

## Changing Family Policies as a New Welfare Regime in Modern Germany

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### Abstract

Developed countries have changed its traditional welfare regimes because of limited economy growth and aging society. In Germany, categorized as the conventional welfare regime, various welfare renovations including family policies have progressed to cut welfare costs. These family-policy reformations can be characterized from the following aspects; dual-income and individual-targeting provision. In 2006, under the Merkel coalition registration, the introduction of Elterngeld, family allowance to compensate income and stimulate fathers' participation in child care, could be recognized a symbol as a transition to the Social Democracy family policy. Previous research has already pointed out the tradition of the family-policy regime in Germany from the Christian Democracy regime to the Social Democracy regime. While it is hard to explain using existing theories which focus to characteristics of political parties, veto players, and half sovereign state, it is suggested to focus on the role of discourse from constructivist approach. However, the question still remained that why Elterngeld was introduced although the policy for expanding child-care facilities, which can also be categorized as a Social Democracy policy, was postponed. This research reexamined the welfare regime transition in Germany, focusing discourse in the house of representatives. Observing discourse in the parliament is effective to understand politicians' vision what kind of family policies are desirable. By counting the specific discourse from 1994 to 2017 and scrutinizing the minutes around 2006, it turned out that politicians have an agreement that both mothers and fathers should adjust work life balance based on "family", which can be defined as the difference between Elterngeld and the policy for expanding childcare facility. Therefore, current transition of the family policy from the Christian Democracy regime to the Social Democracy regime is limited and can be concluded that Germany is revising its traditional welfare policy regime.

**Keywords:** Changing, Family, Policies, New Welfare Regime, Modern Germany

### Introduction

According to the Esping-Andersen (1990)<sup>1</sup> and Lewis (1992)<sup>2</sup>, German welfare policy is categorized as Christian Democracy which can be characterized the Catholic tradition emphasizing a family structure and unions organized by each occupation. This "Male-breadwinner state" that men work while women take care of their child, had been a typical labor and welfare model until 1980s especially in West Germany, however, limited economic growth and aging society forced Germany to cut welfare costs. On the other hand, family policy such as earnings-related parental leave and public/ publicly subsidized childcare has been expanded to stimulate women to participate in labor market. As a result, from 1980s German family policies has been expanded, modeled after Social Democracy welfare regime. For example, introducing of the child-care allowance and leave payment under the CDU administration symbolized the social approval of child care. In fact, the period of the leave was extended for 3 years in 1992 and the period of the childcare allowance payments were extended for 2 years in 1993 as well. One significant policy that can be defined as the Social Democracy family policy is the introduction of "Elterngeld", an earning-related and gender-neutral parental leave benefit for the duration of 12months, in 2006 under the Merkel coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD registration. In comparison with the previous childcare allowance, "Erziehungsgeld", it compensates each of the recipients 300 Euro per month for 2 years, the estimated allowance became proportional and the period was reduced. Another feature of the Elterngeld is that it stimulates fathers' participation in child care because the total allowance period taken individually is restricted up to 12 months<sup>3</sup>. In this

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<sup>1</sup> Espin-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, J. (1992). Gender and the development of welfare regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 2(3), 159-173.

<sup>3</sup> Blese, P. & Seeleib-Kaiser, M. (2004). *The Dual Transformation of the German Welfare*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

research, family policies including following aspects, dual-income and individual-targeting provision, are defined as Social Democracy regime.

Previous research has already pointed out the family policy tradition in Germany from the Christian Democracy to the Social Democracy regime<sup>12</sup>, however, it is unable to explain using existing theories such as party matter's theory, path dependence, and veto-player theory. Parties matter's theory which focuses roles of parties has been paid attention as one factor to expand welfare policy. According to the administrative party has a significant influence on the decision for welfare-policy expansion. For example, Hibbs (1977)<sup>3</sup> explains that conservative or liberal parties tend to avoid the inflation, while social democratic parties tend to focus to decrease the unemployment rate. Although Korpi(1983)<sup>4</sup> argued that the key factor explaining the expansion or variance among modern welfare states could be recognized a strength of social democracy and organized labor. It is well known that CDU plays a role for social policy expansion, thus both SDP and CDU can be identified as 'social state parties'(Sozialstaatsparteien) without the incentive to push for social policy changes. Katzenstein (1987)<sup>5</sup> also insists that due to the "semi-sovereign" characteristic of the German political system with its 'veto player'<sup>6</sup> such as the Federal Council and the Federal Constitutional Court, a comprehensive reform is highly unlikely. However, Seeleib-Kaiser (2002) points out the dual transformation, expansions in public support especially in family policy in Germany, which can be seen as the departure from previous policy path in the family policy according to Fleckenstein (2011)<sup>7</sup>. To solve this puzzle, Martin Seeleib-Keise (2010) analyzes the consensus among political elites and interpretes the family-policy expansion was possible because it has the good reason to solve 'total birth rate and human capital'<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, Blese and Seeleib-Kaiser (2004) suggest adopting constructivist approach, including social learning, ideas, knowledge and political discourse, to explain the family policy reform. By conducting an interview with the authority, they implied that the discourse, increasing the birth rate, seemed to play a significant role. However, the question is still remained that why Elterngeld was introduced while the introduction of child-care facilities, which can be also categorized as a social-democratic policy, was postponed.

This research undertakes in order to seek a way of how the present welfare regime in Germany is identified through explaining why finally Elterngeld was get support at the parliament as the place to appeal people, putting its focus on discourse which can be identified from the minutes of the German house of representatives from 1945 to 2017 to attempt how the discourse<sup>9</sup> has been changed. This study makes an interpretation that the role of discourse can be classified into two aspects: the communication among politicians in internal party conference, and among politicians and people. It seems right to presume that once politician succeed to persuade disputants inside government party by using specific discourse which can be defined as the first role, a possibility to adopt a policy at parliament becomes significantly increasing. However, it cannot neglect the second role of discourse at the parliament because politicians can appeal own party's policies and discourse to people. It should be noted that the discourse using in parliament is just the same as phrases which can be observed in manifests. Taking these matters into account, the discourse in parliament should be considered as the discourse for public and observing the discourse in parliaments has an advantage to understand that what kind of family policies are desirable for politicians to appeal public.

### The discourse variation from 1994 to 2017

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<sup>1</sup> Seeleib-Kaiser, M. (2002). A Dual Transformation of the German Welfare State?. *West European Politics*, 25(4), 25-48.

<sup>2</sup> Seeleib-Kaiser, M. (2010). Socio-Economic Change, Party Competition and Intra-Party Conflict: The Family Policy of the Grand Coalition. *German Politics*, 19(3-4), 416-428.

<sup>3</sup> Hibbs, D. (1977). Political Parties and Macroeconomic Policy. *American Political Science Review*, 71(4), 1467-1487.

<sup>4</sup> Korpi, W. (2006). Power Resources and Employer-Centered Approaches in Explanations of Welfare States and Varieties of Capitalism: Protagonists, Consenters, and Antagonists. *World Politics*, 58, 167-206.

<sup>5</sup> Katzenstein, P. (1987). *Policy and Politics in West Germany – the Growth of a Semi-sovereign State*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Tsebelis, G. (2002). *Veto Players. How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Fleckenstein, T. (2011). The Politics of Ideas in Welfare State Transformation: Christian Democracy and the Reform of Family Policy in Germany. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 18(4), 543-571.

<sup>8</sup> Ristau, M. (2005). Der ökonomische Charme der Familie. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 23(4), 16-23.

<sup>9</sup> Schmidt, V (2008). Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 303-326.

This research chose words as discourse, "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie" meaning cooperation between work and family, and "Gleichberechtigung" meaning the equality of men and women, based on the CDU/CSU election campaign in 2005<sup>1</sup>, the agreement for coalition in 2005<sup>2</sup>, and the previous interview conducted by Seeleib-Keiser (2010). To gauge the discourse variation, this research counts the words from politicians' statements by scrutinizing minutes of the national parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundestag) from 1994 to 2017 and inspects minutes especially around the year 2006 when Elterngeld was introduced<sup>3</sup>. One interpretation of counting politician's words at the national parliament is that words as discourse reflect agreements or vision among political elites in terms of how policies should be aimed as a new welfare state. It should be careful that this research also counts discourse "Vereinbarkeit von Dienst und Familie" and "Vereinbarkeit von Karrie und Privaten", which mean also work-life balance, as remarks of "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie". Table 1 indicates the relationship among periods, administrations, numbers, and dates. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show how these remarks at the parliament has changed from 1994 to 2017; the vertical line indicates number of times and the horizontal line indicates numbers which Table 1 shows. It seems at least right to presume that the discourse, "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie", continues to increase. To observe the variation clear, Figure 3 and Figure 4 show percentages of minutes under specific administration, which "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie" and "Gleichberechtigung" appear more than 10 times in one minute, classifying them into each administration categories. According to Figure 3, a significant increasing of the discourse, "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie", appears from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Schröder administration to the 1<sup>st</sup> Merkel administration. On the other hand, because the discourse, "Gleichberechtigung", draws a U curve according to the Figure 4, the 1<sup>st</sup> Merkel administration can be defined as a turning point to increase the discourse, Gleichberechtigung", contrary to Lang (2008)<sup>4</sup>.

Table 2 summarizes minutes observed significant large numbers of words, "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie" and "Gleichberechtigung" under the 1<sup>st</sup> Merkel registration. One point is that on 3/9/2006, all parties: CDU/CSU, SPD, die Linke, FDP ad Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, approve the concept that Elterngeld stimulates the father's participation in child care<sup>5</sup>. It should be emphasized that this agreement among all parties happened only once during the discussion concerning Elterngeld, leading us to presume that father's participation is defined as one of the most important factors. This characteristic can divide 2 policies, expanding childcare facilities and Elterngeld. According to the minute on 3/9/2006, Ina Lenke stresses that if more women participate the labor market, more men also have to spend family time from the perspective of gender equality. Further focusing on the minute on 9/29/2006<sup>6</sup> when Elterngeld was approved, three points can be observed at issue: Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie, Gleichberechtigung, and economic inequality. Opposition parties such as die Linke and FDP continue to disagree with Elterngeld from the perspective of the economic disparity because its allowance is calculated based on the income contrary to previous family allowance, however, die Linke approves some parts of Elterngeld as fathers' participation in childcare. The government party finally justified the Elterngeld using both discourses, "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie" and "Gleichberechtigung", with emphasizing "equality" of gender to refute the opposition parties' position emphasizing the economic "inequality".

## Conclusion

The fact that strategy using both discourse, "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie" and "Gleichberechtigung" was effective and successful enough to approve Elterngeld in the parliament reveals that the politicians have an agreement that both mothers and fathers should adjust work life balance based on "family", which is also one difference between Elterngeld and the policy for expanding childcare facility. It is sure that the German family policy has changed from Christian Democracy regime to the Social Democracy regime, it cannot be completely accepted that this tradition has completed because Elterngeld includes more significant characteristic as Christian Democracy regime and gains the support among politicians in the parliament as a vision for public. It seems to right to conclude that Germany is revising its traditional welfare policy regime.

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<sup>1</sup>CDU/CSU (2005). *Deutschlands Chancen nutzen. Wachstum. Arbeit. Sicherheit.Regierungsprogramm 2005-2009.*

<sup>2</sup>CDU/CSU & SPD (2005). *Gemeinsam für Deutschland-mit Mut und Menschlichkeit, Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD.*

<sup>3</sup>Deutscher Bundestag Plenarprotokoll ,13,14,15,16,17,18.19 Wahlperiode.

<sup>4</sup> Lang, S. (2009). Contested Institutionalisation: Women's Policy Agencies and Challenges to Gender Equality in Germany. *German Politics*, 18(1), 55-70.

<sup>5</sup>Deutscher Bundestag,16. Wahlperiode, 22. Sitzung.

<sup>6</sup>Deutscher Bundestag,16. Wahlperiode, 55 Sitzung

**Tables and Figures**

Table 1. Relationship between Period, Administration, Number, and Date

Period	Administration	Number by author	Date
13	the 5 <sup>th</sup> Kohl administration	1-222	11/10/1994-10/26/1998
14	the 1 <sup>st</sup> Schröder administration	223-453	10/26/1998-10/17/2002
15	the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Schröder administration	454-633	10/17/2002-10/18/2005
16	the 1 <sup>st</sup> Merkel administration	634-865	10/18/2005-10/27/2009
17	the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Merkel administration	866-1116	10/27/2009-10/22/2013
18	the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Merkel administration	1117-1359	10/22/2013-10/24/2017
19	–	1360-1362	10/24/2017-11/22/2017

Figure 1. The Number of Times Politicians Remark “Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie”

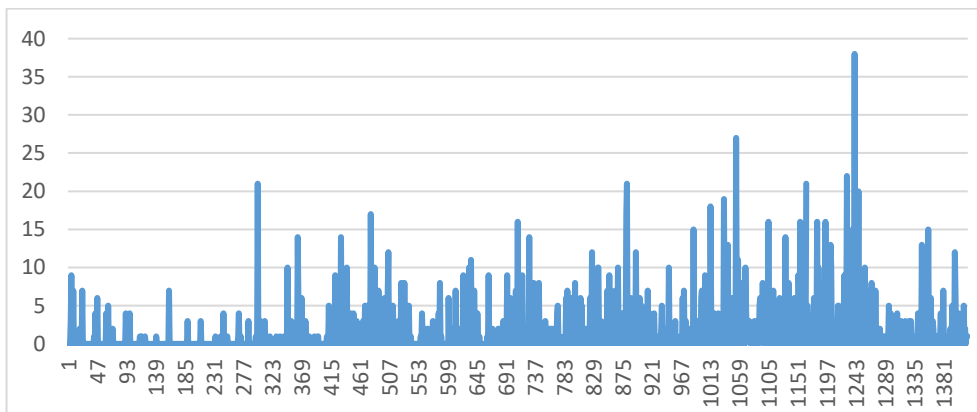


Figure 2. The Number of Times Politicians Remark “Gleichberechtigung”

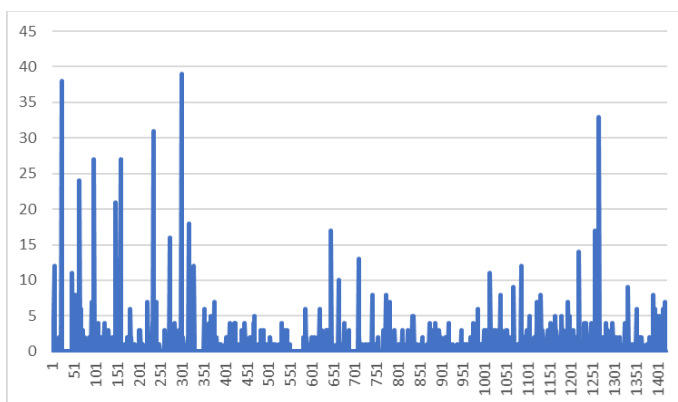


Figure 3. Percentages of Minutes, Appearing “Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie” More Than 10 Times in One Minute

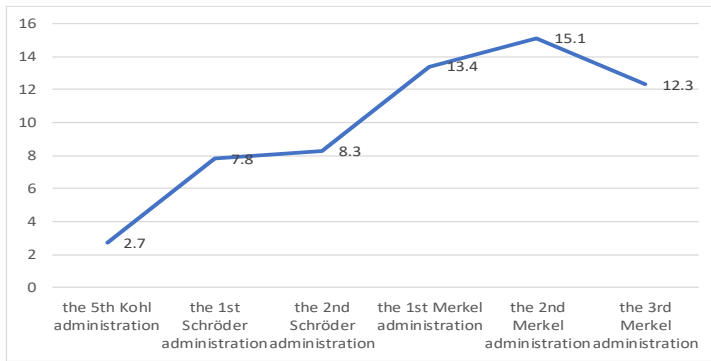


Figure 4. Percentages of Minutes, Appearing “Gleichberechtigung” More Than 10 Times in One Minute

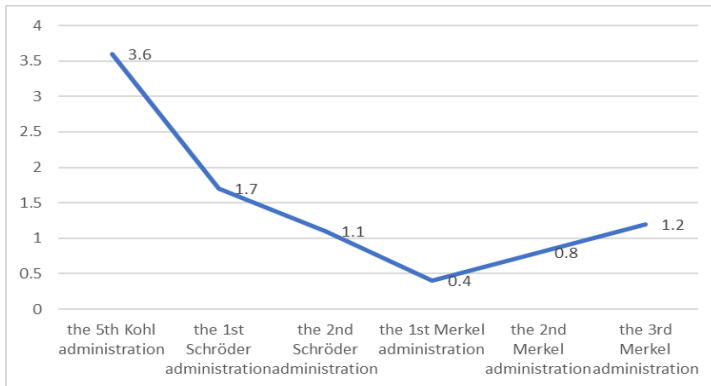


Table 2. Minutes Observed Large Numbers of Words, “Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie” and “Gleichberechtigung” under the 1<sup>st</sup> Merkel Registration

date	num ber of tim es that politicians m en sion "Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Fam ilie"	num ber of tim es that politicians m en sion "G leichberechtigung"
3/9/2006	16	13
6/22/2006	14	—
12/1/2005	9	—
3/30/2006	9	—
9/7/2006	8	—
9/29/2006	8	8