”	“Did they pay the housewife and mother to cook the soup? Ah, the housewife and mother did not work. Also, she was not doing anything the entire day. She only chatted with her friends over coffee. [...] The child went to kindergarten and came back, all by itself. Interesting, how many people are working in our society who actually don’t work”

Dogmatism Analysis

In order to assess dogmatism in argumentation styles, the data (entirety of comments) were separated into three files (sub-data sets) on the basis of the classification of posters into UBI opponents, UBI supporters and posters whose attitude remained undefined. This resulted in the UBI opponents' file containing 30436 words, the UBI supporters' file containing 97901 words and the undefined file containing 7267 words. In order to control for the large differences in size between the sub-data sets, we adapted the length of the two largest data sets to the length of the smallest data set, which resulted in three data sets of equal size each containing 7267 words. We calculated the dogmatism quotient (DQ) for each data set counting the proportion of dogmatic lexeme (e.g. always, must) to non-dogmatic lexeme (e.g. sometimes, could) using *Coan20*¹² a software specifically designed for this purpose. To embed the findings, we also analysed the degree of dogmatism in the reference material, i.e. the textual material generated by the interviewees and the interviewer. The results are shown in Table 2.

<i>Comments</i>	Pro UBI	Contra UBI	Undefined
DQ	0.38	0.39	0.33
<i>Reference Data</i>			
	Neufeind	Wehner	Liebermann
DQ	0.33	0.28	0.37

Table 2 Dogmatism Quotient (DQ) for UBI supporters, opponents and persons with undefined attitude towards the UBI; results are based on three data sets each containing 7267 words. For reference, the DQ is listed for interviewer Neufeind (based on 694 words), interviewee Wehner (based on 1297 words) and interviewee Liebermann (based on 1285 words).

We find that UBI supporters' and UBI opponents' styles of argumentation do not substantially differ as to their degree of dogmatism (DQ = .38; .39). Both groups' argumentations are characterised by a medium degree of dogmatism. By contrast the posters whose attitude towards the UBI was undefined, i.e. not intelligible from the comments, argue with a substantially lower degree of dogmatism (DQ = .33). While Lieberman's level of dogmatism serves as a reference for UBI opponents and UBI supporters, the interviewer's degree of dogmatism appears to function as a reference for those individuals without a defined attitude towards the UBI.

3. Discussion

This research set out to explore factors and processes determining welfare attitudes at the individual level by looking at the case of the UBI. Conducting two successive studies, this research aimed to explore first, the link between individual justice ideologies and attitudes towards the UBI (Study 1); and second, the potential of public debate to offer a social space for individual attitude recalibration (Study 2). Our overall finding largely confirms the established link in the literature between an individual's position in the social structure and his/her dominant justice ideology. Yet, we find that justice ideology is not unequivocally related to attitude towards the UBI. Nevertheless, in light of the evidence from Study 2, there seems limited scope for "dynamic" welfare preference recalibration. This conclusion pertains to both the content and the culture of the debate around the UBI analysed.

¹² Available at <http://www.coan.de/>

Our findings from Study 1 show that there is not only a close link between justice ideologies and attitude towards retrenchment, hitherto the main focus in the literature on the basis of welfare state support, but also between justice ideologies and expansionary proposals such as the UBI. The findings from Study 1 suggest a close relationship between Egalitarianism and UBI support, and between Individualism and UBI opposition respectively. This confirms our first hypothesis. Support for the UBI among individuals high in Egalitarianism may be related to how these individuals view the UBI delivering on the principles of equality and need. Individuals high in Egalitarianism may regard the UBI not only as the expression of equal citizen rights, but also as the precondition for equal access to opportunities (e.g., to education, the labour market or cultural resources), and as a vehicle to foster social mobility in society. Interpreting support of the UBI in light of the UBI's potential to promote social mobility, is supported by the finding that individuals high in Egalitarianism also object to Ascriptivism. Furthermore, support of the UBI may result from how individuals with egalitarian values consider the UBI to serve their central life aspirations comprising deep social relationships, personal growth and community engagement. Since the UBI would disentangle income from work, it would also be likely to free time from work that is time spent on the job (or workplace). This, in turn, would enable individuals to invest more time in social relationships and activities conducive to the strengthening of the community or conducive to developing personal skills and interests. As regards socio-structural considerations in relation to support of the UBI, it is important to note that our socio-demographic data on UBI supporters - a group of medium-income earners in which every tenth individual is not in employment - do not support the notion that UBI supporters are welfare consumers or socially excluded and thus in favour of the proposal of the UBI. Yet, contrary to our expectation, we find that self-employment among supporters of the UBI is relatively higher than in UBI opponents. Rather than concern with (expanding) state competences in the redistribution of goods, which is usually considered the main reason for opposition towards the welfare state among the self-employed, UBI supporters may regard the UBI as serving personal growth and enabling individuals to live self-determined lives on the basis of financial security.

By contrast, opposition to the UBI among individuals high in Individualism may be related to the principle of equity which they see endangered by the UBI. This result is in line with research on the social acceptance of basic income schemes in general. In essence, this finding illustrates the normative foundations of contemporary late-Capitalist societies which can be characterised by the primacy of work as paid employment and of individual achievement understood as an individual's contribution to the national labour market achieved via his/her participation in the labour market. As individuals' high in Individualism are well-off, well-integrated in the labour market in terms of employment level, and since they occupy positions of relatively great influence and responsibility in the employment structure, their opposition to the UBI is likely to spring from considerations of self-interest, that is to maintain social status and related privileges. This interpretation is supported by two further pieces of evidence. First, the finding that individuals high in Individualism also lean towards Ascriptivism and second, the importance individuals high in Individualism attribute to extrinsic life aspirations such as wealth and appearance. Yet, given that both individuals inclined towards Egalitarianism and individuals inclined towards Individualism value deep social relationships and personal growth, it remains unclear, why one group should view the UBI as promoting such aspirations, whereas the other group does not. High material well-being and high social status may be thought of as a possible explanation why persons high in Individualism do not perceive the UBI as an opportunity for a more fulfilling life. A further issue substantiating opposition to the UBI among respondents high in Individualism, may be seen in their high levels of trust in the market (as opposed

to the government) which they judge as the legitimate institution for the distribution of goods in society. From this normative perspective, the proposal of the UBI as a centrally administered policy may be associated with an expansion of vertical and horizontal state competences. Moreover, given that participation in the labour market would cease to be obligatory under the UBI, it is likely that individuals high in Individualism may fear that the free market may be undermined by the UBI.

Nonetheless, in light of the fluidity of each cluster - none of the clusters consists of UBI opponents or UBI supporters only - but particularly in light of group 1, straightforward inference from justice ideology to attitude towards the UBI must be dismissed. Group 1 consists of individuals not substantially different from individuals in the other groups as regards their socio-demographic characteristics. Individuals in group 1 are indifferent towards Egalitarianism, they moderately embrace Individualism while at the same time moderately opposing Ascriptivism. Most importantly, we were unable to detect a clear tendency in attitude towards the UBI as this group is composed of 40% undecided persons and 30% UBI opponents and UBI supporters respectively. On a more general level, this finding may hint towards the fact that individuals with stronger justice ideologies, may be quicker in positioning themselves when faced with new policy proposals. Further, with a view towards group 2 and 3 which illustrates that UBI supporters are indeed less egalitarian than UBI opponents are anti-egalitarian, the composition of group 1 may support the idea that Individualism can indeed go hand in hand with UBI support.

On the premise of the fluidity and the share of undecided persons within each group, we investigated the scope for “dynamic” welfare preference recalibration through public debate. The evidence from Study 2, however, points strongly to the limits of such recalibration. Rather, the empirical findings seem to hint towards the fact that justice ideologies may also impact on the debate around the UBI by influencing the issues that are raised by UBI supporters and UBI opponents, and their underlying assumptions. First, the content analysis illustrates that UBI opponents and UBI supporters tend to focus on different issues in relation to the UBI, which implies they judge different issues as salient with regard to the possibility of a society with UBI. For UBI opponents, salient issues are potential abuses of the UBI, human idleness, disincentives to work and threats to the principle of equity. By contrast, UBI supporters associate more positive scenarios with the UBI and discuss how the UBI would improve work motivation, self-determination and happiness. At the same time, UBI supporters debate more frequently aspects of fiscal reform considered necessary for the implementation and viability of the UBI. Second, even if the same issue is discussed, the evidence suggests that opponents and supporters rarely discuss on common ground, as they discuss issues from different underlying assumptions. This can be seen at the sub-debate on “the state, the democratic polity and relations between citizens”, which suggests that quite distinct conceptions of the democratic polity are at stake. Whereas UBI opponents understand the latter as being based on citizens (understood as jobholders) participating in the labour market, UBI supporters also recognise those contributions that individuals make through other types of human activities (e.g., care work, volunteering) to the functioning of the polity. Overall, the findings from Study 2 imply that in the debate on the UBI, opponents and supporters rarely engage with each other¹³. Adding that both groups argue fairly closed-minded, the evidence draws a rather grim picture along the lines of “frozen fronts” in the debate on the UBI. This condition can be seen as a breeding ground for mutual misunderstandings

¹³ This is also supported by results from the analysis of the 12 most important threads in the debate, which shows that discussants rarely directly respond to claims or questions of others. Additionally, there are threads that constitute disputes solely among UBI supporters.

and it sets clear limits to individuals' recalibrating their attitudes towards the UBI generally, and to opinion formation among those as yet undecided with regard to the UBI specifically. It seems unlikely that those still undecided may be convinced by the better argument. Rather, their position may come to reflect the attitude towards the UBI that is most common in their respective justice ideology group.

This research must be viewed in light of a number of limitations. First, the overall argument we build stretching from Study 1 to Study 2 must be viewed as a tentative argument, because we only infer the justice ideologies of UBI supporters and UBI opponents participating in the debate, but we do not measure them directly. Additionally, comparison with systematic analyses of other instances of public debate would be needed to assess whether the instance of debate which we analysed is sufficiently similar to public debate happening offline. Participants in online debates tend to state opinions rather than developing coherent arguments, and tend to show higher levels of emotionality due to the anonymity provided by the Internet, which, as is sometimes argued, may diminish data quality. Yet, we can state with certainty that the variety of issues covered in the instance of debate analysed appears representative of debates currently taking place in the Swiss context, such as in the Swiss public media or in events organised by the popular initiative on the UBI. As regards Study 1, improvement as to the representativeness of the sample and refinement of the analytical strategy are possible. We were able to reproduce the hypothesised link between an individual's position in the social structure, his/her justice ideology and attitude towards the UBI. Yet, to increase robustness of this finding, we would encourage other exploratory studies as well as research employing confirmatory methods to investigate this very link. Finally and arguably most importantly, this research points towards the merits of focusing on individuals' application of justice principles when analysing their welfare attitudes. We found preliminary evidence that justice principles underlie individuals' assumptions such as the democratic polity, work motivation, the definition of work, which illustrate substantially why individuals would oppose or support a welfare policy. Arguably, this evidence is thanks to the radical nature of the proposal of the UBI, but there is no reason to assume that individuals may not rely on the very same assumptions in other contexts of welfare reform (welfare expansion and retrenchment). Therefore, we suggest that future research on welfare attitudes may focus on individuals' application of principles of justice and associated normative assumptions.

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