Introduction

A Democratic Paradox?

The summer of 2005 was an exciting one in German politics. On May 22, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) suffered a serious defeat in its electoral heartland, North Rhine-Westfalia, which led Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to call for surprise early elections in the fall. The Christian Democrats chose to run Angela Merkel, chair of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), as their candidate. After starting the summer with a 25 percent point lead, Merkel lost ground throughout the campaign. From her controversial choice of Paul Kirchhof as future Finance Minister to her poor performance in the televised debate, it seemed Merkel could do nothing right. On September 18, the Christian Democrats received 35.2 percent of the vote and the Social Democrats received 34.2 percent. Neither major party had sufficient votes to form a government with its preferred coalition partner. After two months of wrangling, Merkel finally emerged as the leader of a grand coalition made up of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats.

Merkel may have seemed like an odd choice for the Christian Democrats. After all, the CDU is a traditionally Catholic party and she is a Protestant. The CDU has traditional social values, yet it elected a woman. The CDU has struggled to gain votes in the former East Germany and has often seemed ineffective when campaigning there, yet the party elected the first eastern Chancellor. How did this conservative party come to make such an unusual choice for the most important position in the country? The answer cannot be that Merkel is such a good campaigner. While she has consistently won her own constituency seat, her lack of charisma and difficulty in the public arena were well known prior to the election.

CDU policy making on "women's issues" also presents a puzzle. The party has historically had a traditional take on women's roles in society,

yet it expanded parental leave, introduced a gender "quorum" and signed on to reform that liberalized access to abortion. What is driving the CDU's agenda on these issues?

Both the CDU's personnel choices and the party's policy making are guided by a logic that can only be understood through studying the party's internal organization. The party's internal structure empowers some groups while disempowering others. I introduce a new theoretical model of party organization, the corporatist catch-all party model, to describe this internal structure. I argue that this form of organization affects party decision making on both policy and personnel issues.

Corporatist catch-all parties represent important internal party groups on the party's decision-making bodies. These parties contain vertically integrated internal groups that have multiple ideological orientations. That is, the groups may be directed at particular societal actors – women, youth, Protestants – but they must also differ from each other in terms of their positions on political issues. Furthermore, in a corporatist catch-all party, these internal groups have some form of assured representation on the party's internal decision-making bodies.

Personnel choices are driven by the party's internal structure. Recognized groups need people to represent them on the party's decision-making bodies. These internal quotas are typically unspoken, but they are reliably followed nonetheless. Merkel's success resulted from her ability to fulfill three important internal party quotas: women, Protestants, and easterners. Because of this, Merkel was frequently a natural choice when an opening became available. Because the CDU strives to maintain a balance in leadership, Merkel sometimes advanced in the party hierarchy ahead of more experienced and better connected men (Wiliarty 2008a).

A related logic applies to policy making. The CDU strives to represent its diverse internal groups on important policy-making bodies. Representation guarantees voice, not outcome. The actual policies advocated and implemented by the CDU are a result of bargaining among these internal party groups.

This form of organization has several important implications for theories of democracy. Conventional wisdom on democratic party theory contains a normative paradox. On the one hand, it is not a good idea for party activists to gain too much power because party activists tend to hold more extreme views than voters (May 1973).[1] If activists' views prevail in policy making, a political party will be less likely to win. If such a party is

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[1] See Kitschelt 1989 for an expansion and partial rebuttal of May.

elected, it will be less likely to implement policies favored by most voters. Underlying these ideas is the assumption that party leaders are more in touch with ordinary voters and that – if they can only steer around their own activists – they will promise and implement policy that is more acceptable to most citizens than party activists would.

On the other hand, political parties themselves are not internally democratic if party leaders are able to impose their preferences on party activists. As we know from the work of Robert Michels and his Iron Law of Oligarchy, party leaders are likely to prevail over activists because they are better informed and have more resources at their disposal (Michels 1962). Therefore party leaders control a party's policy-making agenda. The problem with this view of party politics, from a democratic standpoint, is that there is a normative preference for parties in a democracy to have internal democracy as well. Yet it seems that if activists are in charge, they will lead parties away from winnable policies – and indeed away from the preferences of voters.

This book does not promise to overcome the normative paradox just described. Instead, it examines empirical patterns of policy making in parties in western Europe and finds that the paradox itself may have been falsely stated. A closer look at policy making – and the links between party leaders, party activists, and voters – reveals a more complex, yet possibly also more democratic dynamic. This dynamic can be observed by studying how parties respond to societal change.

This book develops a theory explaining how a political party decides how to respond to societal changes by investigating how the German CDU has responded to new demands from women since the 1960s. After using the German case to generate this theory, I test it by examining Christian Democratic parties in Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands. Women's roles in most western democracies have been transformed since the 1960s. Women are participating in the labor force in much greater numbers. They are going to school longer and having fewer children. They are much more likely to get divorced or never to marry. They are more interested in being politically active. These changes have caused women to want different things from political parties, but not all women want the same things. How is a party to respond to these changes and still recruit a significant number of votes from women?

The paradox about who controls party policy making has been posed as a conflict between leaders and activists. Who will be triumphant in shaping party policy? Whose view *should* prevail for a satisfactory democratic outcome? Empirical study of the CDU's policy making on women's issues

reveals a different sort of dynamic. The struggle within the CDU does not pit activists against leaders. The internal politics of the CDU are more accurately described as groups of activists and leaders struggling with other groups of activists and leaders within the party in an effort to control policy making. This insight about party politics has implications for the quality of democracy. If policy outcomes are determined by internal power struggles, we need to understand how and whether these internal struggles are linked to the preferences of voters. I argue that there is a link though not always a direct one. Furthermore, activists may not be such a bad influence on a party's chances of success after all because they may actually be *more* in tune with voter preferences than party leaders. An examination of how political parties incorporated women's demands can yield new insights on the previously discussed democratic paradox.

Gender and Politics

Incorporating women has been a difficult challenge for political parties, yet this is an area in which enormous progress has been made in recent years. Scholars of gender and politics have developed a rich literature on how to get women's concerns heard by the political system and what role political parties can play. Important insights from this literature include the idea that a strong women's movement can create genuine pressure on political parties and that parties of the left are more likely to be favorably disposed to women's political demands (Duverger 1955: Katzenstein and Mueller 1987; Lovenduski and Norris 1993: Lovenduski and Randall 1993: Caul 1999, Banaszak, Beckwith, and Rucht 2003). An additional strand of the literature, led by the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS) group, argues for the importance of women's policy agencies (Stetson and Mazur 1995; Mazur 2001; Stetson 2001a; Outshoorn 2004; Lovenduski 2005b; Hausmann and Sauer 2007). These are offices within the state bureaucracy that are created at the urging of state feminists with the purpose of enacting public policy favorable to women. In some cases, women's policy agencies are able to act as insiders and advance the cause of women's movement activists. In an ideal case, a strong feminist movement can work together with a favorably inclined left-wing party and an active women's policy agency to pass and implement policy in line with the goals of the women's movement.

The findings of the gender and politics literature are crucial in delineating the conditions under which activists in the women's movement can positively influence policy making. This literature does not have much to

say, however, about how to understand empirical outcomes under other circumstances. A strong and well-organized women's movement can successfully influence politics, but what happens when the feminist movement is weak or not engaged in party politics? Although it is true that parties of the left are generally more favorably inclined to the demands of the women's movement, left parties are not equally interested in women's issues. What about cases where left parties are disinclined to work with the feminist movement? Or time periods when conservative parties are in power? Furthermore, as the RNGS scholarship shows, women's policy agencies can be co-opted by conservative governments and used to legitimate and implement policy that the women's movement disagrees with. Politics on women's issues does not come to a standstill in the absence of a strong feminist movement or a cooperative left-wing party, yet existing scholarship does not give us many tools to understand conservative party policy making on women's issues.

In many ways, Germany is not a favorable environment for the three-way partnership of women's movement, left-wing party, and women's policy agency. These three actors – movement, left-wing party, and women's policy agency – have not always behaved in a way conducive to cooperation with each other and achievement of the goals of the women's movement. This situation warrants elaboration.[2]

The first weak link in the chain is the West German feminist movement. Owing partly to the complete break of the Nazi era and World War II, the second wave West German feminist movement has been generally considered weaker than its counterparts in many West European countries (Schenk 1981; Gerhard 1982; Altbach 1984; Lovenduski 1986). One product of this comparative weakness is that feminist consciousness was less widespread in Germany than its European neighbors in the 1970s and 1980s (Katzenstein M. 1987: 15). Support for the feminist movement has historically also been lower in West Germany than in other countries (Klein 1987).

The "problem" with the West German feminist movement was not just its weakness, but also that the movement's orientation has not been conducive to increasing its political influence. Feminism everywhere is a movement with multiple internal tendencies. Three of the most prominent of these are radical feminism, socialist feminism, and liberal feminism (Ferree 1987: 173; Tong 1998). While liberal feminism and socialist

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[2] The next section draws on Myra Marx Ferree's forthcoming book on the German women's movement.

feminism are likely to encourage feminist engagement with politics, radical feminism, the dominant strain in West Germany, often does not.

Liberal feminists, the group most prominent in the United States, believe that women, like men, should be able to realize their full potential as human beings. What sets humans apart from animals is our capacity for rational action. The state should provide a framework within which women (and men) can pursue their own goals, their own idea of "the good life," but state interference should otherwise be kept as small as possible. Liberal feminists pursue women's liberation through sexual equality. They are divided on how to achieve that goal. Some liberal feminists prefer to treat women the same as men and are satisfied with removing discriminatory policy. Other liberal feminists argue that treating women and men the same will not have the same effect because it is women who bear (and often raise) children.[3]

In both cases, however, liberal feminists focus on removing legal barriers to women's liberation, and this approach has generally led liberal feminists to engage in the mainstream political process. The American women's movement is dominated by liberal feminists. Through the National Organization for Women and a strong connection to the Democratic Party, liberal feminists in the United States have worked for policies such as equal pay for equal work, recognizing sexual harassment, and access to safe and legal abortions. Liberal feminists are interested in making society's rules fair for women and men and this desire generally leads them to engage in politics as a way to influence those rules.

Radical feminists, on the other hand, begin with different assumptions about the source of women's oppression and these beliefs lead them to different actions. Radical feminism, the strand of the movement most prevalent in West Germany, assumes fundamental differences between men and women (Ferree 1987). For radical feminists, women's oppression stems from the entire system of distinguishing men and women, the sex/gender system. This is true whether the differences between men and women are rooted in biology or socialization.[4]

Radical feminists do not usually believe that women's emancipation can be achieved through changing a particular set of rules or policies. Instead,

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[3] Classic texts on liberal feminism include Wollstonecraft 1975, Mill 1970, and Friedan 1974. For overviews of liberal feminism in much more detail see Eisenstein 1986, Kensinger 1997, and Tong 1998.

[4] Radical feminist texts include Firestone 1970; Millet 1970; Daly 1973, 1978, 1984; and French 1985. For more information on radical feminism see Echols 1990, Tong 1998, Crow 2000.

radical feminists argue that women's liberation is achieved through some resolution that addresses the sex/gender system (Tong 1998: 46). Some radical feminists have found the path to women's liberation in androgyny. Others have advocated scientific research designed to find a way to free women from child bearing through the invention of artificial wombs (Firestone 1970 in Tong 1998: 52). What radical feminists have in common is the belief that the sex/gender system is the cause of women's oppression. To overcome this oppression requires some kind of much more fundamental change than can be achieved through policy shifts.

German radical feminists adopted the concept of autonomy to help overcome the sex/gender system. They believed that because contact with men would inevitably involve women's oppression, the only available solution was separation. Through the pursuit of autonomy, West German feminists hoped to find liberation. Autonomy could be found in a variety of areas of life – from demanding control over their bodies and the complete decriminalization of abortion to consciousness-raising groups to separate bookstores, cafes, hotels, and publishing houses. This form of feminism did not lead activists in the German women's movement to make very many demands of the state (Rucht 2003). Instead, feminists feared that working with state institutions might prove to be contaminating.[5]

Partly because of the prevalence of radical feminists in the German women's movement, Germany has no counterpart to the American National Organization for Women. There is no national level organization that might create serious organized pressure from outside the political parties. The *Deutscher Frauenrat* (German Women's Council) is an umbrella organization to which nearly all women's organization in the country belong. However, that means that the *Deutscher Frauenrat* itself is nonpartisan.

Second wave feminism in West Germany has its beginnings in the New Left movement of the late 1960s and the abortion protests of the early 1970s (Ferree 1987: 183). Although the feminist movement helped bring the abortion issue to the political agenda and keep it there, the ultimate legislation was shaped nearly exclusively by the political parties and the Federal Constitutional Court (Kamenitsa 2001: 116–7). (For more on the abortion debates of the 1970s, see Chapter 4.) The lack of influence

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[5] West German feminists were willing to accept state funding for their feminist projects. For more information on the West German feminist movement see Doormann 1980, Schwarzer 1981, Doormann 1983, Ferree 1987, Kaplan 1992, Nave-Herz 1997, Ferree, forthcoming. For a perspective that blames women's exclusion from politics on the gender bias of the German state rather than the factors discussed here, see Young (1999).

of the abortion campaign combined with the conflict with the New Left contributed to the women's movement's commitment to autonomy (Ferree 1987; Ferree forthcoming).

Following the closure of the abortion debate in 1976, the West German feminist movement chose to work for "islands of utopia" – areas of life in which they could live as loyally to feminist ideals as possible – rather than choosing engagement with political parties or the state (Ferree, forthcoming). West German feminists focused their energies on independent projects such as cafes, women's bookstores, and shelters for battered women. Continuing the theme of autonomy, these organizations were run by women, for women. Men were generally not allowed, even as paying customers. The goal of the projects was to provide women the chance at self sufficiency and to make a political statement by showing the possibility of an alternative reality. Projects were generally locally based and run in a nonhierarchical manner, in keeping with feminist values. One result of the focus on the creation of an autonomous feminist sphere, of course, is that political parties did not feel much pressure from the feminist movement to work for particular policy outcomes.

Although the goal of the projects was to create a separate feminist "space" for the various activities, ironically the project work led feminists to begin to make demands on the state after all, in the form of funding. Many projects were funded largely or entirely by the government. Feminists involved with the project work were well aware of the contradictions inherent in attempting to be autonomous while being financially dependent on the state.

Throughout the project phase, then, the feminist movement was not very engaged with the state. Individual projects petitioned for and received funding, often fairly substantial funding, but this situation should not be characterized as a feminist movement moving toward cooperation with a party of the left, even though governments controlled by the SPD were more likely to provide funding for the projects. Instead, the women's movement was situating itself as a client of the state rather than an interest group able to exert pressure to bring about policy change.

Over the course of the 1980s, feminists began to turn more seriously toward the state. For a variety of reasons – the funding issue, the difficulty of sustaining a nonhierarchical organization, the gradual professionalization of some project workers – the project work of the feminist movement began to decline. The new Green Party provided a political opportunity for feminists willing to engage more directly with the state. The Green Party shared many of the values of the feminist movement. Feminists

could become active in the party without becoming members and thereby potentially diluting their feminism. Like the feminist projects, the Green Party attempted to maintain a nonhierarchical organization. The Green Party gave feminist activists a way to begin to pressure the state without having to compromise their core values (Ferree, forthcoming).

The Greens did more than provide an opportunity for feminists to engage with the state; the party actively promoted women's and indeed, feminist, participation. The Green Party promoted women to leadership positions and was the first party in West Germany to implement a gender quota (McKay 2004). The party's "zipper" system, implemented in 1986, called for alternating male and female candidates on the party's electoral lists. The party's caucus in the Bundestag jumped from 26 percent women in 1985 to over 50 percent, where it has remained with the exception of the 1990–4 legislative period. Furthermore, the SPD quickly also implemented a gender quota and the CDU adopted policies to promote women as well (see McKay 2004, and Chapter 5). With feminists more ready to pressure the state and the Green Party (and to a lesser extent the SPD) ready to provide them with a channel to do so, the possibility of a partnership between feminist activists and the parties of the left became more viable. Although the history of the focus on autonomy can still be felt in the German feminist movement today, by the late 1980s, West German feminists were becoming much more comfortable working within state institutions and within political parties. (Ferree, forthcoming; Rucht 2003).

German unification interrupted the coming together of feminist movement, political parties, and the state. The life experiences of women in East and West Germany differed dramatically and the values and goals of their respective feminist movements reflected these differences. In the west, lack of affordable child care and irregular school hours made it exceptionally difficult for women to combine family and career. In this context, feminists in the West tended to view paid employment as the path to emancipation. In the east, paid employment was the norm for women and inexpensive child care was widely available. Feminists from the east were more concerned with the burden of the "second shift" because men in the east were not expected to make any significant contribution to housework or child care. As Myra Marx Ferree puts it, women in the west were dependent on their husband and subject to private patriarchy, while women in the east were dependent on the state and subject to public patriarchy (Ferree 1995; 1997). These differences made it difficult for feminists from east and west to find common ground.

The abortion issue following unification made it even clearer that feminists in East and West Germany had different perspectives. At the

time of unification, abortion was legal during the first trimester in East Germany, but illegal in West Germany and only permitted under certain well-defined conditions. The new law ultimately adopted in the mid-1990s marked a liberalization of the West German law, but a severe restriction of East German law. Once again, the different life experiences of east and west sometimes made East and West German feminists mutually incomprehensible (Ferree 1997; Rohnstock 1994; Helwerth and Schwarz 1995).

The process of unification made it more difficult for feminists to pressure the state. Despite some brief initial success at influencing the course of events – most notably through the founding of the Independent Women's Organization (UFV) – unification was difficult for women in the east, who have been characterized as "victims of unification" (Ferree 1994; Maleck-Lewy 1997). Eastern women were hit particularly hard by the massive unemployment that emerged in the early 1990s. A major reduction in the availability of child care for all ages has left women scrambling to find alternatives. As women's share of household earnings decreased, their power within their marriages declined as well (Meyer and Schulze 1998). Under these conditions, feminist agitation was not the top priority for many women.

Meanwhile, in both halves of unified Germany, as the women's movement became more institutionalized, it also became more dependent on state funding. As feminist projects have become more institutionalized, they have lost much of the utopian character that drew activists to them in the first place. Fewer women are involved in these projects and of those that remain involved, many are seeking employment opportunities rather than "feminist havens" (Lang 1997).

If we consider the chain proposed previously – feminist movement pressures left-wing political party that works through women's policy agency – we see that in Germany the feminist movement often did not choose to pressure German political parties. Instead, the West German women's movement frequently worked outside of mainstream politics to pursue its ends in very different ways. The East German feminist movement was quickly marginalized after unification.

The next actor in the chain, the party of the left, has also not had an easy relationship to the feminist movement. In the United States, the women's movement has often benefited from close cooperation with the party on the left, the Democrats. In Germany, on the other hand, the relationship between feminists and the main party of the left, the SPD, has historically been more contentious.