

The Political Economy of Welfare States: The Divergence of Family Policies in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic

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Abstract

The restructuring of Central and Eastern European countries after 1989 has led to major transformations of political and social institutions. This paper focuses on the institutional legacies, political processes, and the new directions in the gendered nature of welfare state formation in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. Theoretically, this paper builds on comparative welfare state analysis as well as on new institutionalism. The initial hypothesis is build on the assumption that the emerging patterns of family welfare regimes in Central and Eastern Europe diverge from the typology described in the comparative welfare state literature inasmuch as they diverge in relation to each other in the process of gendered welfare regime formation. This paper argues that despite various initial similarities in the pre-'89, there are significant differences in the political institutional setting and post-communist maternal and family policy reforms in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic and consequently in women's relationship to welfare state. The paper seeks to identify central economic and political actors, historical processes, and social variables that might explain the divergence of family policies across these countries.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the literature dealing with Western countries' welfare regime, there has been an ongoing debate in understanding the underlying structure that encourage and sustain a particular form of welfare state. The initial assumption in distinguishing various constructions of welfare state relies on the premise that economic institutions are embedded in social and political communities and that the impact of institutional actions cannot be sorted out from the social and political conditions under which these institutions exist. Within this framework, the literature on comparative welfare states suggests that varied interests' alignment of social and political domestic actors explain the emergence of a certain type of welfare state. Two main camps are discernable; the first, pioneered by Esping-Andersen, suggests that varieties in the working class mobilization explain different forms of welfare regime¹ and the second view, introduced by Swenson, suggests that the shifting capitalist interests' alignment is the main driver².

The mainstream literature on comparative welfare regimes of western European countries and the social and political structures that bring about a particular form of welfare state might not help us fully understand the gendered nature of the welfare regimes adopted in post-communist systems in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. The classical tripartite partnership between the government, employers, and trade unions does not seem to be a reasonable starting point in

¹ Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1993. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Blackwell Publishers

² Swenson, A. Peter. 2004. 'Varieties of Capitalist Interests: Power, Institutions, and the regulatory Welfare State in United States and Sweden' *Studies in American Political Development*, 18, 1: 1-29

understanding the welfare regimes endorsed in these countries in the early phase of transition. I will therefore modify the welfare states comparative approach for the purposes of this thesis paper. First, unlike most research on comparative welfare states, which hypothesizes a high degree of path-dependency, this thesis takes a milder stand in trying to understand the underlying factors of gender relations to welfare state in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. The research conducted on the three above-mentioned countries shows that maternal and family welfare policies vary even in countries with similar institutional features. Using the comparative welfare states' theoretical framework and institutionalism analysis, this research project attempts to identify to what extent the family policies in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic are have been influenced by a number of external and particularly domestic factors. Applying the variation hypothesis to East Central Europe, research shows that countries pursue quite different paths, notwithstanding the shared communist legacies and similar pressures of privatization. Secondly, in line with Esping –Andersen and Korpi's class-mobilization theory, the central analytical argument is constructed on the basis of 'how the balance of class power determines distributional change'.³ Despite these authors' classical typologies and focus on Western European welfare states, in principle, this thesis similarly accounts on how mobilized power ⁴ is translated into desired policies and reforms through the party-system institutions and the parliament accordingly.

³ Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1993. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Blackwell Publishers; Korpi, Walter. 1983. *The Democratic Class Struggle*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

⁴ Conditions for Power Mobilization: Power depends on the resources that flow from electoral numbers and from collective bargaining power mobilization, which in turn, depends on levels of trade unions organizations, share of votes, and parliamentary and cabinet seats held by left or labor parties.

In an attempt to identify the central economic and political actors, historical processes, and social variables that might explain the divergence of parental and family policies across these countries, the given research paper is structured as follows. *Initially*, along Esping-Andersen theoretical framework, this thesis does account for the historical legacies behind maternal and family welfare regime divergences in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. Similarly, pre-capitalist patterns of working class political mobilization, political coalition building, and previous political economic reforms are considered important elements in shedding light on the gendered welfare state regime adopted by these new democracies. For the purpose of the first chapter, Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic are going to be analyzed in isolation to employers' and trade unions' direct influence on policy-making and the focus is going to be placed solely on the initial party-system division and interest groups articulation along political party discourses that emerged in the new democracies. Thus, the first chapter focuses on the party-structure analysis, as the main driver of the social policy decision-making process, and additionally at the political salience of social security issues in all the countries in discussion.

The second chapter empirically lays down the principles of allocation of the parental and family policy's social security regime resources in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. In attempting to point out at the differences in family benefits in the three countries in analysis, a detailed comparison of family policy reforms proceeds by describing the bases of generosity and entitlements for each policy provision; the timing of the reforms and the internal and external constraints; the degree to which state policies encourage women's paid and unpaid work; and to what extend the state policies in all these countries create distinctions among women by their class status. The differences observed in the family policy provisions seem to shape women's position in the labor market and family, the particular welfare regime adopted, and its long term

consequences on women's social position. One of the most important features of the variance observed in family policy outcomes derives from the universal eligibility nature adopted in Hungary and Czech Republic, and the mean-tested eligibility criteria implemented in the Poland.

Lastly, the third chapter links the political-institutional setting and family policy reforms in an attempt to identify the underlying factors of a particular gendered welfare formation and its social consequences in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. According to this research paper line of argument, it is observed that all the countries in this study started off with similar family welfare regime conditions and the social role conferred to women during communism. From the countries in study, Hungary and Poland start off not only with the same communist family benefits legacy but also with very comparable political institutional settings. However, during the two decades of democratization, the maternal and family policies and the women's role as dual-earners have come to position themselves in the opposite side of the continuum. Czech Republic, on the other hand, emerged out of the communist period with fairly distinct political-institutional legacies and similar communist family welfare regime with the other two previously mentioned countries. However, during the liberalization process, Czech family welfare regime started to increasingly converge with the Hungarian gendered welfare regime. Overall, while Hungary shifted to a more socially protective system due to political pressures coming from middle-class women's interest groups, the Czech family welfare system smoothly continued to preserve its protectionist social system, which is based upon solid political-economic institutional grounds, where the 'left' coherently represents the working class interests. Poland, on the other hand, could be distinguished for its durable conservatism with respect to gender roles and the political marginalization of woman, where the Catholic Church displays a great bearing on the political-

institutional setting. In Poland, women, have become continuously dependent on their husbands, family, and market to cope with the low level of state involvement in protecting ‘mothers’.

1.2 Theoretical background

Mainstream comparative welfare state analysis attempt to explain the crucial elements on how a state provides welfare services and benefits for its citizens. One important camp of comparative welfare regime literature’s scholars, best represented by Esping-Andersen, suggests that western European countries are quite similar to each other in terms of industrialization, economic growth, and capitalism, except for the *working class mobilization* variable. Esping-Anderson (1985) followed by Korpi (1993), Myles (1984), Schmidt (1978), Cameron (1978) find evidence that the history of political class coalitions is the most decisive cause of welfare capitalism.⁵ Therefore, as a result of the nature of the class mobilization and political coalition structures, Esping-Andersen distinguishes three main forms of welfare regimes; *residual*, *conservative*, and *universal* welfare systems. The regime typology is built on a ‘power resource model’⁶ assuming that that the degree of ‘decommodification’⁷ depends on the relative power of

⁵ Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1985. *Politics Against Markets: The Social Democratic Road to Power*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press;

Korpi, Walter. 1983. *The Democratic Class Struggle*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Myles, John. 1984. Does class matter? Explaining America’s welfare state. Paper presented at the Center for the study of Industrial Societies, University of Chicago (November)

Schmidt, M. 1987: The politics of labor market policy. In F. Castles, F. Lefrer, and M. Schmidt (eds). *The Political Management of Mixed Economies*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Cameron, David. 1978. The Expansion of the Public Economy? *American Political Science Review* 72 (4): 1243-1261.

⁶ Korpi, Walter. 1989. “Power, Politics, and State Autonomy in the Development of Social Citizenship.” *American Sociological Review* 54: 309–28.

Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1993. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Blackwell Publishers.

⁷ Decommodification—the less a person’s total income is based on income earned from wage labor, the more decommodified the person is. by reducing the significance of being a “commodity,” or reliance on wage labor.

trade unionism and party development. Anglo-Saxon countries, which fall under the residual welfare state model and where the decommodification level is the lowest, deliver minimal welfare benefits to its citizens and the state delegates its welfare regulatory power to the market. Corporatist or conservative welfare state, such as those found in Austria, France, Germany, and Italy give a greater attention to the class structure. This model assists in the preservation of societal class-divisions by attaching different rights to different groups of people in the process of assisting particular social classes more than others. One of the main characteristics of this model, shaped by the Christian family values, is associated with conservative policy arrangements that privilege a male breadwinner family model by providing generous motherhood benefits at the expense of gender equality. The universal welfare regime, which exists exclusively in Scandinavian countries, provides equal benefits to all the societal classes. Therefore, it promotes a high level of social equality by similarly addressing to both the market and the traditional family; working classes and middle classes; females and males.

Despite serving as a solid ground of reference in most comparative welfare regime studies, the 'power resource model' has been continuously critiqued for its lack of focus on the gendered construction of welfare states. It is as such that the scholars interested in the gender dimension of welfare states have developed their own typologies. Orloff, one of the most prominent feminist scholars, offers a different perspective to the class power explanation by looking more closely at the family, social services, and power relations between women and man. By critiquing Esping-Andersen and its followers, she suggests that the relation of the welfare state to paid labor should not be divorced analytically from its relation to the organization of caring and reproductive labor, much of which is done by women but not

acknowledged as a basis for welfare rights and benefits in the same way as men's wage labor.⁸ It is as such, that Orloff and many other feminist scholars critically assessed the comprehensiveness and construction of the 'decommodification' model by accounting for social activities other than market-based employment, which provides more space for the family variable analysis. As a result, the power relations between man and women are seen in another light. Following this logic and by examining women's relationships to paid and unpaid work, Sainsbury, created her own typology of dual-earners and male breadwinner model.⁹ The majority of feminist scholars focused on family social policies and constructed their own typologies in an attempt to better understand to what extent women were able to choose between family responsibilities and pursue their own professional career. Thus, the role that women were taking in the family and their work was greatly shaped by the public provisions on maternal and childcare benefits. Jane Lewis, a prominent British sociologist, divided welfare states according to the 'degree of strength' of the male breadwinner model on a scale of strong, moderate, and weak classifications.¹⁰

With the opening up of the Central and Eastern European countries in the 90s, many scholars began to analyze the new emerging patterns of welfare state. Due to the lack of focus on these countries, a new comparative research on welfare state provisions (Blossfeld and Mills

⁸ Orloff, S. Ann. 1993. Gender and the social rights of citizenship. *American Sociological Review* 58, 646 303–328.

⁹ Sainsbury, Diane. 1994. *Gendering Welfare States*. New York: Sage Publications.

O'Connor, Julia, Ann Shola Orloff and Sheila Shaver. 1999. *States, Markets, Families: Gender, Liberalism, and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰ Lewis, Jane. 1993. *Women and Social Policies in Europe: Work, Family, and the State*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Lewis, Jane. 2003. "Gender and Welfare State Change." *European Societies* 4 (4): 331–59.

2003; Esping-Anderson 1996; Offe 1993)¹¹ as well as on its gendered formation dimension took off (Deacon 1992; Deacon and Szalai 1990; Einhorn 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000; Haney 2002; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998). Despite their thorough analysis in the transition countries, these researches tended to treat the Central and Eastern European countries as a homogenous bloc. The mainstream literature¹² on post-communist countries argues that the welfare system in CEE countries was influenced by the model presented by international financial organizations such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. They suggest that Central Eastern European countries initially lacked well-functioning interest groups that would serve as partners in the social partnership model. However, as this thesis will attempt to prove, the process did require a degree of political consensus in a social partnership model.

Thus, it became understandable that the transition countries could not be explained through the theoretical underpinnings of the western welfare regimes but only by uncovering empirical realities we could better understand the process of gendered welfare formation in the post-communist capitalist societies. In exploring the social protection family regime in Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic, this research paper will attempt to bring gender into the comparative analysis of the welfare states and social citizenship. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the relationship between gender-relevant dimensions of social policy with those identified by the mainstream literature in an attempt to understand how political legacies, institutional arrangements, and family policy reforms have a direct bearing upon the female's role in society.

¹¹ Blossfeld, Hans-Peter and Melinda Mills. 2003. "Globalization, Uncertainty and Changes in Early Life Courses." *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 6: 188–218.

Offe, Claus. 1993. "The Politics of Social Policy in Eastern European Transitions: Antecedents, Agents, and Agenda of Reform." *Social Research* 60 (4): 649–84.

¹² Deacon 1992; Deacon 2000, Deacon and Szalai 1990; Einhorn 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000; Ferge 2001; Haney 2002; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998

Chapter 2: Initial Post-Communist Political Divisions in Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic: in the light of Pre-Capitalist Institutional Legacies

2.1 Introduction

In a variety of cases, the literature on post-communist capitalism places great emphasis on the ad hoc economic and social policies employed at the begging of the transition. Often it has been argued that due to the disintegration of the previous political and socio-economic networks and patterns, initially, CEE countries lacked well-functioning interest groups that would serve as partners in the social partnership model. The non-existence of private property during communism meant that there was no legacy of employer coordination after 1989. As such, King observes that in Czech Republic and Poland similar paths of reforms to market economy were undertaken, while Hungary pursued a more gradual reform process towards market liberalization¹³. In the first two countries, the first post-communist government pursued a radical course to market economy through ‘shock therapy’¹⁴. According to him, Central and Eastern European countries’ capitalism was characterized by a lack of working class mobilization combined with outdated technologies and a heavy reliance on foreign capital¹⁵. In the application of varieties of capitalism in post-communist Europe, Bohle and Greskovits have argued that Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland fall into the same group of ‘*embedded neoliberal*’ welfare regime, which is essentially based on ad hoc and politically targeted welfare benefits. This type

¹³ King, P. Lawrence. *Explaining Postcommunist Economic Performance*. William Davidson Working Paper Number 559. May 2003

¹⁴ Rapid and extensive price and trade liberalization, stringent monetary and fiscal stabilization, and the implementation of mass privatization program.

¹⁵ External debt per capita 1989 (in US \$): Poland –\$ 1,134; Czech Republic-- \$ 636. King Lawrence in “Explaining Postcommunist Economic Performance.

of welfare regime failed to offer institutionalized voice to Unions and ‘losers’ of the reform and provided some safety nets to overcome opposition to reforms¹⁶. Bohle and Greskovits, as well as King, suggest that the initial reform package was prepared in a highly isolated institutional setting, mainly because inherited institutions of labor representation were dismantled. However, to what extent the new institutions were embedded in previous social and political system and how much they were socially inclusive varied among Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic. Most of scholars dealing with the post-communist CEE countries have overemphasized the ‘socially inclusive policy’ similarities in relation to the neoliberal reforms, which would slow down the decline of social groups to underclass statuses, while underestimating the prospect of divergent welfare regimes’ creation.

2.2 Pre-communist Institutional legacies

Despite various similarities in 1989, this did not necessary mean that countries with similar starting conditions would end up with similar system. The adoption of the new liberal democratic political economy was hindered by complex pre-communist and communist rule legacies. Although these countries shared a common central-planning inheritance from communism, they were also diverse in history, culture, and anti-communist social movements. While King, Bohle and Greskovits, put more emphasis on the politically driven process of the ruling class of the time in advancing with different social policy reforms, Kitschelt does account for the pre-capitalist legacies of these countries as a stepping stone in explaining various party-

¹⁶ Bohle, D, and B. Greskovits. Neoliberalism, Embedded Neoliberalism, and Neocorporatism: Paths towards Transnational Capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe. West European Politics May 2007.

system elements¹⁷. In the ‘embedded neoliberal’ welfare regime group, initially Czech Republic and Poland were the ones that did undertake more radical reforms to liberal market economy transition. Nevertheless, there was considerable variation in the socio-economic features and pre-capitalist political patterns, which shaped party formation and coalition building. Pre-capitalist legacies influenced to a great extent the degree and form to which the political networks and initial party divisions evolved in the early phase of transition.

According to Kitschelt, Mansfelova, Markowski, and Tóka, Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic came out of communism with comparably different pre-communist and communist rule institutional legacies. Czech Republic, which stood out from the other two countries, did inherit distinctive institutional settings in the emerging political economic conditions, namely ‘*bureaucratic-authoritarian communism*’, which differed from all the other CEE countries. Along the same line, Polish and Hungarian ‘*national accommodative communism*’¹⁸ legacies were transmitted in the new political regime. The pre-communist legacies might shed light on the inclination of the parties to appeal to the electorate. During the interwar-period, Czechoslovakia was a functioning liberal democracy with a programmatically crystallized party system and a highly mobilized working class. Poland and Hungary, on the other hand, was under a parliamentary democracy and exhibited semi-authoritarian political rule features. During the inter-war period, Poland and Hungary, unlike Czechoslovakia, was comparably less industrialized and as a result the working class was not politically mobilized.

¹⁷ Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdena Mansfelova, Radoslaw Markowski, Gábor Tóka. Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation. (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

¹⁸ Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdena Mansfelova, Radoslaw Markowski, Gábor Tóka. Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation. (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

2.3 Anti-communist political mobilization forces

The communist rule in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic correspond to different degrees of anti-communist social forces' strength and orientation that leads to the subject of party system formation. Indeed, the degree of anti-communist social forces mobilization variable is the one where the highest level of divergence can be noticed among these countries. In Czech Republic, the anti-communist demands for regime liberalization, which reached its peak with the Prague Spring in 1968, was activated by reformers within the communist political elites. This led the way for a mass movement from below, which intention was to reform rather than to overthrow the communist system. Additionally, due to a secularization of political and public life since interwar period, the Catholic Church did not play the classical 'Gramscian' counter-hegemonic role in opposing the communist regime.

In Poland, in the early 80s, an emerging alliance among the working class, critical intellectuals, and technocrats operating within the communist party, strongly supported by a traditional anti-communist Church, started to voice their concerns about the existing political and social system. In Poland at the time seemed to emerge, what Gramsci would consider, a strategic class alliance into a counter-hegemonic bloc. The formation of this alliance named 'Solidarity' was based on common interests. Politically, all wanted freedom from the bureaucratic state and in '81 Solidarity seriously challenged the communist state-party apparatus. Contrary to Czech Republic, in Poland there seemed to emerge an open conflict between the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic forces. The strength of Solidarity's alliance, lied on the fact that it was primarily driven by the working class, which meant that the struggle was taking place along old industrial lines. Furthermore, since communist discourse favored the working class, the civil

society discontent, had to be channeled within a pro-working class language¹⁹. In this way, the communist regime would have to deal with labor discontent as a response to the expectations created by its own ideological system. In Poland, the Catholic Church played a crucial role in organizing the counter-hegemonic bloc and upheld an intermediary role between the existing government and the opposition forces.

Hungary experienced the major communist resistance in the years between '53 and '56. Unlike the Polish case, the Hungarian communist rulers adopted a strategy of social consensus building by emphasizing economic liberalization and the satisfaction of consumer demands more than by tolerating spaces for political dissent. It was only during the last period—80s that the communist regime started to become increasingly unpopular due to increasing economic difficulties and foreign indebtedness. It was at this time that reform-minded communist officials started to work on the possibility of further economic and political liberalization and a smooth transition from the socialist planning to a more liberal political economy. Not only did Hungary lack the Solidarnosc experience of open, polarized confrontation with the communist leadership, and as a result the involvement of the Catholic Church as a dominant political actor, but as well the very hostile anti-communist public opinion that became prevailing in Poland.

2.4 Post-'89 Party-System divisions

In the emerging liberal democracy regime, an analysis of the party divisions shows that in the early years different legacies of pre-communist as well communist rule resulted in different party identification tendencies in both these countries. Surprisingly, the new parties manifested a

¹⁹ Ost, David (2006): *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Post-Communist Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Ch.1, 5) pp. 13-37, 121-179

tendency to organize party-voter linkages according to the inter-war programmatic appeal legacies. Thus, it is not inappropriate to claim that the emerging party system did not form in an ideological vacuum but that there is striking continuity of political party appeal and interest groups relationship. Czech Republic had inherited high levels of professional technocratic bureaucracy from communism, which reinforces the linkages among political actors, in comparison to the less bureaucratized communist regime in Poland, and Hungary.

In Poland, party positing across economic and socio-cultural issues became very ambiguous in the after-math of '89 break-up with the communist system. The politicians did not align along clear economic class interests issues but put more emphasis on issues of political identity. As such issues of socio-cultural, national, and ethnic identifications became the main axis around which the new parties aligned. There is an evidence of continuity from pre-communist party identification on religious and national issues that exposed itself in the new political economic regime. The post-Solidarity forces mobilized and articulated their political identity around the Catholic Church, while the former communist embraced the new socio-economic liberal democracy principles and started to reform around these lines. Furthermore, at the beginning of the liberalization process, the previous anti-communist bloc 'Solidarity', a coalition of various social forces, did not reach a consensus on economic liberalization policy package²⁰. The working class forces, as the main counter-hegemonic social force, did not voice a distinct political program. The sudden demise of working class interest's articulation could be explained with the simple fact that during communism the counter-hegemonic movement had to be instrumentally channeled within a working class discourse to be successful. Therefore, it is

²⁰ Ost, David (2006): *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Post-Communist Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Ch.1, 5) pp. 13-37, 121-179

not completely clear if the working class social forces, as such, possessed any real political strength. Moreover, Poland could not rely on a pre-communist tradition of working class mobilization on shaping the new party system. Consequently, this placed economic-distributive issues at the central attention of political competition in Czech Republic but not in Poland.

Similarly to the Polish party-system setting, Hungarian political parties did not develop clear programmatic profiles on socio-economic issues, but even more than in Poland they judged political-cultural issues to be substantially more important. Among all countries, Hungarian party profiles have the weakest degree of programmatic crystallization along the left-right classical political divisions. Thus, the socio-cultural issues have the relatively greatest capacity to structure party-competition. In countries with reformist former ruling parties and negotiated transition, such as Poland and Hungary, polarization on economic issues tend to be less pronounced. Due to its negotiated political opening and the absence of strong anti-communist umbrella organization, Hungarian parties began to form early before the first democratic elections.²¹ Since Hungary experienced a long tradition of economic reform, the post-communist parties largely preserved its agenda on protectionist and secularist economic, political, and social policies.

In contrast to the Polish and Hungarian emerging parties, in Czech Republic, religious, national, and ethnic socio-cultural issues did not become a principal focus of the political elites. In fact, they constitute a rather marginal role at the level of political competition among party alternatives. Czech Republic early industrialization and secularization had wiped away the salience of moral and gender-related issues and thus the possible influence of the Catholic

²¹ Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdena Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, Gábor Tóka. *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*. (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Church as a political actor. In the light of changing conditions, Czech politicians voiced their party positions around issues of economic-distribution. Czech system, which during the inter-war period enjoyed a relatively industrialized economy, had an old tradition of political class competition among capitalist and working class interests. Alignments of political actors along these lines endorsed the formation of political divisions primarily along economic issues.

There is clearly a difference between the Polish, Hungarian, and Czech party-system divisions on policy preferences; the latter emphasized the importance of economic-distribution issues and the first two voiced party alternatives along socio-cultural issues. In Czech Republic, the competing political alternatives approximated a one-dimensional political divide between *economic protectionism* and *market liberalism* party alternatives, in which left/right are conceptualized in their classical form. Overall, in Poland and Hungary, due to their focus on socio-cultural and national issues, party divisions became more complex and revolve around more than just one axis. Polish and Hungarian political competition promoted a trio-polar divide among *secular libertarian*, *market-liberals*, and a *national authoritarian camp*. In Poland, the *national authoritarian camp* consists primarily of former Solidarity forces, which evoke national and moral traditions and present themselves as “critics of boundless market liberalism and individualism”²² In Poland as well as in Hungary; competing political forces accentuate the relevance of the libertarian-authoritarian axis, with a limited diversification on the economic issues. In both countries, the main forces competing for power are *post-communist* and *Christian nationalist*. The *market liberals*, a secular and post-communist party, acts as a tertiary force, which often has become part of coalition building of both camps. Out of the three countries,

²² Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, Gábor Tóka. *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*. (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Czech Republic manifests the highest level of pragmatic crystallization along economic issues²³ and as such the most defined party competition over economic policy divisions.

2.5 Social policy party divisions on a left-right scale

Since the main goal of this thesis research derives from an interest in finding out variances or similarities on the welfare regime elements in both these countries, a quick look at party position on social security policies on a left/right scale is necessary. In all the three countries, the post-communist parties are placed practically on the left of the left/right axis, endorsing the welfare economic protectionism, whereas there is a clear difference between the liberal forces. In Czech Republic, the market-liberal parties with a coherent economic program are situated near the rightist pole of the scale. In Poland, by contrast, the market liberal parties are situated in the center of the scale. In fact, the entire spectrum of parties is situated stronger to the welfare state pole. Consequently, we can notice that the political division over issues of economic protectionism is much smaller in Poland than in Czech Republic. In Hungary, the post-communist, liberal and conservative-nationalist forces are as well positioned more in the center of this continuum. However, in a slight difference with Poland, where the post-communist parties adopted a more liberal agenda, the Hungarian post-communist parties did maintain a more coherent socialist agenda, which has its roots in the legacy of the reformist communist forces. Overall, there are variations in parties' relative position on a left-right scale, which

²³ If political parties build pragmatic appeal to electoral constituencies on salient issues, they must express unambiguous policy divisions that are widely agreed on by their own politicians and recognized by their competitors.

suggests that the issues according to which politicians attribute left-right positions to parties in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic are not the same.²⁴

According to the empirical evidence offered by “Post-Communist Party Systems”²⁵, Poland and Czech Republic political parties demonstrate similar levels of issue salience on economic issues and the greater difference can be observed on political and cultural issues. The Hungarian political party-system, where the party-competition is clearly more pronounced on political-cultural issues, follows the two previous countries in this analysis. In the mixed economic-cultural category, healthcare social policy as well as childcare policy and women’s labor market representation receives below average rating in all the three countries. Although, women everywhere were the main losers of the political economic transition process, this pattern shows that Czech, Polish, and Hungarian political parties generally paid generally little attention to the special burdens imposed on women in the first stage of transition process. Evidence shows that there is, nevertheless, an uneven degree of issue salience especially on issues, such as women’s choice of abortion and Church influence on education. On these political and cultural issues, Poland manifests a higher level of political parties’ issue salience compared to Hungary and Czech Republic. The Church-State relations that emerged during the formative phase shaped to certain extent the welfare state institutional structure. As we already mentioned above, the empirical evidence proves that in Poland there is a greater disparity between secular and religious party positions, whereas in Czech Republic the center gravity leans towards secularism, while in Hungary the major political discrepancy revolves around secularist and nationalist forces. Overall, Czech Republic did exhibit more coherent party program crystallization.

²⁴ Analysis of the empirical research is drawn from: Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, Gábor Tóka. *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*.

²⁵ Ibid.

2.6 Reinforcement of party-system Institutional legacies

The impetus giving rise to institutional change happens, when the equilibrium of societal forces shifts. However, the way different societies respond to the new changing conditions greatly varies. The new situation offers many alternatives, and the “new course of behavior is influenced by past patterns of behavior”,²⁶ notwithstanding the societies’ consciousness to the new changing conditions. In a simplistic form, the new institutional equilibrium would be either reinforcing or undermining of the past behavior, leading to institutional stability in the first case and instability in the latter²⁷. Overall, Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic equally preserved the previous social norms and ideological appeal to the inter-war period electorate, which reinforced itself over time and encouraged economic and socio-cultural reforms revolving around issues of classical left/right economic political debate in Czech Republic and around left/right ideological debate (libertarian/authoritarian axis) in the other two countries.

Nevertheless, in considering these countries policy preferences in the post-’89 period one major aspect of the rational political actor’s behavior has often been undermined. Policies that are likely to encourage institutional and political change, give incentives to political elites to undertake a course of action, which minimize their fears of losing power. As a result, they would offer preferential treatments to those socio-economic actors that are likely to transfer their interests in political support. Once the new equilibrium reinforces itself, there is a good reason to think that ‘individuals would continue to follow these patterns of behavior even under conditions

²⁶ Grief, A. and D, Laitin. (2004). “A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change”, American Political Science Review, Volume 98, No. 4. (633-652.p.)

²⁷ Ibid.

of marginal parametric change.’²⁸ In Czech Republic the previous political and social networks within the bureaucrats and between the bureaucrats and interest groups lead to the creation of a new political equilibrium, internalizing itself in the new bureaucratic structure and culture in the form of ‘reinforced Weberianism’. In a long run, this led to a new institutional stability, which assisted in implementing reforms around competing economic issues. As a result in Czech Republic, parties show a strong programmatic crystallization on economic and mixed issues, whereas Polish and Hungarian party-system shows a greater programmatic crystallization on socio-cultural issues. How this factors and the political mobilization variable influenced the policy outcomes on paternal and family benefit policies will be discussed in the third chapter.

²⁸ Grief, A. and D, Laitin. (2004). “A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change”, American Political Science Review, Volume 98, No. 4. (633-652.p.)

Chapter 3: Family Policy Reform in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic

3.1 Similarities—Initial Conditions

There are important similarities in the ways in which maternity and family benefits were regulated in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic during communism. In all three countries, women were the ones primarily supposed to take care of children, conforming at the same time to their role as mothers and workers of the proletariat. Firstly, there has been a similar pronatalist trend in the three countries in question. Maternity and family provisions in Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic attempted to promote births and increase the size of the population and thus the socialist labor force, which was rapidly declining from the '60s and later. The communist governments in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic attempted to achieve this goal by introducing generous maternity-leave benefits and state contributions to childrearing. However, the birth rates continued to steadily decline in many Eastern European countries and this trend became more persistent after '90s.²⁹ Secondly, in accordance with women's dual role as *wage-earner/mothers*, women were the primary recipients of family policies and they were expected to withdraw from the labor force after childbirth. Therefore, fathers were excluded from parental-leave policies³⁰, which would enable them to look after children outside the labor force. Despite the fact that socialist maternity-leave policies were designed to allow only women

²⁹ The terminology of family policies is quite confusing because each country has a slightly different system and a different way of designating each policy. To systemize these differences, we will use the same term: **Birthing Leave**—Leave granted to new mothers with pay; **Parental Leave**—long-term period of leave offered to both parents after the birthing leave expires; **Parental Leave benefits**—the pay for parents, who look after young children at home; **Family Allowances**—which go to families for the cost of raising children.

³⁰ Due to the fact that parental leave benefits did not enable fathers to look after children outside the labor force, they were simply called maternity leave benefits.

to leave the workforce, they were also guaranteed their re-entry to paid work through long-term job protection. Finally, during communism, the main variance between Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic, did have a very technical nature, which consisted primarily in the terms of eligibility for parental and family benefits. Thus, in Poland, women could claim maternity leave on the basis of employment in contrast to Hungary and Czech Republic, where the basis of entitlements became universal in the mid '80s³¹. Nevertheless, since the communist regime aimed for full employment, in reality the situation was the same in all these countries.

Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic (besides Slovenia) came out of the communist period as the three most developed economies in the Central and Eastern Europe with similar levels of economic development and performance. Their gross domestic products (GDPs) ranged from \$9,685 in Poland, to \$13,447 in Hungary, and \$15,099 in Czech Republic³². However, the countries greatly differed in the level of external indebtedness at the begging of transition, with Poland and Hungary as leading countries. Women's labor market position and overall income gender gap deteriorated in the three countries in this study due to sudden shifts in labor supply, but not to the extent experienced by many other countries in transition. These countries educational specific skills, particularly in technical and science subjects, were all of sudden obsolete due to changing demand for these services and products. Furthermore, the legacy of large exports to Soviet Union meant that after the breakup of the Eastern block many companies experienced demand shocks. The restructuring of the whole economy in pursuit of higher productivity in the latter stages resulted among other things in massive employment losses and

³¹Eva Fodor, Christy Class, Janette Kawachi, Livia Popescu. Family Policies and Gender in Hungary, Poland, and Romania Communist and Post-Communist Studies (Published @2002 Published by Elsevier Science Ltd on The Regents of the University of California)

³²Fultz, Elaine, Marcus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.). 2003. The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. International Labour Organization. Geneva.

the end of full employment system. All these countries were affected by the disappearance of up to 30% of jobs³³. From the three countries, however, Poland experienced the highest unemployment rate, closely followed by Hungary, while in Czech Republic the unemployment losses were the lowest³⁴. Overall, women remained relatively more economically active in Czech Republic. During the first phase of transition, the value of social spending and primarily the maternity and family benefits were reduced everywhere, mainly due to external pressures for structural adjustment³⁵.

3.2 Economic liberalization—the speed of the market liberalization process

Despite the similarities in of the initial conditions and the legacy of the communist family welfare system, the variation in family policy stated to emerge after the fall of communism and the start of the transition process. The divergence of maternal and family policies were achieved through a number of factors one of the most important being the transformation path chosen by each individual country. The purpose of this chapter as well is to point out at the differences rather than the technical structural similarities. The transformation of state socialist planned economies towards a capitalist model progressed at a different speed and intensity in the three countries, which might shed light on the family policies adopted later in the decade. Poland

³³ Steinhilber, Silke. Gender and Post-socialist Welfare States in Central Eastern Europe: Family Policy Reforms in Poland and Czech Republic Compared. Draft Working Document, May 2005. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

³⁴ Fodor, Eva. Women at Work: The Status of Women in the Labor Markets of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development . February 2005.

³⁵ Haney, Lynne. 2002. Inventing the Needy: The Gender Transformation from Socialist Welfare to Welfare Capitalism in Hungary. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Goven, J., 2001. New parliament, old discourse? The parental leave debate in Hungary. In: Gal, S., Kligman, G. (Eds.), Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life After Socialism. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ

experimented with the most radical shock therapy, followed by Czech Republic, whereas Hungary pursued a slower, more gradual path in liberalizing the economy.

3.3 Family Policy Schemes: Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic

Family benefits and parental leave are payments in cash or in kind and paid each month to support parents in bearing and raising children.³⁶ The family benefits include general allowances, paid to supplement wages according to the number of children in the family as well as other major benefits that are contingent upon giving birth, usually named ‘maternity benefits’, and childcare benefits, for which an allowance is provided to support women withdrawing from the labor force to care for a young child.³⁷ (in Hungary, the family benefits are provided through the tax system as well) In Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic, the parental leave and family benefit policies have similar elements and structures. In all the three countries, maternity leave³⁸ and benefits comprise a paid birthing leave of 3–6 months, which only mothers can receive after the birth, and a parental child-raising leave for up to 3 years in which time parents (usually mothers) withdraw from the labor force and stay at home with their natural or adopted children. Childcare and childrearing are usually done by mothers and despite the introduction of fathers’ parental leave in all the above-mentioned; this provision in general has been used only at a level

³⁶ Fultz, Elaine, Marcus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.). 2003. *The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. International Labour Organization. Geneva.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Technically, Parental Leave

of 1 percent the male population³⁹. Thus, the term maternal could be used for the parental leave benefits.

Despite the similarity in the policy's components in all these countries, Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic greatly diverge in the principles of allocation of the social security regime resources. In attempting to point out at the differences in family benefits in the three countries in analysis, a detailed comparison of family policy reforms proceeds by describing the bases of generosity and entitlements for each policy provision; the timing of the reforms and the internal and external constraints; the degree to which state policies encourage women's paid and unpaid work; and to what extent the state policies in all these countries create distinctions among women by their class status. The differences observed in the family policy provisions shape women's position in the labor market and in family. Thus, the divergence rather than convergence enlighten the typologies of women's dual role as mothers and workers in all the three countries, the particular welfare regime adopted and its long term consequences on women's social position.

3.4 Basis for entitlement and eligibility criteria

Almost 17 years after the fall of communism, the parental and family benefits in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic have diverged, primarily, in terms of the generosity and eligibility for women receiving these social benefits. The family welfare provisions in Poland appear to considerably differ from the parental and family benefits in the Hungary and Czech Republic. In Poland, only the working poor are entitled to receive parental leave and benefits.

³⁹ Fultz, Elaine, Marcus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.). 2003. The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. International Labour Organization. Geneva.

Hence, after childbirth most women are left unprotected by the state. Due to fiscal pressures at the begging of the transition, Polish government have constantly adopted austerity programs that called for major cuts in overall social spending, including family benefits. This has been achieved through greater income testing of the benefits and, cuts in their level and duration, which targeted primarily the economically marginalized women. Therefore, the majority of women became increasingly dependent on their families and market in supplying the necessary assistance for child-raising. In Poland, one is either eligible to receive parental benefits or not. Additionally, during the years Polish public spending on family policies has gradually declined as a percentage of its GDP⁴⁰ (roughly half as much as Hungary and Czech Republic), which explains the dramatic decline in the number of beneficiaries, from a universal to means-tested. Furthermore, one of the main differences that sets the Polish system apart from the Hungarian and Czech one, concerns the fact that women are not allowed to work while on parental leave, and only a third of all children are in daycare even between the ages of three and six, which will be analyzed in more details in the childcare services provisions. Polish family security system encourages the creation of larger families by providing more benefits for larger families and increasing number of children⁴¹. Women are encouraged to have children through the constant changes in the abortion rights law⁴² as well, which has been traditionally supported by the Catholic Church through its political institutional channels.

⁴⁰ Fodor, Eva. 2005. *Women at Work: The Status of Women in the Labor Markets of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

⁴¹ Fodor, Eva. 2005. *Women at Work: The Status of Women in the Labor Markets of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
Fultz, Elaine, Marcus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.). 2003. *The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. International Labour Organization. Geneva.

⁴² Gal, Susan and Gail Kligman. 2000. *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics and Everyday Life after Socialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

In contrast to Poland, the Hungarian and Czech family welfare systems are comparably more generous in the amount of support provided to women and on the terms of entitlement criteria. The family provisions in both these countries better accommodate women's needs to balance their time as workers and mothers. The most important distinction that sets the Hungarian and Czech's parental and family benefits regime at a more advantageous position for women consists of the principal of 'universal' eligibility, which benefits are provided to women independent of their employment status. From the three countries in this study, Hungarian state provides the most extensive and generous parental and family benefits. As noted in the table below, Hungary offers a higher allowance for paternal and child-raising benefits in the majority of the provisions as compared to Poland and Czech Republic. One of the main advantages of women living in Hungary, as compared to the relatively generous welfare regime in Czech Republic, regards the fact that in Hungary women are allowed to work part-time, whereas in Czech Republic it is very limited. In Hungary, there is also a special provision for middle and upper-middle class women, who receive an extended child birthing leave of 70 percent of their wage for up to 2 years. Although, some authors argue that the high level of support in Hungary discourages a number of low-income women from looking for work, because they can feasibly and comfortably de-commodify their labor power⁴³, the evidence shows that the generosity of welfare provisions and the long-term job security in Hungary encourages a greater life balance for women's dual role in society. Czech family policies are closely comparable to the Hungarian system in terms of the generosity and eligibility criteria (see table below). Despite the numerous similarities in these two countries, Czech welfare regime does provide women with a strictly

⁴³ Lukacs, Erika and Maria Frey. 2003. "The Gender Dimension of Social Security Reform in Hungary." In *The Gender Dimension of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. E. Fultz, M. Ruckand S. Steinhilber. Budapest, Hungary: ILO.

limited possibility of working while on maternal leave. This makes women returning in the labor force more difficult in Czech Republic.

What makes the Hungarian system distinct from the Polish and Czech system is its three-tiered nature⁴⁴. The Hungarian system clearly differentiates among women based on class status, while in Czech Republic this distinction is less pronounced. Although, every mother is eligible for a flat-rate childcare leave, provided by the state as a universal right, the system does not particularly encourage large families. The insured, middle-class women are the ones to benefit the most from the parental and family benefits in Hungary, through which they receive 70 per cent of their income for two years, as well as increasing tax credits for raising children. Tax credits, which is a new provisions under which women may claim additional benefits for child raising, become unavailable for the unemployed, poor women and consequently for those with many children⁴⁵.

Additionally, there is a clear variance to the question of parental leave counting towards pension. In this respect, Czech Republic provided the best coverage of universal rights of women as mothers, where parental leave counts 100 percent even without paying contributions. Hungary follows this path but the women working in the private sectors are eligibility parental leave counted fully counted as a working time upon the pension scheme only if they pay the contributions. In Poland, the child caring period only counts toward pension entitlements at a discount rate of 70 percent and up to a limit of one third of job history.

⁴⁴ Fodor, Eva. Women at Work: The Status of Women in the Labor Markets of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development . February 2005.

⁴⁵ Fodor, Eva. Women at Work: The Status of Women in the Labor Markets of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development . February 2005.

Therefore, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic provide different types of parental benefits to their citizens, which shape women's labor-market positions significantly in each country. While Hungary and Czech Republic provide assistance to women's dual role as mothers and workers, Poland pushes them in a position, where the return to the labor market becomes more and more difficult. In Poland, the family welfare regime represents a male-breadwinner model of welfare state⁴⁶ and the vast majority of middle-class women, who have children, do not receive any compensation for the loss of income and a significant protection from job loss. It is as such, that middle-class women in Poland become completely dependent on their family and neoliberal model of market services. This system makes women's choices particularly difficult for single mothers. In the majority of cases, women have to withdraw from the labor market for a long period of time and finding their way back becomes more and more difficult. On the contrary, in Hungary, middle-class women are the ones that benefit the most from the family welfare regime. The Hungarian family-benefit system is characterized by the way it differentiates among women. These "differentiations run along the intersections of class and race, and result in an exceptionally generous system for middle-class working women and a deteriorating, lower-level system for the poor", which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Czech Republic family welfare benefits falls somewhere in between the Hungarian and Polish system. However, despite being slightly less generous than the Hungarian system, it shares a variety of similarities with it as well as the role they give to women in the as mothers in the family and labor force.

Table 1

⁴⁶ Sainsbury, Diane. 1996. *Gender, Equality and Welfare States*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Summary of the basic characteristics of the main Parental-Leave Programs			
	Czech Republic Family Allowance	Hungary Childcare Leave	Poland Child raising Leave and Allowance
Eligibility	Universal	Universal	Income Test and Insurance
Replacement value of birthing leave	69% for 28 weeks	70% for 24 weeks	100% for 16 weeks
Parental Leave-elite track	-	For insured parents special provision: 70% of wage up to two years	-
Parental Leave as a percentage of average wages	20%	30%	20%
Parental Leave as % of minimum wages	60%	96% in 2000, decreased significantly with increase in minimum wage	56%
Expenditure on Family Policies as % of GDP	1.9% (2000)	2.0% (2000)	1.06% (1998)
Does Parental Leave count towards pension?	100 % even without paying contributions	100% in Public scheme, but only three years per child In second (private) tier only according to the contributions paid	70% (up to a third of work history)
Family Allowance as % of household income	3.7% (1996, all households with children)	N/A	0.2%
Work Allowed?	Very limited: child allowed max five days a month in daycare	Part-time yes, or unlimited at home after age 18 months	No

Pro-natalist?	No: flat-rate for each child	Partly: Family allowance is higher per child benefit for each child up to the third. Tax credit work against poor (i.e. large) families	Yes: Higher Fee for third and later children since 1999. Family allowance also varies by number of children.
Number of beneficiaries		Increased: possible slight decline since 2000	Declined after 1990
Fathers	Fathers yes: since 2000, they are also eligible for job protection	Fathers yes: grandparents also since 2001	Fathers since 1996

Source: Fultz, et al. 2003⁴⁷

3.5 Childcare Institutions: Cost and Availability

All women in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic are eligible for a birthing leave and a minimum maternal leave, despite the three countries' differences in the latter. These parental and family benefits though are not enough for supporting parents and especially mothers in raising their children. The childcare services provided by the state or private institutions become particularly important after the expiration of the parental leave benefits and define the process of leaving women at home or making sure they come back in the labor force. The problem concerns the issue of who will take care of the children after the age of three and if the state provides the necessary services to make women's return to the labor market less painful. In Poland, as we will observe in the process of analyzing the childcare services, the difficulty of obtaining childcare for children between three and six years of age make women particularly and more directly dependent on their families and private services for support.

⁴⁷ Fultz, Elaine, Marcus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.). 2003. *The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. International Labour Organization. Geneva.

Before 1989, all child care institutions for children between ages of three to six were organized and managed by the state-socialist administration. Kindergarten services were in great demand because the full employment status of women and these institutions were made available and easily accessible in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. Furthermore, after the 1970s attendance at kindergarten became mandatory on all these societies⁴⁸. Even though during communism, Poland did have the lowest level of childcare services development, in comparison to Hungary and Czech Republic⁴⁹, the discrepancies in the quality and places of the service provided was not that evident. In all the three countries above, numerous places of childcare services were lost after the fall of communism, however, fewer children were born during the past decade and a half. According to Lukacs and Frey, until 2003, the number of children in Poland fell from 44,000 to 23,000 in the 1990s, but at the same time 150,000 fewer children were born. In Hungary were lost about 17,000 of the places but this change was accompanied by a decline of over 30,000 children in the same period.⁵⁰ The Czech Republic, follows the same trend in the number of child birth and loss of nurseries and kindergarten places⁵¹. The service provision became decentralized everywhere and that meant transferring the responsibility of childcare service functioning to the local government⁵².

⁴⁸ Fultz, Elaine, Marcus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.). 2003. *The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. International Labour Organization, Geneva.

⁴⁹ Szelewa, Dorota. 2005. *Childcare Services in Poland and Hungary: explaining the difference*. MA 2005. CEU Political Science Department

⁵⁰ Lukacs, Erika and Maria Frey. 2003. "The Gender Dimension of Social Security Reform in Hungary." In *The Gender Dimension of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. E. Fultz, M. Ruck and S. Steinhilber. Budapest, Hungary: ILO.

⁵¹ Kotynkova, Magdalena, Vera Kucharova and Ladislav Prusa. 2003. "The gender dimension of social security reform in the Czech Republic." In Elaine Fultz, Markus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.), *The Gender Dimension of Social Security reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland*. International Labour Organization, Geneva.

⁵² Szelewa, Dorota. 2005. *Childcare Services in Poland and Hungary: explaining the difference*

During the transition, the childcare services for children older than 3 years older become more expensive in the three countries into consideration but the state in all these countries took different measures to deal with the new challenges. In Hungary, the majority of day-care child services are run by state or local governments, particularly for underprivileged families. Although few private and religious organizations have developed new daycare centers, the service is highly accessible and still widely affordable through free-of charge public institutions⁵³. In Poland, even though the proportion of children in daycare institutions has always been lower than in Hungary and Czech Republic, the cost and availability of childcare is becoming a serious problem during the transition period. Here, the number of kindergartens decreased dramatically by about a third of the existing number⁵⁴ but the proportion of children attending these institutions did not decrease at the same pace. In fact, the percentage of children from three to six years old in need for kindergarten services increased from 33 per cent to 39 per cent in the same period⁵⁵. Both the augmented costs of childcare for children aged between three and six years and the diminished availability of these services have positioned Polish women in a more difficult situation. Furthermore, considering the above-mentioned reductions in the generosity of eligibility of parental and family benefits, daycare places a great financial burden on a significant number of Polish families and consequently may prevent women from returning to the labor force and taking care of the children at home. Finally, Czech Republic has maintained the high quality of childcare services and similarly to Hungary, they are easily accessible and affordable by the majority of families. After '89, the proportion of children aged

MA 2005. CEU Political Science Department

⁵³ Fodor, Eva. *Women at Work: The Status of Women in the Labor Markets of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development . February 2005.

⁵⁴ Fultz, Elaine, Marcus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.). 2003. *The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. International Labour Organization. Geneva.

⁵⁵ Ibid

between three and five who attend kindergarten has increased from 89 per cent to 99.5 per cent, besides the drop in the birth rate mentioned above⁵⁶.

Overall, after the long-term parental leave has expired most of the women in Hungary and the Czech Republic are provided assistance for child caring through these institutions, whereas in Poland, only about one of the third of all families with a child in the three to six-year group age benefit from them⁵⁷. As we can observe, the availability and the cost of childcare institutions varies in the all three countries with Hungary and Czech Republic sharing many similarities and Poland being on the other side of the scale. The cost and the availability of these services have prevented many families in Poland to find the financial means for women's return in the labor market. It is important to mention, the provisions for the Hungarian women training after childcare leave, which highly alleviates the reintegration of the majority of women in Hungary back to their jobs⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Kotynkova, Magdalena, Vera Kucharova and Ladislav Prusa. 2003. "The gender dimension of social security reform in the Czech Republic." In Elaine Fultz, Markus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.), *The Gender Dimension of Social Security reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland*. International Labour Organization, Geneva.

⁵⁷ Lukacs, Erika and Maria Frey. 2003. "The Gender Dimension of Social Security Reform in Hungary." In *The Gender Dimension of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. E. Fultz, M. Ruck and S. Steinhilber. Budapest, Hungary: ILO.

⁵⁸ Ibid

Chapter 4

The link between the Institutional Setting and gendered welfare regimes: Implications of the Family Policy Reforms

4.1 Implications of family policy reforms

The countries in this study start off with similar conditions in the welfare regime in relation to the family benefits and the role they gave women during communism. In attempting to understand the variance in family benefits with the fall of the socialist system, the effect of the political institutional legacies and an in-depth study of the reform process are necessary to point out the particular policy formation in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. From the countries in study, Hungary and Poland start off with very similar political institutional legacies the welfare regime but during the past two decades maternal and family benefit policies become positioned in the opposite side of the continuum. We will attempt to understand the factors that played a role in this drastic divergence. Czech Republic, on the other side, emerged out of the communist period with fairly distinct political-institutional legacy and similar communist family welfare regime with the other previously mentioned countries. However, during the liberalization process, Czech family welfare regime started to increasingly converge with the Hungarian family welfare regime but how much this convergence is embedded in the welfare institutions is difficult to point out. While Hungary shifted to a more socially protective system due to political pressures coming from middle-class women's interest groups, the Czech family welfare system smoothly continued to preserve its protectionist social system, which is based upon solid

political-economic institutional grounds, where the ‘left’ coherently represents the working class interests. Poland, on the other hand, could be distinguished for its durable conservatism with respect to gender roles and the political marginalization of woman, where the Catholic Church displays a great bearing on the political-institutional setting. In Poland, women, have become continuously dependent on their husbands, family, and market to cope with the low level of state involvement in protecting ‘mothers’.

As we have noted in the previous chapter on maternal and family policy provisions, Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic diverge on the role they give to women as workers and mothers and the way they differentiate among women based on class-status. This chapter will attempt to point out at the differences in class-based and gender-based political power mobilization around family benefits. The main goal of this last analytical chapter is to link the political institutional setting, historical legacies, as political mobilization factors to the divergence of maternal and family policy outcomes in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. In understanding the dynamics of welfare state in all these countries, I take into consideration the main actors affecting the shift in issue dimension of the public provisions that has a direct impact on the role women’s are given in each society.

4.2 Catholic Church, Women Political Mobilization, and Working Class actors in Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic respectively

Along with the theoretical framework of working-class mobilization variable, this chapter attempts to discover the impact of political mobilization in the formation of family welfare regime in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic after the 1989. At the same time, the analytical framework will be based primarily on the political legacies of each of these countries and how

they have changed and shaped the new system in the process of transition. It is important to mention, though, that largely all these countries initially lacked a political legacy of clear interests' class mobilization by the beginning of the democratization process.

As previously discussed in the first chapter, with the fall of communism 'Solidarity' which represented primarily the working-class interests ceased to exist as a working-class political force with the start of the democratization process. Despite the demobilization of the pre-capitalist working-class interests, women were massively displaced from positions in the political realm and consequently Poland experienced a dramatic fall in the number of women representation in the emerging political parties, particularly in the parties emerging from the former-Solidarity bloc⁵⁹. The role of Catholic Church is one of the crucial actors that set the Polish system apart from the Hungarian and the Czech one. The Catholic Church, in Poland, as Gramsci predicted in his theory of counter-hegemonic forces, played a major political role before and during the communist period and its political influence was highly strengthened with the Solidarity forces coming into power after the fall of the existing system⁶⁰. Prior to 1989, both the Church under the Solidarity umbrella organization represented a mass opposition to communism, and since 1989 the former and post-solidarity parties have cooperated in promoting a return to the Polish traditional family values of pre-socialist era⁶¹. The first Solidarity government in

⁵⁹ 1. *Following the first free elections in 1989, women's representation in Parliament dropped from 20 to 13 percent, declining even further to 10 percent in 1993.*

Fuszara, Malgorzata. 2000. "New Gender Relations in Poland in the 1990s." In *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*, eds. Susan Galand Gail Kligman, 259–285. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

⁶⁰ Deacon, Bob. 1992. "East European Welfare: Past, Present, and Future in Comparative Context." In *The New Eastern Europe: Social Policy Past, Present, and Future*, 1–30. New York: Sage.

⁶¹ Zielinska, Eleonora. 2000. "Between Ideology, Politics, and Common Sense: The Discourse of Reproductive Rights in Poland." In *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*, eds. Susan Galand Gail Kligman 23–57. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, Gábor Tóka. *PostCommunist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*. (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Poland, led by Lech Walesa, became openly pro-Catholic⁶² and along with the external pressures for structural adjustment and the advent of the drastic fall in the unemployment rate, this government introduced measures that strengthen the position of male figure in the society by promoting a male breadwinner form of family, where women were increasingly pushed towards the household. The Solidarnos and the parties that came out of this bloc after 1989 have strongly discouraged women's right for abortion and along with the Church ideology they have continuously supported a strongly pro-natalist policy. The abortion issue in the last two decades has engendered two clear opponent camps in the public and political discourse, where the post-communist parties favor women's right for abortion and former-Solidarity bloc parties oppose it⁶³. Indeed, soon after Lech Walesa was elected President he disbanded the women's section of Solidarity because of their continued efforts to oppose the criminalization of abortion⁶⁴.

Hungary, which came out of the communist period with similar political institutional structure, has differed quite dramatically from the Polish family welfare system. However, in contrast to Poland, Hungary did not experience a anti-communist mass political movement of the working-class and the communist regime was changed through a process of negotiation among the reformists within the communist party and the other liberal structures. The strength of trade unions was not particularly pronounced in the communist period and their influence in the policy-making continued to be weak in the post-socialist period. Unlike Poland, in Hungary, the working class interests never monopolized the political discourse. In the beginning of the

⁶² Hauser, Ewa. 1995. "Traditions of Patriotism, Questions of Gender: The Case of Poland." In *Post-Communism and the Body Politic*, ed. Ellen E. Berry, 81–104. New York: New York University Press.

⁶³ Zielinska, Eleonora. 2000. "Between Ideology, Politics, and Common Sense: The Discourse of Reproductive Rights in Poland." In *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*, eds. Susan Galand Gail Kligman 23–57. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

transition period, due to the introduction of austerity economic schemes, the first Hungarian governments moved from a universal family welfare benefits to a mean-tested family policy. It is at this time, that in Hungary, a strong alliance of women interests' groups politically mobilized against means-tested family policies introduces⁶⁵. According to Haney, the middle-class women overtly mobilized to resist the welfare policies that would reduce their welfare benefits and disadvantage their role as mothers. It is as such, that they openly demonstrated in the streets of Budapest and lobbied through the welfare agencies to legitimize the importance of the universal socialist family benefits for their status as 'mothers'. They quickly aligned with the political parties' opposition forces of the time, primarily Fidesz party, which taking advantage of their interests was able to increase its electoral support and influence the policy-making outcome in the later period.⁶⁶ The political mobilization of middle-class women in Hungary had to do with an increasing interest of women to strongly maintain and universally benefit from the family policy provisions based on their status as mothers and workers, similarly to the pre-capitalist welfare regime. The middle-class and upper-middle class women's political mobilization in Hungary, the one that become immediately disadvantaged with the means-tested eligibility measures, was primarily focused on the provision of long-term paid leave. This mobilization did not influence the outcome of the policy measured that the socialist government of that time adopted, however, the opposition forces, particularly the right-wing conservative party 'Fidesz', quickly appropriated middle-class women interests' agenda against the liberal reforms. Thus, Fidesz politically mobilized the women's movement and articulated their interests at a legislative level. When this party led the coalition of the next government to come in 1997, they made sure

⁶⁵ Haney, Lynne. 2002. *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*. University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif.

⁶⁶ Haney, Lynne. 1997. "'But We Are Still Mothers:' Gender and the Construction of Need in Post-Socialist Hungary." *Social Politics* 4 (2): 208–44.

to influence the policy-making of family and paternal benefits. As Fodor has noted, Fidesz not only successfully appealed to the female electorate but affirmed itself as the voice of middle class, urban, and professional women⁶⁷. Therefore, it comes as no a surprise the fact that women have traditionally voted for Fidesz, which have consequently influenced the policy-making process of family benefits. Middle and upper-middle class women political mobilization's main goal was achieved through translating these interests at a party level. After the temporary adoption of mean-tested eligibility criteria, the new government from the national-conservative camp, which came to power in 1998, re-established the universal eligibility for family welfare policies. Despite some reduction in the family benefits in the recent years, these benefits have widely remained the same⁶⁸.

4.3 Family policies and structural adjustment

The speed of social welfare reform and particularly the family benefits reform, in which we are interested, occurred at different paces in Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic. In the begging of '90s, the climate for economic reforms, which a clear focus on macroeconomic stability, fiscal austerity, and budgetary concerns have been a strong argument in social policy debates. Czech Republic has been the only one, which saw itself under weaker constrains. While both Hungary and Poland came out of the socialist period as comparably highly indebted countries. Of the three countries, Hungary had the highest level of foreign debt which had

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Steinhilber, Silke. Gender and Post-socialist Welfare States in Central Eastern Europe: Family Policy Reforms in Poland and Czech Republic Compared. Draft Working Document, May 2005. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

amounted to \$ 2,040 per capita. Poland fell somewhere in between with \$ 1,134 foreign debt per capita and Czech Republic had the lowest levels of debt, which did not amount to more than \$ 636 per capita in 1990.⁶⁹

Furthermore, the legacy of large exports to Soviet Union meant that after the breakup of the Eastern block many companies experienced demand shocks. From the three countries, Hungary had the highest levels of exports to USSR as a percentage of GDP, which strongly affected the high levels of foreign debt evidenced in 1990. The restructuring of the whole economy in pursuit of higher productivity in the latter stages resulted among other things in massive employment losses. These losses weakened the worker's bargaining power and resulted in domination of employer side and lack of organized labor. Ex-communist countries pursued different courses of reforming the system after the '89 events, and the decision to change radically or incrementally was not only an arbitrary political decision but also one greatly influenced by the pre-capitalist political legacies, which took different forms in each country. Both Poland and Czech Republic pursued the most rapid reforms towards market liberalization through 'shock therapy'. In Poland, the first Solidarity government introduced a strong dose of shock therapy⁷⁰ under the 'Balcerowitz plan'. However, while Poland chose swifter and more radical reforms, Czech Republic adopted a somewhat more moderate social-liberal reform path. From the countries in discussion, Hungary was the one to adopt the most gradualist reform path; which was labeled 'shock privatization' by many political economy scholars. This is also due to

⁶⁹ King, P. Lawrence. Explaining Postcommunist Economic Performance. William Davidson Working Paper Number 559. May 2003

⁷⁰ "Shock therapy" means---rapid and extensive price and trade liberalization, stringent monetary and fiscal stabilization, and the implementation of mass privatization program

the fact that some form of political and economic liberalization had already started in Hungary, even before the fall of the socialist system.⁷¹

At the begging of social policy reforms, the post-communist governments in all these countries were influenced by external pressures coming from IMF and World Bank, which among other things included heavy-handed structural adjustment policy recommendations over all the economy and the introduction of mean-tested benefits⁷². However, the degree to which these countries responded to external pressures over the need for rapid structural adjustment of the whole economy widely varied. Poland was quick in implementing the recommendation laid down by the international organization, which called for a rapid structural adjustment process with an emphasis on budget constrains. Hungary processed in its own structural adjustment speed and seemed to follow, as many scholars would come to label it, a course of ‘market liberalization with a social face’. While disregarding many of the international organization’s recommendations, Hungary ignored the hegemonic pressures coming from external actors. Czech Republic , similarly to Poland, implemented rapid structural reforms in the many economic and social provisions, but due to the low level of foreign debt, the good shape of the exiting Czech economy, and a bureaucratic institutional setting the external pressures coming from international institutions became naturally diluted.

Therefore, in relation to social policy reforms Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic took different paths towards liberalization. The timing of welfare reform also influenced the form and degree of class-based political responses in each country. Poland led the ‘embedded neoliberal’

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Deacon, Robert. 2000. Eastern European welfare states: the impact of the politics of globalization. *Journal of European Social Policy*, May, vol 10, issue 2.

welfare countries group in terms of the speed with which it pursued a neoliberal reform agenda⁷³. Due to fiscal and external pressures, which provided the major impetus for change, the first post-Solidarity government called for major cuts in overall social spending, and particularly the paternal and family benefits. These were achieved through a shift from the universal family benefits during communism to an income testing family benefit policy and cuts in their level and duration. In Poland, the social policy reform occurred at a very rapid pace and the major changes were introduced during the first post-Solidarity government. It is as such, that due to the general political and public opinion that in order to well off in the long-run, they had to sacrifice in the short-run, that the political mobilization over family social reform was almost inexistent. As previously mentioned, not only did the overwhelming strength of the working class during the Solidarity movement in the 80s ceased to exist as such, but women became more and more vulnerable under the new system and lacked the ability to oppose the family reforms, which were adopted overnight.⁷⁴ Overall, the number of women in the entire public and political sphere decreased dramatically during the first years of transition⁷⁵ and the anti-abortion law became the main focus of concern in the public and political debate⁷⁶. There is no evidence, as such, that woman political mobilization in Poland was in any way active on maternal and family benefits. It was in fact repressed due to the speed of reforms and the decline of the number of women in

⁷³ Hauser, Ewa. 1995. "Traditions of Patriotism, Questions of Gender: The Case of Poland." In *Post-Communism and the Body Politic*, ed. Ellen E. Berry, 81–104. New York: New York University Press.

⁷⁴ Leven, Bozena. 1994. "The Status of Women and Poland's Transition to a Market Economy." In *Women in the Age of Economic Transformation*, eds. N. Aslanbeigui, S. Pressman and G. Summerfield, 27–42. New York: Routledge.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* In 1989 women comprised 20 percent of Parliamentary deputies but by 1990 this number had fallen to 12 Percent

⁷⁶ Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, Gábor Tóka. *PostCommunist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*. (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

political offices.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the first post-solidarity government strengthened its link with the Catholic Church and, as such, became increasingly supportive of a male-breadwinner family structure and overlooked women's political involvement in their government.

In contrast to Poland, in Hungary the family benefits reform, similar to other economic and social reforms, proceeded at a gradual pace. The social policy reform started in the late 1994 (relatively later than in Poland)⁷⁸ and when the former-communist parties' coalition came to power, Hungary moved swiftly towards a means-tested family and maternal policy. At this time, the finance minister of the time Bokros, introduced the "Bokros plan", which in similar way to the "Balcerowitz plan" targeted only the poor working women. However, the shift from the universal family benefits to the income-testing benefits was introduced much later than in Poland and consequently became more vulnerable to political opposition. One of the main factors that shaped the policy-outcome in Hungary was influenced by the level of women's mobilization. In contrast to Poland and Czech Republic, here, middle and upper-middle class women actively mobilized to protect the universal benefits⁷⁹. Additionally the influence of Catholic Church played a major role in ideologically shaping the political discourse in Poland but lacked a widespread influence in the Hungarian society. Despite the fact that both these countries share a similar pattern of political-party division along the libertarian-authoritarian axis, in Hungary, the Catholic Church did not play a leading anti-communist role in the pre-89 period. Therefore, it

⁷⁷ Leven, Bozena. 1994. "The Status of Women and Poland's Transition to a Market Economy." In *Women in the Age of Economic Transformation*, eds. N. Aslanbeigui, S. Pressman and G. Summerfield, 27–42. New York: Routledge.

⁷⁸ Fultz, Elaine, Marcus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber (eds.). 2003. *The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. International Labour Organization. Geneva.

⁷⁹ Misra, Joya. 1998. "Mothers or Workers? The Value of Women's Labor: Women and the Emergence of Family Allowance Policy." *Gender and Society*, 12 (4): 376–99.

clearly lacked the power to influence post-communist policy-outcomes, such as in Poland. In contrast to Poland, the state rather than the traditional family was held responsible for supporting mothers and children, and the value of women's labor force attachment, if not direct participation, was better preserved.

In Czech Republic, the major restructuring of the social security system was undertaken in the years 1995/1996⁸⁰ and the reform was restructured along the same socialist family policy lines. The state continued to have the major role in supporting the women's childbearing, parental allowance, child allowance, and social allowance. Similar to Hungary, the Czech state covered 85% of the total state social supporting spending⁸¹. While in Poland the strong presence of Catholic Church's ideological influence over the political sphere have helped shape the debate on the 'motherhood' and family benefits, in Czech Republic the political discourse over traditional motherhood values have been almost inexistent. Czech Republic's early industrialization and secularization have extinguished the possibility of religious values influence in politics and across party lines. Therefore, unlike Poland and to lesser degree Hungary, here the abortion and women's reproductive rights have never been a concern of the major political-party actors. Women's weak institutional representation at governmental and administrative levels in almost all the three countries at the begging of transition, particularly in Poland, further contributed to the lack of attention to gender issues during the enactment of social reforms. However, Czech Republic political and social environment already had a legacy of strong working class mobilization and as such their interested were voiced as a whole by the welfare protectionist socialist camp. Indeed, the very nature of the Czech political-party system, the

⁸⁰ Steinhilber, Silke. Gender and Post-socialist Welfare States in Central Eastern Europe: Family Policy Reforms in Poland and Czech Republic Compared. Draft Working Document, May 2005. United Nations Research Insititute for Social Development.

⁸¹ Ibid.

focus on strictly economic issues, and the working class mobilization legacy did help in producing a coherent maternal and family policy reform, where the women's economic and social interests were inherently represented by the above-mentioned political forces. Institutional-setting in Czech Republic requires a general political-institutional conciliation among the political and interests groups. Consequently the reform intended to satisfy all the political actors and women did not particularly find themselves disadvantaged by the family policy reform. In as such, there was not political mobilization because the reform of the maternal and family benefits preserved the status of the working class and class divisions of middle and upper-middle class women.

The Implications of maternal and family policy divergence

The reform in family social policy has affected women in Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic differently. Considering that women and not man have been traditionally supposed to withdraw from the labor market and take care of the child, these policies do have a direct impact on women's working life. In sum, women in Poland have become continuously dependent on their husbands, family, and market to cope with the low level of state involvement in protecting mothers. Poland, therefore, could be distinguished for its durable conservatism with respect to gender roles and the political marginalization of woman. These factors have come to bear very forcefully in the reforms processes since 1989. Despite many other structural similarities with Hungary and Czech Republic, Poland has become equated more similarly with the 'residual welfare state regime', where the state takes responsibility only when the market fails to do so.

Family policy reform in Hungary has reinforced women's dependence on the state and has increasingly distinguished among women based on class position in terms of eligibility or generosity.⁸² Unlike in Poland, the Hungarian middle class women have largely more access to and control over the maternal and family benefit resources provided by the state. As previously observed, despite the universal eligibility criteria, family policy in Hungary reinforces class differences through a set of additional family policy provisions, such as tax income benefits, which further assists the working women and poses greater differentiation on their class-status variable. From the three countries in analysis, Hungary does the most to balance women's

⁸² Acker, Joan. 2006. "Inequality Regimes." *Gender and Society* 20 (4): 441–64.

motherhood and working roles. They are granted generous long-term maternity leaves and at the same time they are allowed to work part-time during this period. In this way, the universal childcare leaves does not undermine women's career choices, which otherwise would push them towards more 'feminized' jobs.

Lastly, the reform of family policies in Czech Republic continued to preserve the former-communist structure with minor changes to adopt it to the changing condition. By and large, the family policy reform continued along the same lines despite the political power rotations. This meant that in Czech Republic, the reforms required a solid basis for political consensus among different interest groups (taking into consideration the fact that the political parties competition occurs primarily around economic policies). Once, the compromise among different economic and political actors was achieved, there was no need for further political mobilization. The Czech family policies are comparable to the Hungarian regime in terms of generosity and the universal eligibility criteria, however, it does not reinforces class-based hierarchies among women as much as the previous one.

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