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The Politics of Family and Care Policy Reform

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<1> Abstract

In this chapter we look at the explanatory capacity of different political factors in understanding particular paths of family and care policy reform in Europe. Over the past decade, a growing body of research has been looking at the interactions between changes in the political landscape of Western democracies and social policy (Beramendi et al. 2015; Häusermann et al. 2012). In this chapter we will firstly show the recent paths of reforms in family policy in three countries: Sweden, Germany and Spain that belong to different welfare regimes. The magnitude of reform in this social policy field in former conservative or familistic countries such as Spain and Germany contrasts with the stagnation and ‘limited’ marketization of early developers such as Sweden. Secondly, we will explore possible causal explanations looking at demand and supply factors. On the one hand, the rise of female employment and work-family conflict, together with secularization and cultural change, have been identified as the main factors triggering demand, particularly among women and sociocultural professionals. On the other hand, supply may arise from political parties’ need to attract new groups of voters, the presence of women in politics and from the functional necessities of advanced capitalist economies.

<1> Introduction

The turn of the century has witnessed a constant expansion of family and care policies from a Social Investment (SI) perspective (Daly and Ferragina, 2018). Previous theories anticipating welfare retrenchment amid globalization, population aging and growing financial constrain fall short to explain the unfolding of this process (Pierson, 2001). Even countries considered part of conservative and familistic welfare regimes have enormously expanded these policies, performing a path-departure which deserves attention (Morgan, 2013). Family and care policies have expanded in most countries amid the ever more frequent frame of SI (Bonoli, 2013). Besides the beneficial effects of these policies for social and gender equality, emphasis is now also placed in their positive economic impact in terms of labor market participation of women and human capital formation through, for instance, early years education (Hemerijck, 2013).

At the same time, family policy developments challenge, in some cases, the ‘parties matter’ perspective. The power resources approach held a hegemonic position explaining the expansion of welfare states during the twentieth century through the political representation of working-class beneficiaries by left-leaning parties and labor unions (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Korpi, 1983). Nevertheless, this hegemony may have come to an end due to deep transformations in the socioeconomic structures of postindustrial societies, party-voter de-alignments and the increasing support of conservative and right-wing parties for the welfare state, processes that trigger a

'new politics' scenario (Bonoli and Natali, 2013; Beramendi et al., 2015). As a result, there is a growing interest in linking intersecting gender and occupational dimensions with electoral competition dynamics.

Scholarly literature has turned into examining demand and supply factors that explain policy shifts that directly or indirectly ease the reconciliation of work and family life and externalizes certain aspects of social care. On the one hand, demand arises from the material and cultural transformations of the electorate, and particularly of women. Firstly, variation in female employment, family structures and cultural landscapes alter women's values and economic interests through the emergence of work-family conflict and the decreasing relevance of religion (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Emmenegger and Manow, 2014). Secondly, family policies seem to receive higher support among middle-class sociocultural professionals as part of broader investment/consumption and universalism/particularism choices (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015). On the other hand, supply may emerge from various actors: electoral interests and strategies, the presence of women in politics, and functional necessities. Firstly, parties would implement family policies seeking new voter groups, due to rising electoral volatility and the decreasing relevance of their core constituencies (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). Secondly, the rise of women in politics is considered to be reasonable, although difficult to measure, predictor for policies that address gender issues (for a review see Wängnerud, 2009). Thirdly, policymakers and employers may also support employment-oriented family policies due to new labor and skills requirements and population aging (Fleckenstein et al. 2011).

This chapter is divided into two main sections. We firstly offer an overview of recent paths of policy reform. Sweden is an early developer of family and care policies that pursue universalism and gender equality. Nevertheless, recent center-right coalition governments have implemented policies that contradict this historic trajectory. By contrast, Germany and Spain have departed from their traditional familism by expanding care and family policies considerably over the recent years. Spain has witnessed an important expansion of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and parental leave, which has currently resumed after a long austerity parenthesis. In Germany, an outstanding expansion of ECEC and parental leave by social-democratic and conservative governments constitute a clear path departure. In the second section, we examine different theoretical discussions regarding the role of demand and supply factors in explaining the described policy reforms in our three countries, although explanations may work for a greater number of cases. Concluding remarks are provided in the last section.

<1> Recent paths of reform in family and care policy

<2> Sweden

As it is widely known, the Swedish welfare state was a pioneer in socializing care, supporting the employment of women and embracing a strong political commitment towards gender equality. Since the 60s, a great expansion of publicly provided ECEC and the extension of parental leave was implemented by the consecutive

governments of the Social Democratic Party (SAP), with the support of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and organized women's groups within and outside the labor movement (Daune-Richard and Mahon, 2001; Earles, 2011; Fleckenstein and Lee, 2014). Swedish family policy has been traditionally based on the individualization of welfare entitlement and the pursue of a dual-earner / dual-carer model that intends to stimulate paid work for women and household duties for men (Nyberg, 2004). Nevertheless, a certain marketization of childcare, a decreasing replacement rate of parental leave and the introduction of a stay-home childcare allowance have recently brought concerns over universality and gender equality, as we will show. Despite these recent trends, an earner/carers family model and the use of public ECEC remains the most frequent and economically attractive strategy for families (Tunberger and Sigle-Rushton, 2014). As a result, Sweden remains the source of much (family) policy transfer towards other countries such as Spain and Germany (Windwehr and Fischer, 2020).

During the last two decades, center-right coalitions have introduced layered marketization reforms in ECEC. The center-right coalition that governed Sweden between 1991 to 1994 legalized public funding for private for-profit preschools, finally implementing something for which the Swedish Employer Association and the Swedish Federation of Industries were pressuring since a decade earlier (Earles, 2011). A further step towards privatization was taken through the creation of a childcare voucher system in 2009, creating a national framework of public funding for private ECEC provision (Westberg and Larsson, 2020). As a result, the share of private preschools grew from only 4% in 1970 up to a 28% in 2018 (Skolverket, 2018; quoted in Westberger and Larsson, 2020). The expansion of a private and for-profit ECEC sector had produced some concerns about the universal and redistributive character of the system (van Kersbergen and Kraft, 2017). This is mainly because highly educated parents allocate their children in private centers to a larger extent, which points out to a possible class differentiation in the future (Blomqvist and Palme, 2020). Furthermore, private centers remain free to perform varied and innovative pedagogical approaches.

Nevertheless, state control over childcare delivery remains strong, which limits these concerns. As Gingrich (2011) has argued, introducing markets in welfare provision has varying outcomes depending on the allocation of effective control mechanisms from the part of the state. The fact that private ECEC providers should technically maintain the same fee rules and curricula as public schools ensures that there is not a trade-off between increasing interventions of markets and sacrifices in terms of universality and quality of service provision (Earles, 2011). Moreover, several reforms by the SAP have expanded the inclusive character of the Swedish ECEC system between 2001 and 2003: the system provision was expanded for unemployed and parents on parental leave with other children; a maximum fee for public ECEC centers below 1 to 3% of income was introduced; and 525 hours of free attendance were established for children between 4 and 5 years old (Hiilamo, 2004; Earles, 2011; Blomqvist and Palme, 2020).

Addressing parental leave, it has suffered contradictory developments since the turn of the century: some measures were taken to enhance the gender balance in the uptake whereas replacement rates are being in fact reduced. Swedish parental leave is relatively long, well paid, and also flexible, as it can be taken on a full-time

or part-time basis. Persistent gender differences in the uptake of the leave led the government to double the single month reserved to each progenitor in 2002. Furthermore, the center-right coalition introduced an equality bonus in 2008, creating incentives for balancing the share of parental leave while preserving freedom of choice (Earles, 2011). The bonus provides 100 SEK for each transferable day taken by the parent with a smaller share (usually the father) (Tunberger and Sigle-Rushton, 2011). Meanwhile, net replacement rates are being reduced. Firstly because the income ceiling has remained stable while wages have increased (Blomqvist and Palme, 2020). Secondly, because a modification of taxation since 2010 has caused the rate to actually fall from 80 to 70%, according to recent research (Wesolowski et al. 2019).

Finally, a stay-home allowance following traditional family values was introduced in 2008 by the center right coalition government, particularly advocated by the Christian Democratic party (KD). This policy move constitutes a fierce contradiction with the Swedish social-democratic legacy. The policy consist in a 3000 SEK/month (approx. 300€) allowance for parents of children between 1 and 3 years of age that restrain from using public ECEC. The allowance creates the possibility for parents to either enlarge their parental leave, extend their working time reduction, or contract private home care. As it involves a re-commodification of care and incentives for women to stay at home to conduct care tasks, it has been criticized for creating gender and social inequality. Furthermore, it can also lead to the segregation and isolation of migrant communities, as they are the ones more prone to use this policy due to their lower female employment levels. In addition, outsourcing of care to the market has received further incentives through a tax deduction to domestic services expanded in 2009 (Tunberger and Sigle-Rushton, 2011). As we will review in the following section, the observable difference between the models followed by left and right-wing parties match a partisanship explanation of welfare state reform.

<2> Germany

Germany has traditionally been classified as a conservative welfare state regime, as most of western continental Europe. Overall, this model consists of earnings-related welfare benefits, joint taxation for married couples, traditional family policies and a subsidiarity role of the welfare state in providing social care (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Taken together, these characteristics actively promote a male-breadwinner family model, also providing economic support for women performing unpaid domestic and care activities (Drobnič and León, 2014). Welfare benefits for women being mainly derived from their husbands' employment, there existed little incentive for them to engage in paid employment (Lewis, 1992). The political dominance of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) throughout the second half of the twentieth century explains these policy developments, which match traditional partisanship explanations. As a result, low female employment rates and low childcare enrollment, most of it part-time, was common in Germany. Nevertheless, East Germany showed an opposite picture at the time of the unification: its communist economic regime promoted female employment and childcare was virtually universal (Rosenfeld et al. 2004).

Recent expansion of family policy in Germany departs from this conservative ideal that strongly fostered the traditional male-breadwinner model. Family policy in the 80s and early 90s remained conservative despite shy extensions of parental leave and the introduction of parental benefits in pensions (Ostner, 1998). However, since the mid-90s, family policy in a social-investment and gender equality direction was implemented at different paces by diverse political coalitions and family minister personalities. Beginning with the coalition between the Greens and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) (1998-2005) and accelerated during the CDU-SPD coalition government (2005-2009), there was a great expansion in parental leave and ECEC. While the advocacy of the CDU for progressive family policy has been greatly studied by welfare analysts (Morgan, 2013; Fleckenstein and Lee, 2014), the fact that the later coalition between the CDU and the liberals (FDP) (2009-2013) slowed down these reforms and even introduced a stay-at-home allowance has been rather overlooked (Henninger and Wahl, 2016). Nevertheless, modernizing family policy reforms resumed during the second grand coalition starting in 2013 (Henninger and Wahl, 2019).

The red-green coalition initiated the process of parental leave and ECEC provision expansion, bringing a formerly ignored issue into the agenda. Parental leave at that time was very deficient: its low pay and long duration virtually constituted a job-protection for women to conduct child-rearing. A 2001 reform slightly improved the leave, creating a 450€ flat-rate benefit during 12 months, allowing both parents to go into leave simultaneously and increasing the amount of working time up to which a worker can remain entitled to benefits from 19 to 30 hours (Blum, 2010). Additionally, the reform also gave parents the legal right to work part-time. By the same year, the government reached an agreement with the Länder to provide 4 billion euros of financing in order to expand full-day childcare centers (Augustin-Dittmann, 2010). With this reform, the government aimed at resolving the issue of most childcare centers being part-time —especially in the western area. The expansion of ECEC was made decisive through the Day Care Expansion Act, which promised to provide 1.5 billion of financing per year in order to obtain an increase in coverage of 230,000 places (Augustin-Dittmann, 2010).

In the later period, the conservative CDU was the main responsible of Germany's path departure through a critical expansion of parental leave and ECEC. After their defeat in the previous elections, the party performed a modernization process which brought to higher concerns for gender equality issues. As a result, the presence of female leaders increased significantly (Morgan, 2013). Elections in 2005 led to the establishment of a grand coalition in which the CDU-member Ursula von der Leyen became the minister of Family Affairs, a position from which she implemented a strong reform package. In 2007, the government replaced the flat-rate pay of parental leave with an earnings-related benefit set at 67% of net income and with a top of 1,800€ (Drobnič and León, 2014). In addition, two nontransferable months were reserved for the father. On the other hand, in 2008 the federal government agreed with the Länder to provide additional financing in order to increase 750,000 childcare places and to establish a legal right to childcare for children between 1 and 3 years old beginning in 2013 (Seeleib-Kaiser, 2010). These two reforms constitute a strong departure from a traditional regime towards a social-democratic model which promotes work-life reconciliation and the redistribution of care work across

genders. Numerous papers have been devoted to explaining the paradox of this path departure being steered by a Christian-democratic government, as we will review in the following section.

Nevertheless, virtually opposite policy movements were also adopted during the following CDU-FDP coalition government. With the SPD out of government, amid an austerity environment created by the financial crisis and under the belligerent attitude of CDU Bavarian sister party (CSU), the new family minister Kristen Schröder slowed down previous reforms and implemented conservative measures. During this period, the government failed to implement the promised expansion of parental leave for part-time workers, top-income earners were temporarily excluded from parental leave benefits and the creation of childcare centers was slowed down (Henninger and Wahl, 2016; Windwehr and Fischer, 2020). Despite these austerity measures, the financial situation did not impede the government from creating a stay-at-home benefit of 150€ for parents withdrawing from public childcare use in 2013. These reforms go against previous efforts made by the same party to promote work-family reconciliation in a gender-friendly direction.

Finally, the second grand coalition was able to revert this retrenchment and to redirect family policy. Firstly, the stay-at-home allowance was declared unconstitutional by the Federal Constitutional Court after a formal allegation made by the SPD-ruled Länder of Hamburg. Secondly, with the Family Ministry now under the SPD, parental leave was extended for part-time workers to 24 months, and additional four months of leave were added for parents who work simultaneously (Henninger and Wahl, 2019). The family ministry has also lately aimed at imposing gender quotas in advisory boards and executive positions (Reuters, 2020). In conclusion, the path departure of Germany has been consolidated despite its interruption during the CDU-FDP coalition government. Limits to the major increase in childcare attendance remain in terms of quality of provision and regional differences (Schober, 2014).

<2> Spain

Originally labeled part of continental welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990), many authors have claimed that Spain, together with other Southern European countries, holds peculiar characteristics that made it part of a distinctive regime. Ferrera (1996) and others argued that a Southern European model could be differentiated upon the basis of income fragmentation, low state capacity and particularism/clientelism. Furthermore, this regime is also characterized by an 'unsupported familism' because care is mainly provided by the family even in the absence of conservative family policies (Saraceno, 1994; Naldini, 2003). Nevertheless, despite being late democratizers (with the exception of Italy), Southern European countries, and Spain in particular, have witnessed a spectacular expansion of female employment and gender equality legislation (Guillén and León, 2011). Since the advent of democracy, a gradual access of women to mass education and employment, broad secularization and the spread of civil and sexual liberties have deeply transformed the Spanish society. The expansion of family policies, ECEC services and parental leave schemes experienced a peak moment between 2004 and 2008, and continue to expand today in spite of severe retrenchment during the austerity period.

Path departure from the strong familist tradition of the Spanish welfare state started since the early 90s. During that time, both governing parties, the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) and the conservative Popular Party (PP), introduced gender quotas that made for a major increase of women on politics (Estévez-Abe and Naldini, 2016) and started to implement policies which eased work-family conflicts by outsourcing care from the family. PSOE expanded the duration of maternity leave from 14 to 16 weeks and its replacement rate from 75% to 100% in 1994, constituting a relatively generous leave in comparative perspective at that time. An effort to make ECEC a universal and voluntary right for children between 0 and 3 years of age through the 1990 education reform act ultimately failed, but it did lead to the foundations for a later expansion.

Family policy under PP's government (1996-2004) continued to expand towards the easing of work-life balance for women, although in a rather timid way. Firstly, a 100€ tax allowance for working mothers of children under 3 was introduced in 2000. Secondly, a 1999 reform allowed the leave to be transferable for the father, and introduced the right to work part-time. The latter is potentially effective for work-family reconciliation as working parents are able to choose working time allocation and duration (between one-half and seven eighths of their previous working time). Nevertheless, temporary workers, which make up a high proportion of the Spanish workforce remain *de facto* excluded from this right as employers can choose not to renew their contracts. Thirdly, the government also started to deregulate ECEC and introduced public subsidies for private care.

The real expansion of family policies came under the two terms of center-left PSOE's government headed by Zapatero (2004-2011). The government introduced a consistent agenda on gender equality and anti-gender violence, and it also expanded marriage and parenthood rights to same-sex couples. In 2007, a reform came out with several improvements in the parental leave field: the introduction of a 13 day nontransferable paternity leave; the extension of leaves for recently employed, unemployed and women under 21; and the prolongation of leaves in particular health cases. Moreover, a strong expansion in ECEC was made through the Educa3 program, which aimed for the creation 300,000 new 0-3 places (Ibáñez and León, 2014). In addition, the law on long-term care (2006) created a national system of public care and financial support for private care, constituting the beginning of public support for care for the elderly. Furthermore, a one-time transfer of 2.500€ was created for each newborn baby (*cheque bebé*).

In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, and under the pressure from European institutions, the PSOE government introduced severe austerity measures which affected several of the reforms introduced or announced just a few years earlier. With the aim of reducing the public deficit, strong spending cuts slowed down the expansion of ECEC, dismantled the already timid long-term care policy, stopped the one-off payment for newborns and froze the extension of paternity leave (León and Pavolini, 2014). Perhaps paradoxically, the actual enactment of the great paternity leave extension as envisaged by the 2007 socialist law (from 13 days to four weeks with full salary) happened under the conservative government of Rajoy in 2017, under the pressure from the liberal party Ciudadanos. Just a couple of years later, the coalition government of PSOE and far-left Podemos (UP) further extended paternity leave to 16 weeks by 2021. Currently, while long-term care remains rather neglected, with a demand for formal care that clearly overcomes provision, limits in the supply of ECEC

continue. Even though there has been an expansion of preschool attendance from 10% in the year 2000 to 40% in the 2018/19 course, half of the provision is private and expensive and 60% of centers offer less than 30 hours attendance¹.

<1> Political-based explanations of family policy reform

A large sector of comparative welfare state literature has explained cross-country variation in the implementation of family and other social policies by looking at partisan dynamics. Power resources theory departs from the straightforward linkage between an industrial class structure and political parties developed by the earlier partisan politics approach (Borg and Castles 1981). In the 'democratic class struggle', labor unions and left-wing parties push for redistributive social policies following the interests of their working-class constituencies (Korpi, 1983). Policy decisions in turn expand the size and 'power resources' of these classes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). What follows is that social-democratic parties would advocate the role of the state in providing social care, pursuing universality and redistribution. As we will discuss later on, other authors have commented more recently that the link between social democracy and gender equality cannot be understood without taking into consideration the agency of the labor movement and women's advocacy groups within and outside political parties.

Many of the recent trends of family policy reform reviewed above show that parties 'still' matter. These developments defend the validity of this theory beyond its widely recognized explanatory capacity for addressing social policy reform in industrial contexts. Firstly, Swedish right-wing governments have pushed for marketization of social policies and even introduced a traditional stay-at-home allowance, following a conservative and economically liberal agenda. Secondly, German CDU's family policy has been contradictory if we regard its different terms in office. And thirdly, most of family policy expansion in Spain was implemented under left-wing governments. Nevertheless, unexpected moves from both conservative and social-democratic parties demonstrate the need to introduce novel factors into the equation, or even to re-consider the main theoretical arguments.

A large set of scholars is increasingly criticizing this strong and programmatic link between parties and industrial electoral constituencies assumed by the traditional partisan politics approach (Häusermann et al. 2013). In order to offer alternative explanations for policy development, a burgeoning 'New Politics' strand has aimed at addressing supply and demand factors emerging from the new socioeconomic and political environment of postindustrial societies. In what follows, attention is paid to novel demand-side and supply-side factors that may explain family policy reform. In addition, we attempt to evaluate to what extent do these new perspectives explain family policy expansion in the three countries reviewed above.

<2> Demand-side explanations for family policy reform

Family policies involve both redistributive and cultural conflicts, which cause political preferences to be divided across multiple and intersecting cleavages (Naumann, 2012). On the one hand, scholars of the politics of the welfare state have studied the occupational distribution of preferences for family policies as part of broader investment/consumption and universalistic/particularistic divides (Beramendi et al., 2015). Research illustrates that demand for family policies and other SI policies are especially strong among highly educated sociocultural professionals. On the other hand, numerous scholars have addressed how the expansion of female employment and the emergence of work-life conflict, together with changes in ideas about gender roles, cause women to demand family policies and to vote accordingly. Structural and attitudinal changes would then steer a transition from the 'old' voting gap (women voting for conservative parties more often) to the (inverse) 'new' voting gap due to the more frequent support of left-leaning parties for these policies (Abendschön and Steinmetz, 2014; Emmenegger and Manow, 2014).

Preferences for family policies are not equally distributed across socioeconomic groups with diverging material interests and cultural values. Firstly, literature comparing policy preferences between different occupational groups links family policies to broader choices between policies that protect present 'consumption' and those which constitute an 'investment' in human capital formation and allocation (Beramendi et al., 2015). Fostering work-family reconciliation through good quality parental leaves, ECEC and other policies is considered as part of a Social Investment agenda because it enhances human capital formation. (Hemerijck, 2013). Middle-class sociocultural professionals are expected to have a greater preference for these and other investment policies due to their stronger capacity to face uncertain policy outcomes with respect to working classes, which face more insecure income and living standards (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). Secondly, family policies also trigger new cultural demands towards social and gender equality. . This signals education as another predictor for family policy support. Conservative attitudes among lower-educated working classes with respect to middle classes also lead scholars to expect increasing support for these policies among the latter (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). Recent research has provided robust findings for these arguments, concluding that high education, young age and pertaining to a sociocultural professional class predict support for SI policies in Europe (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015; Häusermann et al., 2019, 2021). In all of the three countries reviewed above, changes in the relative size of those occupational groups brought by deindustrialization have increased the number of sociocultural and service workers at the expense of industrial blue-collar worker (Oesch, 2015). This in turn expands the overall support of family policies among the electorate of these countries.

However, research has increasingly considered the relevance of the gender cleavage in family policy demand. Empirical research demonstrates that women are stronger supporters of policies which foster skill preservation and mobilization (Garritzman and Schwander, 2021). Women's political preferences may be shaped both by their material interests in postindustrial economies and by cultural and ideational shifts. One of the

major transformations in European labor markets has been the incredible rise in female employment, happening earlier in Sweden and more recently in Germany and Spain (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Giger, 2009). At the same time, a persisting imbalance in the gender distribution of domestic and care responsibilities creates conflicts between women's professional and family responsibilities, especially in the more familistic countries of continental and Southern Europe. Moreover, transformations in family structures are caused by the liberalization of divorce, the spread of single-parent households and patterns of dual-earnship (Esping-Andersen, 1999). As a consequence, the resulting opportunities and expectations of women provoke shifts in their economic interests, policy preferences and electoral behavior (see Giger 2009 for female employment and Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006 for divorce rates).

Besides, scholars frequently consider the importance of attitudes and ideas for explaining the demand for family policies. Inglehart and Norris' (2003) revision of modernization theory argues that socioeconomic development steers gender equality not only through women's work but also through secularization and other cultural changes. These authors also find evidence that demonstrates the effect of material and ideational change into OECD variation in actual political preferences and voting. Nevertheless, some scholars have emphasized the relative autonomy of culture and ideas for explaining social and family policy. For instance, Pfau-Effinger (2005, 2008) has argued that 'welfare culture' —ideas and values about social policy and welfare— mediates the two-way relationship between social actors, their preferences and policy-making. A different focus has been adopted by Emmenegger and Manow (2014), which argue that secularization unlocks women's vote to flow following their material interests, previously entrenched in conservative parties due to the secular-religious conflict's capacity to prevent pious voters from voting left-leaning parties. Secularization and other value changes in the German and in the Spanish society may thus contribute to explaining a rise in the demand for family and care policies (Guillén and León, 2011). Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser (2015) find empirical evidence of attitudinal shifts being the best predictors for policy change since the turn of the century in Germany and other 17 OECD countries. In a similar vein, Blome (2016) argues that broad changes in normative beliefs about mothers' employment happening in Germany but not in Italy steered party competition towards the promotion of family policies.

<2> Supply-side explanations for family policy reform

Societal preferences for family policies do not directly translate into policies but they are rather mediated by electoral competition dynamics, coalition potentials and party system contexts. Rather than assuming a traditional partisanship approach, several authors have addressed how parties' policy performance depends on the societal distribution of political preferences. It has been argued that parties may instrumentalize family policies with the aim of attracting new voter groups, particularly women and sociocultural professionals (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). Furthermore, a larger presence of women in politics fosters the amount of resources and efforts allocated to policies addressing gendered issues due to a more effective interest

representation (Wängnerud 2009). Finally, it has also been argued that functional necessities might also lead policymakers and employers to push for employment-oriented family policy reform. Next, we briefly explain these three main sets of arguments.

Firstly, a re-shaping in the size and preferences of occupational and socio-demographic groups steer political parties to compete for new groups of voters. To begin with, the support of the working class for traditional social-democratic parties is falling, and the size of this social class is also decreasing. Due to a reduction in their traditional constituencies, social-democratic implement policy decisions in order to attract new voter groups, particularly women and socio-cultural professionals. This in turn brings traditional conservative parties into the competition for these groups of voters, which become 'contested constituencies' around which electoral competition revolves (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015). According to several scholars (Morgan, 2013; Fleckenstein and Lee, 2014), this is the most robust political explanation as to why the German CDU implemented a path departure in family policy during the first grand coalition. In addition, while the middle class is the main group supporting family policies, its coalition potentials either with working-class or with business groups can lead to different redistributive outcomes (Häusermann and Palier, 2017).

Another challenge posed to the partisan perspective in the explanation of family policies is the variation of parties' implementation of policies depending on the party system and the institutional context. On the one hand, the credible competitors that parties perceive as immediate rivals can configure their policy decisions amid electoral competition dynamics. Empirically, Schwander (2018) has found that conservative parties do not pursue progressive legislation upon the presence of a credible far-right competitor. The recent emergence of far-right parties across Europe may thus prevent center-right parties from supporting social investment policies in the family and care realm. On the other hand, variations in the electoral system and the balance between the executive and the legislative power may alter the dynamics of party competition. Taking into account the institutional context, Estévez-Abe and Naldini (2016) argue that a relatively strong capacity of parties to transform electoral promises into actual policies can unlock 'election-oriented policy making'. In turn, a reinforced relationship between electoral competition and policy-making may politicize family policies, allowing for path-departing policies to be quickly implemented. Despite Spain holding technically a parliamentary government, the relative power of the executive makes it *de facto* more similar to a presidential system, which may explain the magnitude of family policy reform during the government of Zapatero (Estévez-Abe and Naldini 2016).

Secondly, besides implementing family policies, parties may increase the share of their female members or upgrade the ones already present as a process of modernization following the purpose of attracting female voters. As we have seen, this has been the case of PSOE and PP in the late 80s, and of CDU in the late 90s. Whether due to an electoral strategy or not, the presence of women in politics has increased remarkably (Paxton et al. 2010), and this may have important consequences for policymaking. Acknowledging that women in politics make a difference in policy outcomes means adding a gender dimension to class-based partisan perspectives, creating a better-suited framework to account for developments in policies which interact with

gender cleavages. Several scholars have included (or at least control for) women on politics when looking for determinants of family policy expansion. Leon et al. (2019) do so for several family policies in Italy and Spain while Bonoli and Reber (2010) do so for ECEC across the OECD. It is reasonable to expect the presence of women in parliaments to have a political impact as they share similar experiences and expectations in the public and private life with other women (Phillips, 1995). Hence, the increasing number of women in high political ranks in Germany and Spain can be one of the factors behind recent moves in family and care policies. More broadly, several studies have recorded that female parliamentarians have diverging attitudes (Lovenduski and Norris 2003), vote differently (Vega and Firestone, 1995) and give speeches which include distinctive themes (Celis, 2006).

Furthermore, the feminist movement and organized labor may also succeed in pushing for policies which align with women's material interests (Childs and Krook, 1998). Literature looking back at the Swedish case has argued that a gender-neutral perspective falls short to explain why trade unions and political parties supported the Swedish welfare state expansion in a gender equality direction during the 60s (Daune-Richard and Mahon, 2001). Rather, the critical mass of women within the SAP and the LO, together with the relevance of the feminist movement, may have been crucial to explain this development.

Thirdly, some scholars have underlined the role of the functional necessities of advanced capitalist economies when explaining family policy implementation in a social investment direction. Deindustrialization and population aging cause labor and 'transferable skills' shortages in the labor market (Iversen and Cusack, 2000). Hence, employers and policymakers may advocate employment-oriented family policies due to their capacity to increase women's participation in the labor market and to preserve their human capital in the event of maternity (Fleckenstein et al. 2011). Sleeib-Kaiser (2017) argues for instance that employers' organizations played a pivotal role in family policy expansion in Sweden during the 60s and in Germany in the early 2000s. Another argument, put forward by Bonoli (2005) is that the support of employers might be relevant because women, although to a lesser extent than other groups affected by 'new social risks', lack the effective and nominal representation necessary to transform their interests into policies. This perspective considers that functional necessities of advanced capitalist economies may lead political and social actors to implement social investment policies with relative autonomy to electoral competition.

<1> Conclusion

In this contribution, we had two major aims. On the one hand, we have undertaken a thorough analysis of recent family and care policy expansion in Sweden, Germany and Spain, and the main political actors involved. Over the last 20 years, we record a great expansion of parental leave and ECEC in Germany and Spain, and some contradictory moves in Sweden. On the other hand, we have reviewed preexisting and novel explanations for these and other trends in social policy across Western democracies. In recent years, a diverse set of scholars of

the politics of the welfare state have looked into new explanatory factors that challenge the traditional partisanship approach (for a theoretical review see Häusermann et al. 2013). In order to offer a clear summary, we have classified these factors into 'demand' and 'supply' for family and care policies.

In the last two decades, Germany and Spain have eagerly reformed family policy in a SI direction, while Sweden has been overall able to retain the universal character of its provision of social care. Conservative governments in the Scandinavian country have implemented several reforms which seem to contradict the social-democratic character of the Swedish welfare state. The most important one has been the introduction of a child allowance that creates incentives for women's unpaid care work. Nevertheless, ECEC provision and parental leave continue to be at the top of welfare development around the world, and these keep being a frame of reference for reform in other countries (Windwehr and Fischer, 2020). In the case of Germany, we have recorded a path departure from a conservative regime which promoted a male-breadwinner / female-carer model. Consecutive governments have created and enlarged an earnings-related parental leave and also extended the provision of ECEC. Notwithstanding, a CDU-FDP coalition has eventually slowed down and opposed this policy trajectory in the years following the great recession. Spain has also lived a strong retrenchment in family policies during these years but, besides this period, there has been a constant expansion in childcare investment and (especially) in parental leave, mainly implemented by the center-left governments of PSOE.

Traditional partisanship explanations remain valid for many of the policies reviewed. Authors from this schooled considered social-democratic parties to be the most obvious promoters of family policy reforms following universality and redistribution. At first glance, we observe an overall support of these parties for policies which reconcile work and family life in the three cases reviewed. Furthermore, the Swedish conservatives have clearly opposed these reforms. Nevertheless, the attitude of conservative parties in Germany and Spain has been contradictory, expanding family policies in a SI direction in some cases and implementing traditional family policy in others. The German path departure, initiated by the CDU, poses the most important challenge to the 'parties matter' perspective. In the Spanish case, conservatives have also expanded work-family policies albeit to a limited extent.

We have reviewed a series of supply and demand factors that may contribute to explain these unexpected phenomena. To begin with, the increase of female employment, the emergence of the service economy, changes in family structures and deep transformations of ideas and values foster demand for family and care policies among the electorate (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2015). Nevertheless, gender and class cleavages distribute this demand unequally throughout society: women, highly educated individuals and sociocultural professionals are the strongest advocates for these policies (Häusermann et al. 2021). As a result, parties from different ideologies such as the German CDU or the Spanish PP would implement family policies seeking new voter groups, due to rising electoral volatility and the decreasing relevance of their core constituencies. Beyond electoral competition dynamics, the increasing number of women in parliament and in the high spheres of political parties, a change happening in Spain since the 80s and in Germany since the 90s, could have been responsible for a reinforced attention to gendered issues. In the last stance, population aging and labor and skills

shortages are also considered independent factors fostering the supply of work-family policies in advanced capitalist economies.

<1> Notes

¹ Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. Available statistics at:
<http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano/estadisticas.html>

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