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HOW GERMAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE SAID FAREWELL TO FAMILIALISM

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ABSTRACT:

This paper finds that, until 2005, parties matter in explaining reforms of German family policy along ways predicted by the literature on partisanship and the golden age of the welfare state. However, existing theories on welfare development cannot explain why German Christian democrats suddenly implemented policies supporting working mothers rather than the traditional family from 2005 on. Building on the literature on intraparty politics, the paper argues that, against a background of secularization and increased women's emancipation, electoral defeats as well as government exclusion from 1998 to 2005 triggered a profound change of Christian democratic politicians. Once the CDU returned to office, dominant groups within this party were much more oriented towards working mothers than their predecessors. In terms of the comparative literature on welfare development, the fact that purposeful political re-organizing within parties was responsible for policy outcomes offers a strong challenge to the prevailing assumption that welfare states are reformed by parties as we knew them. I take this situation to be evidence that further underscores the need for scholars of the welfare state to stop making assumptions about unitary actors with stable preferences, and to focus on societal changes and intraparty dynamics to clarify the role of political parties in developing family policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is “left” for the left? And what is “right” for the right? This has increasingly become a matter of debate bearing relevance for industrialized societies at large. With respect to the development of welfare states, many studies have suggested that the political power of trade unions, social democratic parties and Christian democratic parties played an important role in founding and expanding the welfare state during its ‘golden age’ (Korpi 1983; Esping-Andersen 1985; Van Kersbergen 1995). However, macro-comparative quantitative accounts, find no, or no consistent, partisan effect since the late 1970s (Huber and Stephens 2001; Kittel and Obinger 2003; Korpi and Palme 2003; Allan and Scruggs 2004). These findings about welfare reform are puzzling to us because they either seem to point at the explanatory relevance of alternative and sometimes contradictory theories, or they suggest that current macro-comparative quantitative accounts do a poor job in identifying partisan effects.

One might, for instance, deny the relevance of party politics altogether and concur with Pierson’s influential new politics thesis. Pierson argues that a new logic of politics is responsible for the remarkable resilience of the welfare state and a lack of expansion since the late 1970s. Whereas economic and demographic constraints have increasingly curtailed the capacity of social democratic and Christian democratic parties to expand social policies, the unpopularity of cuts has seriously reduced the abilities of liberal parties to retrench welfare entitlements. Indeed, some macro-comparative quantitative studies have verified Pierson’s claims based on aggregate social expenditure (Huber and Stephens 2001; Kittel and Obinger 2003).

However, following Esping-Andersen’s lead, there has been a broad recognition that many of the theoretically relevant outcomes of welfare state reform will not be captured by aggregate social expenditure data (Clayton and Pontusson 1998; Goodin et al. 1999). This type of data cannot tell us very much about how, or on whom, the money is (re-)distributed. For example, we may see differences in specific programs that are masked by overall social spending patterns. Moreover, as long as the growth of beneficiaries exceeds the per-capita percentage reduction in benefits, spending will be higher (Allan and Scruggs 2004: 498). Furthermore, measurement problems in aggregate social expenditure data have raised concerns (Kittel and Obinger 2003; De Deken and Kittel 2006).

Whereas several scholars focus on aggregate data, others have been interested in big, monetary forms of support developed to target social risks within industrial societies (i.e. pensions, unemployment benefits, and sickness and disability benefits). As welfare states are also composed of other public redistribution mechanisms to promote the life chances of their populations, some claims about welfare state politics based upon big transfer schemes may not be as relevant in an area like family policy. In this paper, family policy comprises child care facilities and parental leave schemes.

Indeed, Clasen has argued that Pierson's new politics thesis is less relevant in family policy than in other social policy fields. Within a context of expansion, family policy leaves parties much more of an 'open field' and thus choice for designing new types of public policy. Therefore, partisan differences are likely to remain pronounced in family policy (Clasen 2005: 181-5).

Yet, all scholars mentioned so far cannot explain the finding of this paper. To be more precise, we shall see that, until 2005, parties matter in explaining reforms of German family policy along lines suggested by Clasen and the literature on party politics in the golden age. However, these theories no longer explain developments in German family policy since 2005 - the moment when Christian democrats suddenly implemented policies supporting working mothers rather than the traditional family.

Accordingly, this paper basically tries to answer the question "what is going on here?" Building on the literature on intraparty politics, the paper argues that, against a background of secularization and increased women's emancipation, electoral defeats as well as government exclusion from 1998 to 2005 triggered a profound change of Christian democratic politicians. Once the CDU returned to office, dominant groups within this party were much more oriented towards working mothers than their predecessors and opted for expanding family policies for employed mothers. As such, the core argument is that German Christian democracy remains relevant in developing family policy, but means a rather different thing across time.

Though this paper strives to give a comprehensive historical account of Christian democracy and family policy, its purpose is broader. It also attempts to place intraparty dynamics within the comparative theories of the welfare state. In terms of the comparative literature on welfare development, the fact that purposeful political re-organizing within parties was responsible for policy outcomes offers a strong challenge to the prevailing assumption that welfare states are reformed by parties as we knew them. I take this situation to be evidence that further underscores

the need for scholars of the welfare state to stop making assumptions about unitary actors with stable preferences, and to focus on societal changes and intraparty dynamics to clarify the role of political parties in developing family policy.

The argument proceeds in five steps. Section two summarizes the theoretical framework. Section three provides some background information on developments in the German party system and the Christian democratic electorate. Section four outlines the development of family policy from the late 1940s until 2005, and relates this to the role and involvement of political parties. Section five does the same for the period from 2005 on. Finally, section six concludes.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Table 1 portrays three ideal-type social policy values, goals and instruments. The table builds upon the existing literature on the role of parties during the golden age of the welfare state. Based on the three ideal types, it will be analyzed whether this literature sheds light on the development of family policy.

The first ideal type is called social democratic because the core value is earnings equality and, in the field of family policy, equality of opportunity for individual family members (Giddens 1998: 8-11; Powell 2004: 15). Here, equality of opportunity refers to enabling people to enhance their incomes via labor market participation. It ‘combines a strong egalitarian ethos with a work ethic that emphasizes employment as the root of collective identity and pride. Although social democratic parties, initially rising with the growth of a predominately male blue-collar workforce, only very gradually shed their traditionalist views on women and the family, modern social democratic parties have everywhere come to recognize women as equal partners in the social democratic project for solidarity and employment for all’ (Iversen and Wren 1998: 515). Therefore, social democratic parties promote the individual capabilities of family members via social services. Moreover, state intervention via universal transfers and social services is perceived as a necessary tool to achieve the goals of earnings equality, equality of opportunity for women and high employment.

The core values of the second model include status maintenance and supporting the traditional family as an institution (Van Kersbergen 1995). Status maintenance and stratification are defined here as retaining traditional status relations,

be it in favor of a strict income hierarchy, corporatism or of familialism (Esping-Andersen 1990: 54). This model has its origins in Christian democratic thought. The role of the state is perceived as follows: ‘The ideal state is a welfare state’ (Seeleib-Kaiser et al. 2005: 7). ‘Its responsibilities consist in defining and enforcing the responsibility of others – individuals or social groups rather than providing services itself’. ... An institutional commitment to full employment, for instance, is at odds with the tenet of the enforcement of “self-responsibility” (Van Kersbergen 1995: 181 in Seeleib-Kaiser et al. 2005: 7). Hence, Christian democratic ideology can best be described by the relatively strong emphasis on responsibilities versus rights as well as on the family and other social groups vis-à-vis society. Social service provision is ideally via the family, that is, the housewife. Social insurance entitlements are derived from employment of the male breadwinner and committed to a preservation of status differentials within the lifecourse. For one, the Christian democratic subsidiarity principle has institutionalised familialism in the sense of supporting male breadwinners and housewives throughout their life courses with generous transfers. High employment levels are a relatively low priority, since this is largely perceived as the responsibility of the social partners, and women are encouraged to stay at home and care for children and spouse (Van Kersbergen 1995; Esping-Andersen 1996; Iversen and Wren 1998: 515; Seeleib-Kaiser et al. 2005: 7).

Table 1 Ideal Social Policy Values, Goals and Instruments of Political Parties

	Social Democracy	Christian Democracy	Neoliberalism
Policy values	Earnings equality Equality of opportunity for individual family members	Maintain status differences Support the traditional family as an institution	Equality of opportunity Family as a private matter
Policy goals	Earnings equality Equality of opportunity for women Employment growth -	Maintain status differences Women as providers of social services - -	Equality of opportunity No family goals, private matter Employment growth Fiscal balances

Policy instruments	State	State secondary to social partners and the family	Market
	High transfers and high services	High transfers and low services	Low transfers and low services
	Universal social rights	Status-based entitlements	Means-tested entitlements

The third ideal type is labelled neoliberal because its core value is equality of opportunity (Gamble 2004: 15). ‘Ideologically, this model is grounded in a belief that freely operating markets are inherently welfare maximizing, whereas state involvement in the economy leads to a misallocation of resources. The neoliberal ideology is combined with a work ethic that underscores self-reliance through active labor market participation, while market wages are seen to reflect the contribution of individuals to overall welfare’ (Iversen and Wren 1998: 514). Hence, equality of opportunity is linked to the goals of budgetary restraint and private sector employment. As to policy instruments, low transfers and low social services are in principle only provided on a means-tested basis for the most disadvantaged citizens (Seeleib-Kaiser et al. 2005: 7). Moreover, in its pure form, neo-liberalism is based on the idea ‘that policies interfering with the free operation of markets, with the exception of a few important public goods such as law and order, threaten the pursuit of individual liberty’ (Iversen and Wren 1998: 514). Accordingly, family policy is largely perceived as a private matter.

Intraparty Politics

In line with most analyses on political parties and welfare reform, we have implicitly assumed unitary actors with stable preferences¹. Though the understanding of parties

¹ To my knowledge, there are several recent exceptions to the rule. For a comparison of social policy and the role of intraparty conflicts in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States, see Mulé (2001). For a comparison of welfare state reform in Germany and Great Britain, see Clasen (2005). For an analysis of pension retrenchment in Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Sweden, see Schludi (2005). For a study on the development of family policy and the role of social democratic women’s movements, see Huber and Stephens (2001). For a comparison of social democratic approaches to labor market policy in Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom, see Feigl-Heihs (2004). For an analysis of the 2003 pension reform in Austria, see Dachs (2004). Notably, quite some studies take into account intraparty dynamics when focusing on big, expensive German welfare state programs. On the Christian-liberal government (1982-1998), see Zohlnhöfer (2001). On the coalition of social democrats

and welfare reform has gone a long way forward, something has been neglected by many scholars: namely the awareness that whatever else parties are, they are not unitary actors and that the analysis of party politics must therefore be complemented with intraparty dynamics. Moreover, it is a rather strong claim to expect that parties have stable preferences. Relatedly, one downplays the potential of politicians as creative entrepreneurs (cf. Scharpf 1984). Furthermore, studies that do take into account intraparty dynamics disproportionately focus on social democracy². It is puzzling that all this occurred just as it has become increasingly difficult for social democratic and Christian democratic parties to appease relatively heterogeneous or even diverging social policy interests in an age of austerity, de-industrialization, secularization and increased women's emancipation³. Austerity is used here as a term to indicate those developments that pose strains to welfare states, like population ageing, low economic growth, high unemployment, rising public debt and membership of the European Monetary Union (EMU).

In family policy, the core dividing line between pro-welfare groups has been the division between those oriented towards working women and those promoting the traditional family ideal. I suggest to label these groups equal right supporters and famialists, respectively.

Equal right supporters do not distinguish between "good" and "bad" ways of raising children. Instead, they are particularly concerned with advocating gender equality in terms of equal access to social and professional positions for both sexes, which includes an equal sharing of power and responsibility in the household. Although many, if not all, social democrats in principle share this orientation, feminist women's groups and individual politicians (usually women) stand at the forefront. Policy proposals involve public child care, parental leave for women with paid work and transfers for children of lower income groups.

Famialists perceive the traditional family as the preferable way to raise children. They reflect the interests of women who identify primarily as care givers in

and Greens (1998-2005), see Egle et al. (2003), Hering (2004), Trampusch (2005), Egle and Zohlnhöfer (2007).

² For an explanation why social democracy continues to attract remarkably if not disproportionately much attention of students of political theory, comparative politics and international political economy, see Van Kersbergen (2003).

³ Another reason is that social scientists from various disciplines perceive organizations mainly as unstable coalitions of interest groups that determine goals through negotiating. Such a perspective has, for instance, also been deemed relevant by scholars focusing on technology innovation management and the literature on social movements (see Hargrave and Van de Ven 2006).

a traditional family. At the very least, women should be enabled to choose whether to raise their children themselves or not. As such, they advocate social policies that reward care-giving activities regardless of employment status. Though most Christian democrats are receptive to this agenda, religious groups, religiously inspired women's organizations and individual politicians (often but certainly not always men) are the most vehement supporters. Policy responses include promoting universal parental leave, tax advantages for parents without paid labor and child raising credits in pension insurance rights.

In practice, the dividing line between equal right supporters and familialists can be blurred. They can even become informal allies on certain issues, as many women's organizations promote an expansion of women's rights both as workers and as care givers. Furthermore, some Christian democrats (often female politicians and women's movements) have actually largely embraced the agenda of equal right supporters.

Party Leadership and Ministerial Portfolio Allocation

The need to find powerful allies within the party brings us to the established fact - established by a lot of empirical research on political parties - that the principal power resources tend to be concentrated in the hands of small groups, the party elite. Following Panebianco, I prefer the expression "dominant coalition" for several reasons. Most importantly, even when a single leader seems to exercise almost absolute power, (s)he usually has to negotiate with other organizational actors: (s)he is at the center of a coalition of internal party groups with which (s)he must, at least to a certain extent, negotiate (Panebianco 1988: 37).

Though it is necessary to discern the role and involvement of internal party groups, some claim that whenever the party leadership changes hands from one group to another, that group becomes the key one (Laver and Schofield 1991: 281). Laver has also highlighted the role of cabinet ministers as "policing" legislation in his or her jurisdiction. This enables me to move beyond the unitary actor assumption and to consider the impact of the different policy preferences that might be pursued by different politicians within the same party (Laver and Shepsle 1994; 1996). For instance, Stiller (2007) has pointed at the relevance of Ministers as creative entrepreneurs in reforming big transfer schemes in Germany. This is particularly interesting because senior party politicians are typically associated with internal party

groups. Most importantly for my purposes, party leaders and internal party groups are likely to attempt to affect eventual policy outputs by selecting specific politicians for the cabinet positions that are allocated to their convictions (Luebbert 1986; Laver and Shepsle 1996; Maor 1997).

Contextual Challenges and Elite Circulation

More than twenty years ago, Angelo Panebianco observed processes of transformation that political parties sometimes undergo⁴. His observations were concerned with organizational change but they strike me as having major implications for parties' socio-economic policy preferences as well.

Panebianco identifies two schools of thought concerning organizational change⁵. According to the first, change has an exogenous origin, i.e. it is externally induced. The organization is forced to adjust to contextual challenges in order to survive (Panebianco 1988: 242).

Some of the most wellknown scholars on the role of social democracy and Christian democracy in developing welfare states can be put in the category of those highlighting that changing socio-economic policy preferences have an exogenous origin (Esping-Andersen 1985; Scharpf 1991; Van Kersbergen 1995). These authors highlight two aspects of the party context relation. First, the constraining effects of austerity on these parties' socio-economic identities. Second, the importance of its changing hunting ground, i.e. secularizing, emancipating and de-industrializing constituents, which these parties must respond to if they want to survive.

To turn to a second school interested in parties, some pose that organizational change has essentially endogenous origins, i.e. it is mainly due to changing power distributions within parties. Indeed, some recent works on welfare state reform have highlighted the importance of intraparty dynamics.

As Panebianco argued in the case of organizational change, focusing on external developments is insufficient because it postulates a simple stimulus-response schema (contextual change leading to organizational change) and because adjustment to contextual change is often slow and sometimes non-existent. On the other hand, the

⁴ Panebianco's work was originally published in Italian in 1982. It was first published in English in 1988.

⁵ For an excellent overview of the literature on party organizational change, see Harmel (2002).

thesis of endogenous change leaves unexplained what produced change in internal power distributions in the first place (Panebianco 1988: 242).

This strikes me as true as well in the case of political parties and welfare state reform. In other words, “merely” focusing on austerity and changing constituencies is insufficient since this assumes that parties mechanically respond to these developments. Instead, I will argue below that responses of the same party are likely to differ once a new coalition has become dominant within a party. On the other hand, highlighting intraparty dynamics does not explain why we witness these dynamics. Indeed, there is an unusual degree of consensus among those focusing on intraparty politics that this alone is not sufficient to explain welfare state reform. Instead, studies are complemented with aspects of the party context outlined above to explain what actually influences the relative strength of each internal party group and their capacity for coalition building.

As to contextual challenges in family policy, we have earlier outlined Clasen’s claim that this policy domain is marked by a context of expansion instead of austerity. Nevertheless, there obviously are fiscal constraints such as public debts. In addition, some have argued that a high degree of secularization and a high degree of female labor market participation weaken familialists (Huber and Stephens 2001: 27-8). However, apart from women’s emancipation on the labor market, women’s emancipation in the form of relatively slow processes of socio-economic and cultural changes in society also tends to challenge traditional normative positions on gender stratification (Clasen 2005: 181-5).

We can now proceed with Panebianco’s argument on party organizational change. He argues that that change usually is the effect of an external stimulus joining forces with internal developments which were themselves undermining the dominant coalition (e.g. generational changes). The external stimulus acts as a catalyst accelerating a change in the composition of the dominant coalition. And change in the power structure stimulates organizational change. Panebianco’s strongest claim probably is that when neither contextual challenges nor internal preconditions are present, organizational change will not take place (Panebianco 1988: 242).

For analytical purposes, Panebianco breaks down fundamental organizational change into three phases. The first phase is introduced by party failure unleashed by strong contextual challenges (Panebianco 1988: 243). As Franz Fallend nicely outlined, how to define party failure obviously hinges on the definition of success one

has in mind. This is a matter of longstanding debate. In fact, at least three criteria of success have been identified. The first is the personal reward of government participation (“office-seeking”). This might either be valued in itself or it might be seen as an instrument to steer policy in a preferred direction. The latter brings us to a second potential goal since parties are assumed to implement policies preferred by their constituencies (“policy-seeking”). Finally, parties may strive to maximize the number of votes (“vote-seeking”). This is an instrumental goal since a high number of votes is deemed necessary to increase chances of government participation and/or to have greater influence on policy content (Fallend 2005: 187).

Bearing in mind these criteria of success, party failure is still not easy to define since it is partly a matter of perceptions. In other words, party failure is party failure once politicians within a party consider it to be failure. This can be due to government exclusion, policy failure and/or electoral defeats

The second phase of party change witnesses the discrediting of the old dominant coalition which was unable to handle the crisis, the formation of new alliances, and the replacement of the leading group. External challenges show that the old strategies of adjustment to or predominance over the environment no longer reduce or control environmental uncertainty. This uncontrollability triggers a party crisis which actually is an identity crisis. Accordingly, the organization’s active members shift their support to minority elites who, having been excluded from decision-making, are not held responsible for the crisis and have their own recipe for solving it. These minority elites represent a move towards the unknown, a modification of contextual relations, and thus, at least partially, a change of the party’s identity.

The third phase is that of organizational restructuring which involves two key organizational “areas”. First, a party’s internal decision rules are often altered, since the new leaders are likely to support their newly acquired control of the party with organizational innovations. The organogram usually is restructured: offices controlled by former leaders or their supporters decline in importance and are reorganized, while new ones grow in importance. Second, the party’s overall goals are changed. We see a “succession of ends”. At times “ultimate ends” are changed and the party’s identity and electoral hunting ground are radically altered (as, for instance, when a Christian democratic party declares that it no longer takes the promotion of the male-

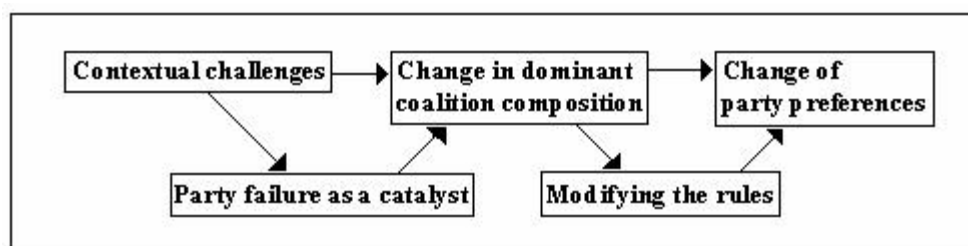
breadwinner model as an objective). But usually it involves a change in the party's strategy (Panebianco 1988: 244-6).

Here, Panebianco stops. Whereas changes in party goals and strategies may have important consequences for policy, we are instead left wondering which groups have become dominant and what they want in certain policy domains. However, this cycle can be completed.

In family policy, equal right supporters within a Christian democratic party may become dominant over famialists. This enables a Christian democratic party to pursue policies promoting working mothers.

Elaborating on the work of Panebianco, I break down organizational change into three phases (see figure 1). The first phase takes place at a background of contextual challenges. In the case of Christian democracy, these involve austerity, secularization and increased women's emancipation. Here, the catalyst is the moment when politicians within a party identify a situation of party failure. This might be due to government exclusion, perceived policy failure and/or large electoral defeats. The second phase witnesses the replacement of the dominant coalition of famialists which was unable to handle the crisis. In the third phase, a party's internal decision rules are often altered to consolidate the power of the new dominant coalition of equal right supporters. Furthermore, we see a change in the policy values outlined in table 1 (i.e. promoting equal opportunities for individual family members rather than supporting the traditional family ideal). Once such core policy values are altered, theories on parties and welfare's golden age have far less explanatory power than before.

Figure 1: Change in political parties



At this point the cycle is complete and we have the basis for our proposition on organizational change:

Against a background of secularization and women's emancipation, perceived party failure amongst Christian democratic politicians is the catalyst triggering a coalition of equal right supporters to become dominant within their party.

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GERMAN PARTY SYSTEM

German politics is complex. First, Germany is a federal state with power being shared at the federal level by bicameralism. As we will see, this can induce situations of 'divided government' since delegates of the *Länder* (states) governments form the *Bundesrat* (Upper House) while federal elections shape the composition of the *Bundestag* (Lower House). Although the Prime Minister (Chancellor) has a dominant position in government, the legislature is a strong countervailing power – in particular under circumstances of divided government (Woldendorp et al. 2000: 226).

Second, it is difficult to decide whether Christian democracy constitutes one or two political parties. In fact, the Christian democrats of the Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union: CDU*) and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (*Christlich Soziale Union: CSU*) have a single Bundestag fraction but do not have a unified party organization. This unique partnership between two sister parties is based on electoral noncompetition as well as parliamentary fusion. This allows the CSU to function as an autonomous regional party in alliance with the CDU (Chandler 1998: 68). Moreover, the politics of unification superimposed a layer of complexity upon the consideration of the character of the CDU.

East and West Germany were (re-)united as the Federal Republic of Germany in October 1990. During the postwar period, the West German party system comprised a small liberal party (*Freie Demokratische Partei: FDP*) and two large political movements: the CDU-CSU and the social democrats (*Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands: SPD*). Whereas the year 1980 witnessed the establishment of the Greens, the year 1990 saw the entry of the Party of German Socialism (*Partei des deutschen Sozialismus: PDS*). The PDS was the legal successor to the Socialist Unity Party which ruled East Germany until October 1990.

Despite these alterations in the West German party system, the CDU-CSU managed to gain a relative majority between 1982 and 1998 (see table 2). From 1998 to 2005, the SPD obtained most votes. In July 2005, the PDS formed an electoral alliance with the Labor and Social Justice Party, a leftist faction of dissident SPD

politicians and trade unionists. The merged list was being called the Left Party (*die Linke*). Despite the fact that the 1994 elections resulted in the lowest number of votes for the CDU since 1949 and the party continued to lose votes afterwards, the CDU-CSU regained a relative majority in September 2005.

Table 2 Bundestag elections, 1987-2005

Year	CDU	CSU	SPD	FDP	Greens	PDS
1987	37.5	10.2	39.2	4.7	7.0	-
1990	38.3	7.4	35.2	7.8	4.4	2.3
1994	37.2	7.8	38.3	3.3	6.5	4.1
1998	32.2	7.3	43.8	3.0	5.0	5.1
2002	29.5	9.0	38.5	7.4	8.6	4.0
2005	27.8	7.4	34.2	9.8	8.1	8.7*

* PDS and the Labor and Social Justice Party.

4. FAMILY POLICY UNTIL 2005: THE RELEVANCE OF TRADITIONAL THEORIES ON PARTISANSHIP

In a comparative perspective, women's labor force participation was relatively high with 35 percent in 1950. The United States, for instance, had a figure of 29 percent by then. The German figure was largely a result of the reconstruction effort, but from there it increased very slowly to 51 percent in 1980, compared to 60 percent in the United States (Huber and Stephens 2001: 136-7, 152). Particularly Catholics and Protestants that go to church have been loyal to the CDU-CSU over time. In 1953, for instance, 40 percent of those voting CDU-CSU were Catholics that went to church, while 26 percent of its voters were Protestants attending church services (Kornelius and Roth 2007: 54).

After the CDU-CSU had defeated the SPD in the 1949 elections, German family policy came to reflect the political predominance of the CDU-CSU, in coalition with the Liberal Party (FDP) and a small conservative party, but also the consistent pressures from Christian family associations, and the presence of an employees' faction in the CDU (the CDA). In line with the literature on Christian democracy in welfare's golden age, this policy put great emphasis on the male breadwinner model and women's responsibility to care at home (Huber and Stephens 2001: 153).

The first measure in the field of family policy – a tax allowance for each child - had been implemented by the Christian democratic Minister of Labor with the support of the CDA in 1949. By then, the establishment of a Ministry of Family Affairs had proven impossible due to vehement opposition by both a coalition partner, the FDP, and the main opposition party, the SPD. Apart from the political sensitivity of population policy just after the Nazi-period, the FDP and the SPD feared that Christian democrats would promote their patriarchal family ideal. However, demands from Christian family associations led Chancellor Adenauer to install a Ministry of Family Affairs in 1953. The Minister, a strict Catholic, obtained a Ministry with few resources. Nevertheless, he managed to shape German family policy substantially in its critical formative years.

The Minister was a strong supporter of families with many children. In line with his conservative family ideal, he perceived female labor market participation as an act of irresponsibility which could only be explained, but not justified, by women's preference to consume. Accordingly, the minister introduced tax advantages for non-working women and child benefits to refrain women from participating in the labor market (Gerlach 2001a; Gerlach 2004: 151-7). The latter were continuously increased by the Minister and his two Catholic CDU successors. Furthermore, the Minister, his successors and the CDU-CSU in general vehemently opposed to expand child care due to the danger of eroding the traditional family (Gerlach 2004: 151-9).

As to the SPD, some highlight that the party continuously remained very skeptical about patriarchal family policy (Gerlach 2001b: 698) and that it formally included the goal of gender equality in its 1959 program of principles (Bothfeld 2005: 164). Nonetheless, most representatives of the trade unions and the SPD took the view that women should only work in case of economic necessity (Huber and Stephens 2001: 153; Bothfeld 2005: 164). The position of the SPD has to be understood in the context of the Cold War, as an effort to distinguish itself from East German communism that promoted the integration of women into the labor market. It was only in the late 1960s that a new independent feminist movement emerged that pushed for women's equality. Simultaneously, an increasing number of women in the SPD with clearly feminist positions advocated fiercely for gender equality (Huber and Stephens 2001: 153). In 1972, this resulted in the foundation of the women's organization (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Sozialdemokratischer Frauen*).

At the policy level, a new period arrived once the SPD came to power and formed a government with the FDP between 1969 and 1982. Instead of supporting the family as an institution, the government now opted for equality of opportunity for individual family members (Gerlach 2004: 160). For instance, the social-liberal coalition abolished the child tax allowance, which had primarily benefited upper income parents. At the same time, the government introduced a child allowance for the first child, and substantially increased this allowance and the allowances for additional children (Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser 2004: 79). Furthermore, for the first time in the postwar period, public child care was expanded from the early 1970s on (Bothfeld 2005: 175; Leitner 2007: 317). Finally, in 1979 paid maternity leave was introduced for working mothers, for a period of six months.

The latter passed against the demand of the CDU-CSU to provide maternity leave for all mothers (Bleses and Rose 1998: 248-57). The underlying normative justification of this resistance by most Christian democratic politicians is best illustrated by the following quote of a CDU member of the Bundestag, ‘Do you (the SPD: author’s information) seriously believe that there is someone who can replace the mother? The best person to do this (raise children: author’s information) surely is the woman who gave birth to the child... Love... should be provided at least six to eight hours per day. But how can a working mother, who returns to work after six months, have this time for her child?’ (ibid: 251).

The CDU in the Christian-Liberal Coalition: The Dominance of Familialists Declines but Remains

As in 1969 with the formation of the SPD-FDP government, the return to office of the CDU-CSU in a coalition with the FDP in 1982 also meant a policy change. In line with party theories on the golden age, the traditional family would again be promoted.

During its period in opposition, the CDU had considered how it could continue to support the traditional family in a period of secularization and increasing female labor market participation. The number of church-attending Catholics declined from 25 percent of the German electorate in 1953 to 15 percent in 1975. However, the share of church-going Protestants continued to hover around 10 percent (Wessels 2000: 147). Furthermore, female labor market participation had increased from 35 percent in 1950 to 50 percent in 1973 (Huber and Stephens 2001: 136). With the support of party leader Kohl, the party’s general executive, Heiner Geissler, proposed

a set of policy measures couched behind a discourse of parental responsibility and women's freedom of choice (Geissler 1976, 1979; Gerlach 2001c: 264).

The Catholic Kohl was not very interested in socio-economic issues, even less so in family policy, let alone in changing the party's rather traditional stance in this regard (Zohlnhöfer 2001: Ch. 3.1). As such, Kohl tended to give the Ministers of (Women and) Family Affairs free space as long as they did not attempt to weaken his position.

By the mid-1970s, the relation between Kohl and his party executive was still rather well. Geissler was a Catholic who belonged to the social wing of the CDU. Once he became Minister of Family Affairs in 1982, his position as minister and party executive enabled him to further develop his proposals and push through several demands. The FDP and more employer-oriented CDU politicians, for instance, were not all that enthusiastic about Geissler's proposals, let alone the expansion of family benefits for lower income groups in 1983 as a compensation for welfare cuts. This expansionary measure had also been strongly favoured by the CDA, which still had an influential position within the CDU by then (Gerlach 2001c; Zohlnhöfer 2001: ch. 4). As Geissler put it himself, 'the implementation of social policy is a power issue. If the general executive of a people's party is simultaneously a member of the CDA and the trade unions, this has a different weight for general policy priorities than when a general executive is relatively uninterested in these issues and cannot, will not or dare not set the agenda in this direction. I have never accepted this' (Geissler 2001: 807).

However, due to Geissler's time consuming double position and dire economic straits, most of his proposals were to be implemented from 1985 on by the next CDU Minister. One notable example is the replacement of paid maternity leave for working mothers by paid maternity leave for all mothers in 1985 (Gerlach 2001c: 265). The benefit was low and flat-rate. After six months, it became income tested. It could be combined with part-time work of maximum nineteen hours per week. This benefit structure was clearly most favourable for one-breadwinner families, and secondarily for families with a second low supplementary income. Moreover, it was clearly biased against the main breadwinner taking any leave. In fact, almost 99 percent of the recipients were women (Huber and Stephens 2001: 268).

A second example of a reform that had been initiated by Geissler was the introduction of pension credits for all mothers in 1986 (Gerlach 2001c: 265). According to Geissler, both reforms provided freedom of choice for women and equal

rights for the traditional wage-earner family (Bleses and Rose 1998: 255-7). Instead, SPD politicians opposed the reforms because both would lead women to stay at home (Gerlach 2004: 169). In fact, the combination of the two reforms was double-edged: people who combined the parental leave allowance with part-time work lost the pension credits. The duration of the means-tested parental leave benefit was gradually extended to two years between 1986 and 1990. Since the flat-rate benefits were not adjusted, however, they eroded in value (Huber and Stephens 2001: 268). Moreover, job protection was not guaranteed due to strong opposition from the FDP and employer-oriented CDU politicians (Zohlnhöfer 2001: 119, 273; Aust 2003: 37).

By contrast, all Ministers of Family Affairs, who were all CDU representatives, continued to expand family transfers independent of the parents' employment situation from 1982 to 1998. An important part of the explanation is that the Constitutional Court became an increasingly influential actor in the field of family policy during the 1990s. In fact, several rulings officially required the government to expand family transfers (Gerlach 2000). Still, the Court leaves political parties ample room for manoeuvre and not all improvements can be traced back to these rulings (Bleses 2003: 193; Gerlach 2004: 168-86). To mention but one example, the CSU Minister of Finance ensured extra tax advantages and child benefits against the wishes of the FDP (FAZ 08.01.1995). Furthermore, party programs indicate that the CDU and the SPD (but not the FDP) continuously proposed improvements of family transfers that often went beyond the rulings and/or preceded these in time (cf. also Bothfeld 2005: 289). This is remarkable if we bear in mind that the German economic situation worsened severely since 1991, and that the government had to comply with the EMU budget criteria from the mid-1990s on.

In short, we have thus far argued that reforms implemented by CDU politicians did little to support employed mothers with small children between 1982 and 1998. However, the exception to the rule is a 1992 law that entitled every child between three and six to a place in childcare. Until that time, expansions of child care had faced great difficulties due to the fact that the supply of child care officially is an issue of the federal states – though we have already seen that some improvements were made during the 1970s by the SPD-led government. Therefore, the strong commitment of most Christian democratic politicians to the traditional family seems crucial if we want to understand the development of child care in Germany. To be

more precise, most CDU and CSU politicians have historically regarded the family as the only suitable institution for raising children in their first years (Aust 2003: 36).

As such, a 1979 effort by the SPD Minister of Family Affairs to entitle every child between three and six to a place in childcare was bound to fail, if only because of the Bundesrat majority of the CDU-CSU at the time. At the end of the 1980s, the Catholic CDU Minister of Family and Women's affairs proposed a similar right. Again, the initiative failed (ibid: 44). This time, the main reason was that the Minister, a professor in gender studies, lacked the backing of most politicians within her own party. Conservative (male and female) CDU politicians warned her not to 'glorify' care for two year old children outside the family under the primacy of the reconciliation of work and family life (Gerlach 2001d: 423).

Moreover, the Minister and some others, including party executive Geissler and the chairwoman of the women's union, demanded that the party undergo organizational and programmatic reform, and that Kohl resigns. Please note that the CDU's return to office in 1982 had been accompanied by a lack of programmatic renewal (Bösch 2002, 2004). Furthermore, the position of Kohl had considerably weakened by 1989 due to subsequent electoral defeats of the CDU at the national and the federal level. Nevertheless, the sceptics unsuccessfully tried to convince Kohl and party members to renew the party's familialistic principles during a party congress in April 1989. The aim was to promote 'real' freedom of choice for working and non-working women (Gerlach 2001d: 423). Immediately afterwards, the party executive and the chairwoman of the women's lost their posts, while the disappointed minister retreated within a year. This particularly reduced the influence of both the employees' association and the women's organization.

By 1990, Kohl had suddenly become the unity chancellor. This helped him to regain votes as well as authority within his party. Accordingly, the CDU became a 'chancellor's party' between 1990 and 1994 as Kohl made all the large decisions himself and his authority was seldom questioned. Party committees met less and less. If they met, Kohl dominated the sessions (Poguntke 1994: 208; Bösch 2002: 53; Bösch 2004: 59). Accordingly, Kohl prevented renewal of the party's familialistic principles personally, and it would remain off the agenda until the electoral defeat of 1998 (Bösch 2002: 60).

At the same time, unification implied the political entry of people raised in eastern Germany. In comparison to West Germany, East Germany is much more

secular and has considerably higher levels of child care provision and female employment. In 1990, for instance, 55 percent of the CDU-CSU's constituents were Catholics (Bösch 2002: 215). However, whereas 45 percent of the western Germans adhered to Catholicism, only 6 percent of the eastern Germans did so (World Value Survey). Moreover, 62 percent of all eastern German children aged three or younger went to child care facilities. In West Germany, this figure was merely 6 percent (Hank et al 2001: 17). Furthermore, 82 percent of the eastern German women aged 15 to 65 were employed in 1990, while this figure was 56 percent in West Germany (sozialpolitik-aktuell.de).

From January 1991 on, a former eastern German citizen, Angela Merkel, became the Minister of Women and Youth. Her appointment by Kohl was triggered by party internal considerations to provide some posts to former eastern Germans (Gerlach 2004: 175). According to one CDU politician and historian, the Protestant Merkel, who was a divorced woman and not a regular churchgoer, perceived herself as a young woman who, as a Minister, aimed to put great effort in establishing equality of opportunity for women. This view on women policy was consistently shaped by socialist equal opportunities policy in East Germany. At the same time, she felt obliged to represent the eastern interests in re-unified Germany (Langguth 2005: 170, 322).

Merkel played an important role in establishing the right to child care for each child between three and six⁶. According to Merkel herself, 'the biggest success during my period as Minister of Women and Youth was to be able to push through the right to childcare...' (Merkel in Langguth 2005: 346). Here, abortion legislation provided the opportunity to do so against the wishes of her own party's Catholic majority in the Bundestag. In fact, Merkel and a group of female parliamentarians of all parties in parliament found a compromise that established the right to childcare as one element to support pregnant women in order to avoid abortion. The female parliamentarians also intended to entitle all children to child care, but most within the CDU and CSU considered this a bridge too far. As usual, the issue of payments was also a highly disputed element of the decision. Due to interventions by the CSU Finance Minister and associations of the local governments, implementation was postponed to 1996 and

⁶ The right for employed parents to care for sick children for 10 days per year can also be traced back to the moment when Merkel was the responsible Minister (Gerlach 2004: 176).

later on to 1999. But they were not able to prevent the law from being adopted (SZ 16.6.1992 and 17.12.1993; Aust 2002: 30-1; Aust et al 2003: 44-5).

The Red-Green Coalition: How a Change in Government Implied a Stronger Orientation towards Equal Opportunities

The formation of a government led by the SPD in 1998, with the Greens as a junior partner, meant a policy change in the direction of equal opportunities for individual family members (cf. SPD 1998: 27-30, 2002: 16-21; Greens 1998: 42-6, 2002: 15-7)⁷.

The first period of the red-green coalition witnessed declining economic conditions. Nonetheless, the government expanded family policy along three dimensions: first, raising the child allowance and child tax advantages; second, strengthening pension credits for working parents to devote six months to child rearing; and third, improving parental leave and the parental leave benefit for employed parents (Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser 2004: 84-5).

During its second term, which lasted from October 2002 to February 2005, the economy was in a recession and Germany continuously failed to comply with the EMU budget criteria. However, expansion again went in the direction of equal opportunities. Most notably, the government set aside federal subsidies amounting to € 1.5 billion annually (from 2005) for the federal states to expand all-day child care facilities for children under the age of three. Furthermore, another € 4 billion was set aside for helping states and municipalities to convert traditional half-day to full-day schools between 2003 and 2007 (Clasen 2005: 163).

5. FAMILY POLICY SINCE 2005: THE USUAL PARTY OF GOVERNMENT IS BACK WITH AN UNUSUAL AGENDA

We have thus far seen that family policy has been an ideologically highly polarized domain with the Christian democrats and the social democrats adhering to two rather different normative views on the role of the family. However, we can witness a remarkable process of convergence of Christian democrats towards the family model

⁷ Historically, several wings regarding family policy can be identified within the Greens, but the equal opportunities perspective had clearly become dominant by the early 1990s (Brüssow 1996; Bothfeld 2005: ch. 8).

of the SPD once they had returned to office in 2005. If we want to understand how this happened, it is first necessary to return to the 1998 electoral defeat.

In line with my central proposition on organizational change, this defeat and subsequent government exclusion triggered a party crisis and the replacement of the CDU's dominant coalition against a background of secularization and women's emancipation. The number of church-attending Catholics had declined from 15 percent of the German electorate in 1975 to seven percent in 1998. Accordingly, this group accounted for merely 13 percent of the votes for the CDU-CSU in 1998 and 12 percent in 2005. Furthermore, the total number of Protestants going to church had declined from 10 percent in 1975 to 2 percent by 2005. As such, not even the most loyal voters could prevent the electoral decline of the CDU-CSU (Wessels 2000: 146-8; Kornelius and Roth 2007: 54).

Increased women's emancipation likely increased, or at least did not contain, strains on the traditional family ideal. Between 1990 and 2000, western German female labor market participation rates increased from 56 percent to 62 percent (sozialpolitik-aktuell.de). Moreover, the claim that both husband and wife should contribute to income was supported by 55 percent of the West Germans in 1990 and 65 percent in 1999 (World Value Surveys).

In line with our central proposition on organizational change, this defeat and subsequent government exclusion triggered a party crisis and the replacement of the CDU's dominant coalition. As the CDU was mainly centered on Kohl's leadership, the loss of office in 1998 and his sudden retirement resulted in a power shift. This was amplified by the fact many politicians of Kohl's generation stepped down as well and that Angela Merkel became the new party executive. Nevertheless, Kohl's closest ally, the Protestant Wolfgang Schäuble, succeeded him (Bösch 2004: 75-77; Langguth 2001: 7, 211). For Schäuble it was clear that 'the CDU has to use the opposition phase to raise and discuss those questions which cannot be pushed aside anymore' (Schäuble 2000: 302).

In family policy, Schäuble and Merkel were much more oriented towards working women than most within the CDU. As such, they understood one another well, and Merkel was able to set up and chair a new commission on family affairs in response to the 1998 defeat (SZ 09.10.99; Langguth 2005: 191, 197, 317). Whereas some CDU politicians pleaded for a clearer emphasis upon familialistic values in order to regain votes, Merkel argued exactly in the opposite direction (Schäuble 2000: 45).

According to Merkel, family policy had to adjust flexibly to the current situation of families. Hence, new policies were required to allow for a reconciliation of work and family life (Merkel in FAZ 18.08.99). Meanwhile, female labor market participation rates had increased gradually from 48 percent in 1980 to 55 percent in 1997 (Alber et al 2007: 59).

On December 13th, the commission's presented her findings at a special party conference on family affairs. At the time, the media concentrated on the biggest crisis in the CDU's history, the so-called spending affair. For years, the party had spent too much on its vast party staff and illegal charities were uncovered. As such, it went largely unnoticed by then that the commission was able to push through some key changes. Instead of focusing on a married man and woman with children, the CDU now defined a family as 'any situation whereby parents are responsible for children and children are responsible for parents' (CDU 1999: 8). Furthermore, the commission departed from the traditional family ideal by stating that both parents usually want to be employed by now and that this requires policies enabling them do so (CDU 1999: 3). According to the commission, 'the key issue for the reconciliation of work and family life is a satisfying child care system' (CDU 1999: 13).

By January 2000, Schäuble felt that he was not able to deal with the spending crisis due to his long history within the party. Accordingly, he retreated as party chairman (Schäuble 2000: 266). A party in uncertainty as well as a lack of experienced competitors somewhat surprisingly enabled Angela Merkel to become party leader in April 2000. She only had a small group of loyalists, the so-called 'girls camp', which consisted of four women and included both the chairwoman and the vice-chairwoman of the youth union. Her candidacy was supported by the youth union and the women's organization, though she did not have a background in the women's organization (Bösch 2002: 147-155; Langguth 2001: 223-240). After Merkel had become party leader, the CDU headquarters suddenly included a high number of women compared to most of its European sister parties (Bösch 2002: 259).

Nevertheless, Merkel had great difficulty in keeping the different wings and regions together as she lacked the authority of being chancellor and did not have a single portfolio to divide. Moreover, it was not the party headquarters that took charge of the CDU but the prime ministers of the different states (Bösch 2004: 73). This was exemplified by a high number of conflicts between Merkel and the rather conservative Roland Koch, the Prime Minister of Hessen (Trampusch 2005: 4). In addition, the

CDU seemed in opposition with itself with Merkel as party leader and Friedrich Merz as fraction leader. Merz could build upon great sympathy within the fraction. The latter had a more conservative composition than the CDU headquarters and considered Merkel too progressive as regards family issues.

Both Merz and the CSU's party leader made it repeatedly clear that the majorities in their parties were in favour of providing a family allowance of at least € 1000 per month during three years, independent of the parents' labor market situation (FAZ 05.07.2000 and 18.01.2001). Accordingly, this became the key family policy proposal of the CDU-CSU in their 2002 election program. On the other hand, the new definition of the family as established by the CDU commission on family affairs entered the election program. Moreover, for the first time in the history of the CDU-CSU, a concrete proposal was made to expand child care in its party program. To quote the program, 'we will ensure that the tax system will take into account child care costs between € 1000 and € 5000 already from 2003 on' (CDU-CSU 2002: 37).

After the 2002 electoral defeat and subsequent government exclusion, Merkel managed to strengthen her internal position by taking up the position of Merz. Moreover, she had put a large effort in a rejuvenation of the Bundestag fraction. The result was an exceptional rejuvenation of the fraction with approximately one third being new. In the field of CDU talents, Ursula von der Leyen probably was Merkels most important discovery. Von der Leyen has seven children and had been working as a physician between 1987 and 2004. Afterwards, she became the Minister of Social Affairs, Women, Family and Health in Lower Saxony. As will be shown below, Von der Leyen - like Merkel - supports equal opportunities for women rather than the CDU's traditional family ideal. When Merkel wanted to use the dire situation of the CDU to promote further programmatic renewal within the party, Von der Leyen seemed the perfect person to do so in family policy. Accordingly, Merkel appointed Ursula von der Leyen as chairwoman of the CDU commission 'parents, child and employment' in April 2005. Especially the CSU and some conservative CDU prime ministers of federal states did not really appreciate this decision (FAZ 04.05.2005). In response to her appointment, Von der Leyen replied that she would do her best to 'achieve a change in orientations and to improve child care in order to facilitate the combination of work and family in Germany' (FAZ 22.01.2005).

By late may 2005, however, Chancellor Schröder suddenly called for early elections and the commission was unable to complete the process of programmatic

renewal. With early elections looming in November 2005, the 2005 party program of the CDU-CSU was completed within six weeks. Touchy subjects, like how one should raise children, were avoided as much as possible (FAZ 14.08.2005, 22.01.06). Nevertheless, the 2005 party program of the CDU-CSU pointed at the need to change traditional family orientations and the need and the will to improve child care, but no concrete proposals were made in this regard (CDU-CSU 2005: 24-5). Furthermore, and against the demands of the CDA and the women's union, the commission was able to leave out the proposal to expand family allowances which had still stood at the forefront of the 2002 program (FAZ 14.08.2005).

On November 22nd, the CDU and CSU formed a government with the SPD. The by then Chancellor Angela Merkel appointed Ursula von der Leyen as Minister of Family Affairs. So far, the two most notable reforms of the grand coalition were to expand childcare and to introduce a new parental leave benefit (cf. Gerlach 2007).

To start with the former, it is worth noting that the coalition agreement points at an expansion in the direction of equal opportunities, just like under the red-green governments. This applies, for instance, to the will to expand child care (CDU, CSU and SPD 2005: 112-5). This is to large extent due to the extensive support of the SPD's emphasis upon equal opportunities by Von der Leyen, the Christian democratic negotiator in family policy (SZ 18.01.2006; Gerlach 2007: fn. 1; see also SPD 2005: 42-6). By early January 2006, Von der Leyen proposed to entitle families with two working parents (or one working lonely parent) of children younger than seven to a tax reimbursement, upto a maximum of € 4,000 per year, if their expenses for child care exceed € 1,000 per year.

The proposal was part of the 'law to promote economic growth and employment fiscally' and received fierce criticisms, especially from the CSU and several CDU politicians. As to the SPD, left-wingers noted that the reform would benefit higher income groups rather than lower income groups if the expenses on child care had to exceed € 1,000 (SZ 18.01.2006; FAZ 25.01.2006). Nevertheless, a majority within the executive committee agreed with the proposal and the SPD would eventually support it (Gerlach 2007: 7). Most within the CSU, however, were concerned about the neglect of the traditional family and demanded that the proposal would also support families with one working parent (SZ 18.01.2006; FAZ 25.01.2006). However, Von der Leyen's response was that 'both men and women will participate in the labor market. The only issue is whether they will raise children' (in

FAZ 22.01.2006). In addition, some high-ranking CDU politicians were not willing to accept the Minister's plans as it implied a quite sudden move away from the party's traditional family ideal by a Minister from their own party with the support of a Chancellor from their own party (SZ 18.01.2006). Accordingly, three politicians with rather traditional views on the role of the family criticized Von der Leyen for the supposed glorification of the working mother during a meeting of the party's executive committee in Mainz. The Deputy Prime Minister of Brandenburg argued that he would not like his children to be raised by the state. Two other politicians joining the critique on Von der Leyen were the leader of the CDU Bundestag fraction, and the Prime Minister of North Rhein Westphalia (FAZ 22.01.2006).

In the end, Merkel gave in to the critique from the CSU and several CDU politicians. Accordingly, the original proposal was revised in such a manner that it not only entitles families where all parents work, but also those where one of the two parents is employed (FAZ 25.01.2006). This became law on January 31, 2006.

In June 2006, the existing parental leave arrangement was replaced by a new scheme. The new law entitles a working parent to 67% of his or her income when caring for a child in the first year after birth. The maximum payment is € 1,800 per month. The reform also introduces two so-called 'daddy months' with the same replacement rate to enable the other working parent to care for a child during the subsequent two months.

In fact, the former SPD Minister of Family Affairs, Renate Schmidt, had already developed a similar proposal in 2004. The only difference was that it entitled one parent for ten months and would entitle the other parent for two months. At the time, the proposal was received rather skeptically within the SPD Bundestag fraction due to its beneficial effect for higher income groups. However, several studies show that especially well-educated working women with high incomes postpone the decision to have children, if they have children at all. Therefore, Chancellor Schröder backed the proposal. Due to sudden early elections, however, the implementation was postponed to 2006 (interview with Renate Schmidt).

During the coalition negotiations between the SPD and the CDU, Von der Leyen backed the SPD proposal. However, the introduction of the 'daddy months' was criticized by most within the CSU (not by some female politicians and the women's union) and by some CDU politicians. Especially the CSU was not willing to accept the proclaimed cut of two months for those families where only one of the two

parents takes up parental leave to raise children. Furthermore, the Christian democratic Minister President of Thüringen, posed that he was not willing to let the state determine whether he his or his wife would raise children (FAZ 21.04.06). In a similar way, the CDU Prime Minister of North Rhein Westphalia, who had also been highly critical about the child care tax advantage, argued that the Constitution would forbid the state to oblige fathers to care for children. This triggered the SPD party executive to claim that the Prime Minister was a ‘dinosaur’ who had been sleeping during his own party’s learning process on family policy. In addition, Minister Von der Leyen replied that she wanted to enable young men and women to reconcile their work and family lives under the current socio-economic conditions. ‘Though some may remember the fifties nostalgically, they will never come back’ (FAZ 02.12.2005). A few months later, Chancellor Merkel herself attempted to convince the skeptics and to bring them on board (FAZ 20.04.2006).

Afterwards, the CSU and the CDU skeptics gave up their resistance against the ‘daddy months’. However, they could claim a partial victory by avoiding the two month cut for those families where only one of the parents takes up parental leave. Therefore, the new parental leave benefit would be paid for twelve months to one parent, instead of the ten months as originally proposed by Schmidt and Von der Leyen. The two months for the other parent would now become a bonus (FAZ 26.04.2006). This became law on June 23, 2006.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed a key topic in the welfare state literature. Like many others, the analysis provided several reasons not to abandon the ‘parties-matter view’. At the same time, our results cast doubt on the continued relevance of the literature on parties in welfare’s golden age. In fact, this literature did a good job in explaining the development of German policy until 2005. In agreement with our proposition on organizational change, however, electoral defeats as well as government exclusion from 1998 to 2005 triggered a profound change of Christian democratic politicians. This took place against a background of secularization and increased women’s emancipation. Once the CDU returned to office, dominant groups within this party were much more oriented towards working mothers than their predecessors and opted for expanding family policies for employed mothers. It clearly became easier for

Chancellor Merkel to change family policy in the direction of equal opportunities with the likeminded Von der Leyen as a Minister of Family Affairs. To quote a CDU insider, 'programmatic renewal is for the greatest part bound to persons. Without Angela Merkel and Ursula Von der Leyen, we would never have had such a strong reorientation within our party' (interview). As such, German Christian democracy remains relevant in family policy, but means a rather different thing over time.

Nevertheless, internal opposition by Christian democratic politicians with familistic orientations remains. A notable example is a recent debate on costless child care for children under the age of three. In January 2006, Von der Leyen announced that she would like to put great effort in making this possible (FAZ 22.03.2006). A few months later, both the leader of the SPD Bundestag fraction and Chancellor Merkel publicly supported her proposal (SZ 20.03.2006). Again, the proposal met fierce criticisms from within Christian democratic ranks. For instance, some CDU politicians blamed Von der Leyen for moving the CDU-CSU away from the traditional family ideal and the party's voters (FAZ 14.02.2007; <http://www.n-tv.de/766641.html>). According to a recent survey, however, 65 percent of the electorate supports an expansion of child care (FAZ 22.04.2007).

Indeed, the core claim of the parties-matter-view is that social constituencies of political parties in constitutional democracies have distinctive preferences and successfully feed the process of policy formation (but see also Soss and Schram 2007). For example, the Austrian Christian democratic party continues to support the traditional family ideal (Obinger and Tálos 2006: 177-86). Following our proposition on organizational change, this does not seem surprising if we note that the Austrian society secularizes very gradually, if at all, with 76 percent being Catholic in 1990 and 79 percent in 1999 (World Value Survey). Moreover, female labor market participation increased very gradually from 59 % in 1995 to 61 % in 2004 (EUROSTAT). Furthermore, in 1999, 74 percent of all respondents agreed with the claim that a pre-school child suffers when his or her mother works (World Value Survey). Within this quite favourable electoral context, the Austrian Christian democrats have continuously been in office since 1986.

This contrasts with the situation in the Netherlands where Christian democrats suffered a large electoral defeat in 1994 and had subsequently been excluded from government until 2002. Whereas secularization and women's emancipation had been ongoing processes in the Netherlands since the mid-1960s, these accelerated from the

early 1980s on. However, a new generation of Dutch Christian democrats only began to develop proposals to support working mothers when their party was condemned to the opposition benches in 1994, and implemented them once the party returned to office in 2002. All of these matters clearly warrant further research. Based on the German case study, what I argue in this paper is that scholars of the welfare state need to stop making assumptions about unitary actors with stable preferences, and that a focus on societal changes and intraparty dynamics is crucial to understand the role of political parties in developing family policy.

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