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Article



Political party families and student social rights

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Krzysztof Czarnecki

Center for Public Policy Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland; Institute of Socio-Economics, Poznań University of Economics and Business, Poland

Abstract

The article conceptualizes student funding systems in order to investigate their ideological and political underpinnings. Using different long-term measures of cumulative power of four-party families and their combinations, and the newly created Student Support and Fees Dataset, it shows that the variety of student social rights in 32 high-income democracies in 2015 can be linked to past partisan politics. Decommodification, understood as making higher education study unconditional on labour income of students and their families, was positively associated with the rule of pro-welfare parties and negatively with the rule of Conservative parties, in the preceding two decades. Individualization, that is the state support for student transition to independent adulthood, was positively associated with the rule of left-wing parties. This, however, applies only to their long-term impact in older democracies and is to a large extent conditional on a country's wealth. Third, social rights distribution characterized by a low degree of targeting and large recipiency rate was similarly related to the Left rule, while the Conservatives ruling in the last two decades contributed to increasing inequalities in student social rights.

Keywords

student funding, social rights, government ideology, party families, comparative social policy

Introduction

Higher education is widely recognized as an integral part of a welfare state and a focal point of social investment strategies (Willemse and De Beer, 2012; Durazzi, 2019). The resulting expansion of enrolment and the increasing diversity of students' socioeconomic background has amplified the problem of student poverty risk (Antonucci et al., 2014). Furthermore, research continuously demonstrates the impact of student support and fees on a range of higher education outcomes, not least enrolment behaviour (Joensen and Mattana, 2021). There is also a growing public concern over student debt levels and high tuition fees – especially in the English-speaking countries (Cantwell et al., 2018). Despite these developments, student funding systems (SFS) have been largely neglected in the comparative welfare state literature. Hence, little is known about their

Corresponding author:

Krzysztof Czarnecki, Center for Public Policy Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University, Szamarzewskiego 89, Poznań 60-568, Poland.

Email: krzysztof.czarnecki@ue.poznan.pl

cross-country diversity, and even less about their origins.

To reduce this gap, I conceptualize and map the variety of student social rights, that is, entitlements to state-guaranteed financial support to cover study costs, across 32 high-income democracies. Next, I link their normative underpinnings to the ideologies of the main party families: Conservative, Liberal, Christian Democracy and left-wing, and investigate whether the diversity of SFSs can be related to government ideologies in the past decades. This is the second attempt to test the partisan hypothesis in this context (Garritzmann, 2016), and one of a very few in higher education more generally (Jungblut, 2015). The article contributes to the comparative political research in two additional ways. First, I adapt the concepts long present in the field: decommodification, familialization and distribution of social rights, to an understudied area of social policy and theorize partisan preferences in this regard. Second, I argue that positions of major party families can converge or diverge on some aims of student funding policy (SFP) in a way that analysing their joint impact can be useful in substantiating partisan effects.

I conceptualize three dimensions of student social rights, reflecting the extent to which SFSs: (a) allow individuals to study independently of labour market participation (decommodification), (b) enable students to study without reliance on family support (individualization vs familialization) and (c) are geared towards certain categories of students, rather than providing encompassing provision to all (distribution of social rights). I measure them using the Student Support and Fees Dataset (SSFD) (a part of the Social Policy Indicators database) (Nelson et al., 2020), which includes unique data on entitlements to different types of non-repayable and repayable financial support and obligations to pay tuition fees for 32 countries in 2005, 2010 and 2015. To investigate the impact of parties on student social rights, I use measures of accumulated parliament seat share of parties ruling in the last decades. Hence, the focus is on the long-term influence of ideologies of the ruling parties, rather than short-term partisan politics, on the recently existing policies. The relationship between the parties' share in power and student social rights is

explored using primarily cross-sectional regressions. The findings indicate that ideological affiliations of governments do matter for SFP, but their effects vary depending on party family, rule periodization and a dimension in focus.

The next section introduces the key concepts, and theorizes the preferences of party families regarding student social rights. It is followed by the section on data and methods. Subsequently, I investigate the associations between the government ideology and the levels of decommodification and individualization, and distribution of social rights in 2015. The final section concludes and discusses the study limitations.

Theory

Literature

Comparative studies of student support and tuition fees are typically descriptive, and often encompass a rather limited number of countries (Johnstone, 2004; Teixeira et al., 2008; Johnstone and Marcucci, 2010; Heller and Callender, 2013). Before Garritzmann's study (2016), student funding had been, at best, analysed in comparative political economy jointly with other aspects of higher education policy (Ansell, 2010; Pechar and Andres, 2011; Willemse and De Beer, 2012; Busemeyer, 2014). Research had been constrained by the lack of comparable large-N data that would allow one, for instance, to decompose student support into particular financial instruments, analyse it net of tuition fees or consider its redistributive consequences. Consequently, there is a deficit of studies explaining the variety of SFSs across the world.

Despite these obstacles, Garritzmann (2016), using case-load statistics, expenditure data and case studies, has recently distinguished between four worlds of student finance, classified according to high or low levels of public subsidies and fees. He explains the diversity of systems by the ideologies of the ruling parties and their consecutive years in power that helped establish and maintain the systems long enough to create lasting popular support (Time-Sensitive Partisan Theory). The major implication is that the impact of partisanship on student funding should decrease over time, making changes in SFS unlikely. Other contextual constraints for executing partisan preferences were demonstrated by Ansell (2010). Although this work has not directly tested the impact of partisanship on student funding, it does have theoretical implications for this policy area: one should expect the Left to push for higher student support and low fees at higher enrolment levels, when students are more likely to come from lower social classes. In such circumstances, the Right should pursue an opposite policy in order to restrict access to quality higher education in favour of their privileged constituency. My study is not intended to test these theories or to offer a new, fully fledged theoretical explanation of SFPs. However, I further examine the diversity of SFSs and the partisan hypothesis in their context using the new data (SSFD) that allow me to focus on different indicators of student funding (direct policy outputs in a form of state-legislated social rights), a more recent timeperiod (2005–2015), and more countries (32) than was the case in the previous studies. Consequently, I also use different periodizations of government partisanship. The extent to which my new approach produces findings congruent with the existing theories will be discussed in the concluding section.

Concepts

I posit that differences in SFSs result from inherently political decisions on the extent to which the state, the family and students themselves should cover the study costs (costs of living and instruction costs), and whether this should depend on student/family income or other individual characteristics. The *student social rights* perspective (Czarnecki et al., 2021) applied here disregards the levels of state appropriation for tuition (costs of instruction) – seen in the *cost-sharing approach* (Teixeira et al., 2008) – and brings financial entitlements and obligations of students as citizens to the centre stage.

Student social rights are determined by the level and structure of state-guaranteed support, and regulations over tuition fees. The state can absorb some or all study costs through non-repayable grants, subsidized loans, in-kind benefits (transportation, housing and so on), subsidized tuition and indirect support to students' parents, that is, tax benefits or family allowances. Remaining study costs must be covered by students or their families from past or current income (and in the case of student loans, from future income after finishing the studies, net of loan subsidies). A student social rights package can be diminished by obligations to pay tuition and other fees (sometimes also subject to means-testing), designed to be covered either by the family or the student once a loan, or other benefit, is earmarked to cover the fees. Hence, entitlements to benefits and fee obligations should be considered jointly in any analyses of student social rights, but in a way that would not equate high tuition-high support with low tuition-low support systems, since loans and fees can have quite distinct impacts on student outcomes (Joensen and Mattana, 2021).

The social rights approach focuses on policy outputs, reflected in legal regulations and revealing the policy aims that a given SFS is supposed to realize. I claim that these aims broadly relate to *the three dimensions of student social rights*: (1) decommodification versus commodification of studying, (2) individualization versus familialization of students and (3) distribution of social rights (universal vs targeted), and that, consequently, any SFS is a result of political struggles over pushing towards one of the opposite poles on each dimension. The dimensions are operationalized as continuous indicators (1 and 2) or an index (3) in the Data and Methods section.

(1) Decommodification means that the financial capacity to study in higher education does not depend on present or future labour incomes of students or their families (Esping-Andersen, 1990). A fully decommodified system compensates households for all additional costs due to studying (including fees) from public sources, up to the level allowing students to maintain a decent standard of living throughout their studies. Conversely, studying is commodified when a student or her family has to cover all study costs, including a substantial tuition fee.

Noteworthy is that this definition does not imply that tuition must be fully funded by the state – studying can be deemed decommodified as long as non-repayable support net of tuition fees provides students with adequate means. Given the obligation to repay student loans, only their effective grant component (for example, interest subsidy) can be considered as decommodifying. Thus, since high support-high tuition systems typically include a substantial loan component, they are unlikely to be as decommodifying as, say, low support-low tuition systems. At the same time, the concept reduces the otherwise exaggerated (from student finances point of view) differences between no fees-low support and low fees-moderate support systems. Furthermore, the concept does not relate to the issues of inequalities in access to higher education. It is coined, like the other two concepts, for the purpose of better understanding of social rights of students as a social group, vulnerable to poverty as a result of their limited labour capacity.

(2) *Individualization* is a result of granting students social citizenship and enabling them to cover their study costs without any financial reliance on their families; that is, creating a financial capacity to start independent adulthood. The less state support is provided directly to students, the more *familializing* the system (Chevalier, 2016).

Decisions regarding transition into adulthood may be influenced by an aversion to the expected loss of standard of living. accustomed Hence. an individualization/familialization should be assessed against students' parental household income. Familialization can be enhanced by up-front tuition fees or simply lack of student-addressed support. Student loans can support individualization, as the repayments, often contingent on income, typically start after studies. Individualization can be also assured by need-based student grants. They are identified by Chevalier (2018) as familializing, since, in principal, students are supposed to receive only the portion of the expected parental contribution to study costs that their parents cannot afford. However, students receive these grants directly, and independently from actual parental transfers. Moreover, students who claim to live independently are typically entitled to similar grants, and various approaches to meanstesting exist – including fixed (and even flat-rate) benefit rates.

(3) *Distribution of social rights* is the extent to which the fee and benefit amounts vary depending on the family income. Benefits can be contingent on

income and other individual characteristics or available to each student. In any case, specific entitlements can be means-tested or flat-rate. Hence, the fewer students who are eligible, and the more unequal the entitlements, the more *targeted distribution* there is in the system. High eligibility rate (share of students eligible for support) and flat-rate amounts indicate *universal distribution*.

Wastable tax deductions of tuition fees, or meritbased support, may favour better-off students. Therefore, SFSs can increase or decrease income inequalities (disregarding state appropriations for instruction costs, and the enrolment level and its distribution across income groups). To account for the direction of distribution and its skewness, it is necessary to compare entitlements and obligations of students from families with different incomes.

Below, I theorize party families' preferences on each of these dimensions, and how their realization would result in four ideal-types of SFS. The extent to which real SFS come close to these types is explored in the results section.

Partisan ideologies and student social rights

First, I posit that party family-specific ideological views regarding such issues as welfare deservingness (merit, need or citizenship), efficiency, equity, the state versus market role in higher education and transition to adulthood have a bearing on its preferences and actions regarding SFP. The idea that parties and their constituencies hold significantly different views on higher education finds support in the literature (Ansell, 2010; Busemeyer et al., 2020; Garritzmann, 2016; see Jakobi, 2011), Unfortunately, the limited coverage of student funding issues, and geographical and time scope of the available data preclude their direct use in this study. Hence, I have deduced partisan positions regarding SFP on the basis of the works cited above and other relevant literature (Busemeyer, 2014; Huber et al., 1993; Jensen, 2014; Kalyvas and van Kersbergen, 2010).

Second, I posit that the longer and more prominent the party's presence in government, the higher its chances to achieve and retain desirable policy outputs. In such circumstances, the policy is more likely to create path dependencies through societal feedback effects, because pre-existing SFSs affect self-interests and perceptions among constituency (Garritzmann, 2016: 267-294). In this process, enrolment levels, or inequalities in access to higher education more generally, may also be relevant (Ansell, 2010). Furthermore, a long-lasting rule helps establishing ideological hegemony in society and government propitious to long-term change in social policy (Huber and Stephens, 2001: 30). Although a present SFS may be the result of a relatively recent major reform, the above implies that its possibility and shape would still be conditioned on long-term government partisanship. In sum, country scores on the student social rights dimensions should depend on the historical rule-record of the main party families ruling in modern democracies: left-wing, Christian Democracy, Liberal and Conservative.

Third, researchers often collapse political parties into the broad categories of 'Left' and 'Right' (Potrafke, 2017). Yet, as I argue below, preferences of Liberal and Conservative parties (usually denoted as 'the Right') over some aspects of student funding may differ significantly. On the other hand, some party families may partly agree upon SFP aims, in which case a power transfer from one to another is unlikely to bring a major policy change. To investigate the postulated common aims in SFP, I use four heuristic categories: 'the Right', 'Pro-welfare' (denoting the Left and Christian Democracy), 'Progressive' (the Left and Liberals) and 'Traditionalist' (Christian Democracy and Conservatives). Whereas dominance of a single party family should result in a distinct SFP, shared dominance of parties constituting one of these categories should result in a high/ low score on a dimension of student social rights over which there is little disagreement between them (as argued below). The extent to which the heuristic map of the hypothesized relationships between government ideology and SFP (Figure 1) finds empirical support, is investigated in the results section.

H1. Decommodification is positively associated with the pro-welfare parties' rule. Both the Left and Christian Democracy can be considered as prowelfare (Kalyvas and Van Kersbergen, 2010), and they are associated with lower private shares of tertiary education spending (Busemeyer, 2014). Although the Left and Christian Democracy disagree



Figure 1. The model of student funding policy preferences of party families.

over access policies (the Left favouring higher, and Christian Democracy lower enrolment), they agree that social transfers should reduce economic disadvantages in participation. For Christian Democracy, this would be in line with the idea of subsidiarity: families receive indirect support above what they can and must provide for their studying children (possibly including some fees) due to child maintenance obligations. For the Left, high grants contribute to overall income redistribution, reducing inequality (in favour of their working-class constituency), while a no-fees policy is supposed to shelter higher education from market forces and maintain its public good status.

H2. Decommodification is negatively associated with right-wing rule. Both Liberal and Conservative parties tend to steer towards a residual welfare state, in which market forces are allowed in social services (Jensen, 2014), including higher education. Commodification of studying, ensured by tuition fees and minimal student support, is justified by substantial private benefits accruing from higher education, and by quality gains resulting from competition among providers (Johnstone and Marcucci, 2010). Furthermore, the middle and upper class (the Right's core constituency) has less interest in supporting higher non-repayable student support (especially needbased), as it can decrease their relative advantage in competition for study places. Merit-based grants are deemed adequate to prevent 'talent loss' – equity considerations are restricted to 'able' individuals.

H3. Individualization is positively associated with the Progressive parties' rule. The Left and Liberals emphasize the need for the state to support and encourage students in embarking on life, independent from their parents. This stems from the recognition of social citizenship of youth (Chevalier, 2016), and from nurturing individual freedom and agency, potentially inhibited by family ties (Hart, 2012: 115–124). The Left pursues individualization primarily on the grounds of individually attributed social rights, while recognizing the students' limited labour capacity. Liberals emphasize the studentaddressed provision as a way of incentivizing the primary beneficiaries of higher education to provide for themselves. By giving preference to student loans, they would also enhance students' attachment to the labour market. High individualization may also result from equity considerations of adequately funding students who cannot count on family support.

H4. Familialization is positively associated with the traditionalistic parties' rule. Familialization is favoured by Conservatives and Christian Democratics, because they tend to promote family-based social provision (Schwander, 2018) and extending child maintenance obligations beyond the age of maturity (Chevalier, 2018), both expected to help preserve traditional family structures. Hence, Christian Democracy encourages living-with-parents arrangements through benefits provided to students' parents. Conservatives pursue familialization by keeping total support low and tuition fees high. The unavailability of only-need-based benefits may result from the solely merit-based distribution of student financial aid, congruent with the Conservative's elitist-meritocratic agenda. Furthermore, upper and middle classes have less interest in supporting higher benefits for students, as they can endanger social class reproduction by weakening the link between parental income and study choice.

H5a. Targeted distribution of student social rights is negatively associated with the progressive parties' rule. Progressive parties prefer little differentiation of entitlements among the students and a high eligibility rate. Yet, they do so for different reasons: Liberals are aiming at promoting the transition to adulthood, whereas the Left, additionally, are trying to reduce income inequality among students, in line with the principle of an encompassing, universal welfare state (especially in high participation systems) which, while benefiting primarily low-income voters, also attracts the middle-class electorate (Korpi and Palme, 1998). This divergence is reflected in the structure of support, with Liberals setting student loans as a default option, perhaps partly supported by needbased non-repayable aid. The Left offers an adequate flat-rate grant - loan mix for all. Hence, H5b. Targeted distribution of non-repayable student grants is negatively associated with left-wing rule.

H6a. Targeted distribution of social rights is positively associated with Conservative rule. For Conservatives, the reasons for high degree of targeting and low eligibility rate are to maintain a residual welfare state (cost-containment) and to support only the 'talented' individuals from lowincome backgrounds in attending elitist higher education through merit-based aid. Conservatives may even accept a situation when only families with higher incomes have enough tax liability to make full use of wastable tax benefits linked to university participation. Christian Democratics and Liberals prefer highly targeted means-tested non-repayable support, too. However, Christian Democratics accept higher eligibility rates on the grounds of the subsidiarity principle and poverty attenuation. Moreover, they promote supplementing or replacing such grants with familializing indirect support, which is sometimes universal (for example, tax benefits), and hence, in lower enrolment systems, propitious to social status reproduction favoured by Christian Democracy (Kalyvas and Van Kersbergen, 2010: 198). For Liberals, means-tested support should in turn co-exist with a wide-ranging provision of student loans. Thus, as far as only non-repayable grants for students are concerned, Liberals and Conservatives can go hand-in-hand: H6b. Targeted distribution of non-repayable student grants is positively associated with right-wing rule.

Consequently, dominance of a single party family in past governments should result in SFS leaning towards one of the ideal-types presented in Figure 1: (1) Encompassing Social Rights – associated with left-wing hegemony, and characterized by decommodification, individualization, and universal, flatrate support; (2) Individualized Social Rights – Liberal: commodification, individualization, and targeted need-based support but universal, flat-rate student loans; (3) Residual Social Rights – Conservative: commodification, familialization, and strongly targeted support; and (4): Familialized Social Rights – Christian Democracy: decommodification, familialization, and targeted needbased support but universal indirect support.

Data and methods

Measuring the dimensions of student social rights

Eligibility and entitlements to financial support, as well as obligations to pay tuition fees, are stipulated in state legislation. Hence, social rights can be conceived of as policy outputs, and a good proxy of government actions. Therefore, social rights-types of data are well-suited for comparative analyses of partisan effects (Wenzelburger et al., 2013), and likely more effective in finding them than expenditure data (Bandau and Ahrens, 2020), whose values are more confounded by factors outside of political control.¹

I calculated student social rights indicators using SSFD.² It includes detailed information on annual monetary entitlements and obligations to pay tuition fees of full-time students in 32 countries, in the academic years 2005/2006, 2010/2011 and 2015/ 2016.³ Crucially for the measurement of the social rights dimensions, the dataset enables joint or decomposed analyses of particular funding instruments, as well as comparisons across families with different incomes (three model-type families). Expressing them relative to average wages allows meaningful cross-country comparisons of social policy aspects of higher education that are not biased by differences in levels of public or private expenditures on higher education, and in the standard of living.

Decommodification is measured as the sum of entitlements to all non-repayable support (minus fees) for a model family, divided by 100% of Average Production Worker Wage as an approximation of the minimum standard of living for a four-person household. Each country's indicator value is the average decommodification level for the model families.

Individualization/familialization is measured as the sum of entitlements to direct student support (minus fees) for a model family, divided by its income to approximate the income replacement rate for a student living independently from his parents. The country's indicator is the average individualization level for the model families.

Distribution of social rights is an index that includes the measures of *targeting degree* and *recipiency rate* (percentage of students receiving a benefit). Targeting degree is the concentration coefficient of nominal values of entitlements for the model families. It shows the skewness of social rights towards low-income students. In one variant, all types of support are considered (net of tuition fees), and in the second – only non-repayable student grants, which should contribute the most to the overall inequalities in entitlements.⁴ Targeting degree alone can give a misleading picture of social rights distribution, for instance, if no student is entitled to benefits. Hence, I created an index consisting of the concentration coefficient and the recipiency rate of need-based student grants (the only available benefit recipiency data). These components are combined on an additive scale. To equalize their standard deviations, I added up their *z*-scores, without weighting.

Measuring government partisanship

To proxy the political hegemony of the party families, I used the Comparative Political Data Set (CPDS) (Armingeon et al., 2020) – specifically, the government support measure, that is, the percentage of seats in parliament held by parties in government.⁵ It combines the advantages of cabinet and parliament seat share measures often applied in partisan politics studies (Döring and Schwander, 2015). Next, I calculated the cumulative seat shares to account for the impact of long-term dominance in domestic politics (Huber and Stephens, 2001), which is one way of reducing the problem of periodization of partisan effects that may not overlap with the (unobserved) time of SFS reforms (Schmitt, 2016). The measure adds up yearly data starting from the first year of a given periodization of government partisanship until the year before the observed dependent variable.

In the core analysis, I focus on governments in the last two decades (1995–2014) preceding SFSs in 2015. This provides a conservative test of the long-term effects of government partisanship, since some studies indicate a decline in partisan effects in the last decades (Bandau and Ahrens, 2020). Furthermore, I deem partisan impact in that period more relevant, not least since it overlaps with the transition to high participation systems in most of the analysed countries, and the ensuing shift to more cost-sharing in some (Cantwell et al., 2018). To analyse the robustness of findings to the rule periodization, I use alternative periods of party dominance⁶: after 1960

(no post-communist countries), 1960–1974 (only the 18 'old' democracies) and 1975–1994 (early expansion of enrolment; no post-communist countries).⁷ According to Garritzmann's theory, one should expect either lower or insignificant partisan effects in the most recent periodization of government partisanship (here 1995–2014).

Control variables

In regression models, I control for the following variables that may affect the hypothesized relationships: enrolment levels in tertiary education (gross enrolment ratio (GER)), the country's wealth (gross national income (GNI) per capita), the size of redistributive budgets (public social spending as percentage of GDP), and the share of 15-24 youth in the population - all lagged by 1 year versus the dependent variables. It has been argued that extensive student funding (or free tuition) is hardly sustainable in high participation countries (Teixeira et al., 2008), in particular when governments choose to resort to the private sector to increase the supply of study places (Johnstone, 2004). Furthermore, the Left can be less likely to increase spending on students if they predominantly come from the middle and upperclass (Ansell, 2010). Wealthier countries, in turn, may be more able to provide high and widely available benefits. The direction of effects of public social spending is unclear, but the measure to some extent controls for unobserved variables related to the state role in social provision more generally (Busemeyer and Iversen, 2014: 312). The relative share of youth, as the main target population of SFP, in the whole population reflects the potential electoral gains from implementing generous student funding.

Methods

The cross-country diversity is explored using descriptive statistics. The hypotheses are tested using cross-sectional regression models. Such an approach is suitable in the context of time-series scarcity, and when the focus is on the impact of a historical dominance of parties rather than shortterm developments (Huber and Stephens, 2001). The low number of observations poses a risk of overfitting the models if all control variables are included. Hence, two main specifications are reported in Supplementary Appendix B: with GNI only and with all controls. Table 1 presents the models relating to the hypotheses, as well as additional models that report relevant findings for the government partisanship periodizations earlier than 1995–2014. In the core analysis, I focus on the latest available data on SFSs (2015). For a robustness check, I estimate additional models (reported in Supplementary Appendix B) using 2005 or 2010 data, and models without the Central-Eastern European countries – results are stable and available on request. I also run pooled OLS models with panel corrected standard errors and autocorrelation correction (Supplementary Appendix C), but results (which do not differ substantially) should be interpreted with scepticism due to few time points in the data.

The standardized data collection in SSFD minimizes the impact of omitted characteristics of national higher education and SFS. Including a vast majority of advanced democracies reduces the bias resulting from the exclusion of influential cases. However, it is still likely that countries with commodified SFSs and a prominent presence of the Right (Chile, South Korea and the United States) are underrepresented.

Results

Diversity of student social rights

Figure 2 compares the countries along the three dimensions in 2015. It demonstrates a large diversity of SFSs, bigger in terms of familialization/individualization (SD = 17.2) than decommodification (SD = 13.9). Also, the index of social rights distribution varies significantly. Correlation coefficients between different dimensions (from 0.30 to -0.72, see Supplementary Appendix A–Table A2) show that they represent substantially different aspects of SFSs. Although the dispersion of countries along the axes is rather continuous, some countries are clearly leaning towards the ideal-types distinguished in the theory section.

Luxembourg and the Nordic countries (except Iceland) guaranteed encompassing social rights to students. They provided them with adequate, universal flat-rate support (more than 25% of family income) to live independently from their parents. At the same time, studying was little conditioned on labour income, although this applies less to Norway and Sweden.

England and Japan stood out as examples of individualized social rights. High level of individualization was ensured by the extensive provision of loans (and some non-repayable aid in England), allowing students to cover a large part of study costs without resorting to family support. High tuition fees and student loans being the pillars of the funding system, higher education was strongly commodified in these countries. Targeted support in the form of maintenance grants and bursaries in England, and of student loans in Japan, was conditioned on family income in a way that kept the recipiency rate relatively high.

Student social rights in Canada, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania were residual, forcing students to rely on income from private sources. This resulted from different SFPs. Canada was charging high tuition fees, little compensated by income-contingent grants and loans. Bulgaria, while charging medium tuition fees, conditioned any non-repayable support on student performance. In Romania and Cyprus, such merit-based funding was implemented through a dual-track tuition system: some students (37% and 47%, respectively) had to pay medium tuition fees, contrary to their counterparts admitted to statesupported study places. Non-repayable support in Romania, Cyprus and Canada was heavily conditioned on family income, resulting in a very low recipiency rate.

No funding system was based on generous provision of indirect support. Nevertheless, Austria and Slovakia can serve as examples of familialized social rights, where SFS is relatively decommodified, but does not help students in establishing their own households. While generally not charging tuition fees, they offered relatively high non-repayable support, mostly as family allowances and tax credits (respectively 69 and 77% of average total support). At the same time, student grants were quite

while in governm	nent, OLS.										
Hypotheses	(IH)	(H2)	(H3)	(H3)	(H4)	(H5a)	(H5a)	(H6a)	(H5b)	(H5b)	(H6b)
Social rights dimension	Decommod	ification	Individualizatic	u		Social rights c	listribution (tot	al, net of fees)	Social rights d	istribution (gr	ints only)
Party families and rule periodization	Pro- welfare 1995–2014	Conserv. 1995–2014	Progressive 1995–2014	Left-wing 1960– 2014	Traditional. 1995–2014	Progressive 1995–2014	Left-wing 1960–2014	Conserv. 1995–2014	Left-wing 1995–2014	Left-wing 1960–74	the Right 1995–2014
Accumulated Darty rule	0.0207***	-0.0235***	0.0053	0.0138**	-0.0004	-0.0006	-0.0010*	0.0013**	-0.0004	-0.0028**	0.0010
	(0.0071) 0.47	(0.0040) 58	(0.0072) 010	(0.0063) 0.52	(0.0063) 0.01	(0.0008) 0_13	(0.0006) 0.40	(0.0005) 0.28	(0.0010) 0.05	(0.0011) -043	(0.0009) 0 19
Gross national income (2014)	0.00006	0.00004	0.0008***	0.0005*	0.0008***	-0.0001***	-0.0008**	-0.0008***	-0.00008***	-0.00007	-0.00007***
	(0.00016) <i>0.05</i>	(0.00016) 0.04	(0.0003) 0.56	(0.0003) <i>0.32</i>	(0.0003) 0.54	(0.000) -0.63	(0.00003) 0.48	(0.00002) 0.57	(0.00002) -0.54	(0.00004) 0.34	(0.00002) 0.50
Gross enrolment rate (2014)	0.168	0.206	0.024	-0.0857	0.0419	0.0128	0.0139	0.0079	-0.0046	0.0024	-0.0082
	(0.154) 0.17	(0.153) 0.21	(0.186) 0.02	(0.151) 0.09	(0.177) 0.04	(0.0182) 0.11	(0.0194) 0.14	(0.0162) 0.07	(0.0206) 0.04	(0.0422) 0.02	(0.0178) 0.07
Public social	0.771*	I. 43**	0.009	—I.826**	-0.0482	-0.0074	0.0953	-0.0145	0.0192	0.0866	0.0275
expenditures (2014)											
	(0.389) 0.34	(0.454) 0.20	(0.640) 0.00	(0.758) 0.55	(0.624)	(0.0604) 0.07	(0.0779) 0.20	(0.0573)	(0.0724) 0.05	(0.0837) 0.26	(0.0639) 0.08
Share of 15–24 in	0.20 0.877	0.602	u.uu — I. 105	0.33 5.526**	-0.01 -1.227	70'N	טניט	-0.04	c0.0	07.0	0.00
total population (7014) ^a											
	(1.734)	(1.504)	(2.402)	(2.273)	(2.341)						
Constant	0.09 51.53	0.06 37.02	-0.09 -3.500	-0.50 101.4**	-0.10 2.836	2,916	0.624	212	2.590	0.554	1.748
	(30.92)	(25.79)	(41.16)	(47.58)	(37.93)	(2.389)	(2.782)	(1.707)	(2.105)	(4.006)	(2.291)
Adjusted R ²	0.26	0.41	0.22	0.32	0.20	0.27	0.27	0.34	0.17	0.09	0.21
Model F	5.560***	11.99***	3.05**	4.822***	3.189**	4.57***	4.049**	5.611***	4.458***	3.2I5**	6.453***
z	32	32	32	22	32	32	22	32	32	8	32
Note: $*p < 0.10$, ** effect sizes, deemir	<i>⁴ p < 0.05, ***</i> مع rem as sr	$^{k}p < 0.01$. Rob nall if $\beta < 0.2$!	oust standard e 5, medium if 0	rrors in par€ .50>β>0.25,	entheses. Stance and large if β	lardized beta o >0.50. Variano	oefficients in it e inflation test	alics. I use a con cs (VIF) suggest	iventional rule no issues of n	of thumb for nulticollinear	nterpreting their ty.
^a This variable shoul very low – see <mark>Sup</mark>	d have less be pplementary <i>i</i>	aring on distril Appendix A–7	bution of social [able_2A).	l rights; there	efore, the resp	ective regressic	on models do n	ot include it (cc	rrelations betv	veen these va	riables are indeed



Figure 2. Decommodification, individualization and social rights distribution in 32 student funding systems, 2015. Note: The bigger a hollow circle, the higher the value of *social rights distribution index*. No hollow circle indicates a universal flatrate system. No student support in Bulgaria, so its index value is only loaded by the measure of need-based grant recipiency (0%). Data values and sources in Supplementary Appendix 1–Table A1.

strongly means-tested, and their recipiency rate was low.

Partisan rule and student social rights

Was this diversity related to the accumulated rule of party families? Table 1 presents the results of crosssectional regressions corresponding to the hypotheses and SFPs in 2015. Comparisons of the effect sizes for different party families and their groupings are facilitated by Supplementary Figure B1 in Appendix B. Supplementary Tables B1–B10 present the models using different government periodizations for each relevant party family(-ies) expected to have an impact on a given dimension. Scatterplots referring to the models in Table 1 can be found in Supplementary Appendix D.

(*H1*) Moderate positive effects of the pro-welfare parties on decommodification ($\beta = 0.47$ for governments in 1995–2014) hold in all model specifications. However, the weaker results for the earlier periodizations, and for student funding in 2005, suggest that government ideology was particularly important for the contemporary SFSs at the time of accelerated expansion of participation (starting in the 1990s, and the 2000s in the case of the postcommunist countries), against which increasing cost-sharing had begun to be considered in some countries (Teixeira et al., 2008). For every country that had been exceptionally dominated by Christian Democracy in 1995-2014 (Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Malta), the indicator scores were near 20%. Other highly decommodified systems were Denmark and Finland, which had however been dominated by pro-welfare parties in the preceding decades. England is an outlier, yet the classification of the Labour Party as the Left in this period may be questioned. Models for Christian Democracy alone also yield moderate positive effects (Supplementary Appendix B-Table B1c). In contrast, the relationship between decommodification and left-wing rule in the same period was insignificant, although quite strong ($\beta =$ 0.51) once the 1975-1994 period is considered, in which the effects of Christian Democracy, in turn, were insignificant (Supplementary Appendix B-Table B1c and e). Whether this finding can be

explained by the Left being a major (or to a lack of Conservative) political competitor of Christian Democracy (Huber et al., 1993), deserves further investigation. Furthermore, education issues can be generally owned by the Left in countries dominated by pro-welfare parties (Busemeyer et al., 2013).

(H2) The liberal parties appear to have had no influence on decommodification, as the impact of Conservative and right-wing rule are almost equal (Supplementary Appendix B-Figure B1). Hence, in Table 1 I present only the models for Conservative rule, which was associated with indicator scores below the average everywhere except for France. The effects are consistently strong in all specifications (-0.47 to -0.74), although significantly diminish in size after excluding the outlier, Japan. Nonetheless there are good reason for not dropping it from the analysis: it may well be an exemplary case of the hypothesized relationship rather than an anomaly, and, as mentioned earlier, the commodified SFSs are likely to be underrepresented in the data. Particularly strong effect sizes have been observed for the seat shares accumulated in 1975-1994, suggesting that studying had been lastingly commodified in the older democracies in which the Conservatives had been dominating over the period of early enrolment expansion (New Zealand, Canada, England).

(H3 and H4) The partisan effects are less evident for the levels of *familialization/individualization*. Traditionalistic parties appear to have had no impact on the extent to which students were granted social rights enabling them to live independently from their parents. There is a similar finding for the Progressive parties. In fact, only the Left alone seems to had exerted a strong influence - and only as far as their early (1960–1974, $\beta = 0.52$) or very long-term $(1960-2014, \beta = 0.52)$ rule is concerned. This may speak to the importance of path dependent processes, one possibly including the setting up of the role of family versus state in welfare regimes that were forged in early post-war decades. The push to individual social citizenship in the Nordic countries appears to have spilt over to SFP. Indeed, all social democratic countries recorded high individualization levels, as well as the Netherlands – a hybrid case in many social policy typologies (Arts and Gelissen,

2002). Austria is one outlier. This could be a consequence of the regular cross-ideological coalitions with the more family-oriented Christian Democracy in which its social democratic party had been involved, or of the long-low enrolment levels in higher education providing no incentive for the Left to change SFP. Other exceptions include Luxembourg and England: wealthy countries exemplifying a key impact of the GNI, apparent in all model specifications. Furthermore, interactions of the left-wing rule with GNI in the pooled OLS models (Supplementary Appendix C) suggest that the scope for influence is largely conditional on a country's wealth. Notably, high individualization has been achieved in most cases through the extensive provision of statesubsidized student loans. Their successful implementation can be contingent on graduate income prospects (and hence smaller debt aversion), likely to be decent in the most affluent countries.

(H5a and H6a) Distribution of social rights was not related to the accumulated rule of the Progressive parties, but I did find a moderate negative association between more targeted distribution and left-wing presence in government. Again, this applies only to the set of countries restricted to older democracies, and to the long-term perspective (1960 onwards, $\beta =$ -0.40). The effect is even stronger ($\beta = -0.49$) for the earliest observed period (1960–1974), which further hints at the importance of potential path dependency resulting from granting universal social citizenship to young adults in the social democratic regime, lending support to Garritzmann's theory. Overall, the results for social rights distribution and individualization are similar with regard to outliers and country wealth being a major factor enabling, this time, more universal arrangements in student funding. However, estimations for the year 2010 show a significant effect of the most recent left-wing rule ($\beta = -0.33$), too. This brings us to the positive, albeit weaker ($\beta = 0.28$), impact of the Conservative parties on distribution of social rights in 2015, consistently spotted only for the last two decades of rule (Supplementary Appendix B-Tables B3b and B7b). Taken together, these findings suggest that while the Left had been successful in implementing more universal arrangements in the past, this achievement had started to be overturned by the counteracting rule of the Conservative parties more recently. These dynamics certainly deserve future investigation.

(H5b and H6b) Models for the distribution of social rights to student grants do not confirm the expected impact of the right-wing parties (nor the Conservatives alone), and disclose only moderate negative effects ($\beta = -0.43$) of the left-wing rule in 18 old democracies in 1960–1974. This is strongly driven by the phenomenon of the universal, flat-rate non-repayable grants in the social democratic welfare regime, although similar arrangements also existed in Malta and Luxembourg. In this light, social rights distribution as of 2015 seem to be largely driven by the Conservative policies of more targeted distribution of student loans, indirect support and tuition fees, while recipiency rate and degree of targeting of non-repayable grants largely hinged on countries' wealth (the Nordic exceptionalism notwithstanding).

Conclusion

In the article, I addressed the issue of ideological and political origins of SFS. I have shown that student social rights in different countries show remarkable diversity along the three dimensions reflecting the normative aims assigned to the systems: decommodification, individualization and distribution of social rights. Many countries do not fall into clearly identifiable clusters. The diversity of student social rights does not seem to overlap much with the typologies based on different types of indicators (Garritzmann, 2016). This underscores the role of dependent variable choice in exploring cross-country differences in social policies (Wenzelburger et al., 2013).

Next, I demonstrated that some of the crosscountry variance on these dimensions was associated with the party families that had been dominating in their past governments: the pro-welfare parties had a positive impact on decommodification levels, the left-wing on individualization and social rights distribution (less targeted funding), and the Conservatives – negative on decommodification and social rights distribution (more targeted funding, but not with regard to non-repayable grants). The observed influence of party families seemed to be conditioned on three major factors.

The first factor relates to the profile of other party families markedly present in past governments. This is reflected in the levels of decommodification of studying, which can be attributed to left-wing rule in the last two decades only if it is considered jointly (as pro-welfare parties) with the rule of Christian Democracy. I argued that this is because their preferences in regard to SFP can partly overlap (for example, favouring low or no tuition fees). On the other hand, 'the Right' category seems to be of little explanatory use in the context of student funding – only the Conservatives made a difference. Overall, I demonstrated that looking at specific party families and their combinations can provide insights into partisan effects that would have been concealed in a typical Left-Right classification.

Second, high individualization levels, typically driven by the strong role of loans in student funding packages, can be found mostly in the wealthier countries. The same applies also to less targeted distribution of social rights. This casts doubts on a universal feasibility of such political strategy in favour of low-income students. The potential impact of the left-wing parties in this regard could be conditional on GNI in the most recent period, but examining possible interaction effects would necessitate longer time-series.

Third, the timing of the political dominance and consequently the set of analysed countries does matter, in particular for the impact of the left-wing parties on individualization and social rights distribution: the effects have been observed only for the older democracies, and for the power accumulated over a very long term (1960 onwards), or in the period of welfare regimes consolidation (1960-1974). This adds further support to Garritzmann's Time-Sensitive Partisan Theory of student funding (Garritzmann, 2016). However, I also found more recent (1995-2014), and similar in size to earlier periodizations, partisanship effects on decommodification and distribution of social rights. Hence, it could be the case that government partisanship has re-gained some force in the recent context of austerity and high participation systems.

My novel conceptualization of student funding policies can pave the way for future theory-testing in comparative analyses. The associations identified in this large-N study can be the guiding lights in comparative case studies attempting to explain the impact of partisan politics on contemporary SFS. This study signals possible interaction effects with a country's wealth, but also, perhaps surprisingly, little-to-no relevance of enrolment levels, for at least the recent policy outputs. This, however, could be a consequence of the convergence of enrolment rates to high levels in the last decades – the aim most parties have started to agree upon (Jakobi, 2011; see Busemeyer et al., 2013). According to Ansell (2010), it is precisely in these circumstances that the Left should pursue expansion, and the Right contraction, of funding for higher education. In line with this, I found that Conservative rule in 1995–2014 was associated with more targeted distribution of student social rights in 2015.

Future, more explanatory-oriented research could account for the ministry responsible for SFP, ideological affiliation of coalition partners and major competitors, term length or changing ideological profiles of parties. The effects of the party families' power in the long-term on some aspects of student social rights found in this study may have little predictive value. Yet, they support the acknowledgement of the political determinants of SFP, over and beyond structural constraints – especially in the last three decades marked by appeals and actions to increase cost-sharing in the face of increasing enrolments and unit-costs in higher education.

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ORCID iD

Krzysztof Czarnecki i https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6170-383X

Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

- The specificity of the social rights indicators used in this study is further elaborated upon in Czarnecki et al., 2021. The comparison to other types of data is visualized in Supplementary Figure A1 in Appendix A.
- For details, including country selection principles in data collection (for example, excluding countries such as the United States or Switzerland, in which the responsibility for SFP is largely devolved to subnational units), see the data documentation: www.spin.su.se/ datasets/ssfd.
- Supplementary Appendix A–Table A1 includes further information on all the data, as well as indicator scores for 2015.
- 4. Such decomposition of targeting degree also checks the measure's sensitivity to an interrelation of entitlements to benefits – for example, a proportional reduction of the available loan by the amount of grant received.
- 5. I rely on the assignment of political parties to party families in CPDS (see Codebook, Supplementary Appendix 4, version from 09/08/2018).
- 6. In these periodizations, some countries have relatively lower maximum score on the measured variable due to not being democracies throughout the time, and thus are excluded from the analysis. Although shorter periods of democratic rule could still be long enough for partisan effects to appear, I deem the resulting bias too large.
- 7. Noteworthy, the recent rule of some parties can be a consequence of their past dominance. This makes identification of the exact timing of impact on

contemporary SFSs difficult in a cross-sectional research design.

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