Social structure and electoral choice

The impact of the class and religious cleavages in German elections, 1969-1998[1]

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Introduction

The class and religious cleavages have long been considered to be central to the explanation of the structure of party systems and of voters' electoral choices. Both in the sociological approach of the Columbia studies (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1968) and in the cleavages' model of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), voters' position in the social structure appeared to be highly relevant for explaining their political preferences.

These stable alignments have however been affected by several evolutions. A strong argument has been made, that the influence of traditional political cleavages on voters' electoral choices was decreasing. According to this dealignment literature, processes of social and political change in the post-war period have affected the relationships between parties and their traditional constituencies. One of the main consequences of these developments is a weakening of the traditional political cleavages. This weakening occurs through two different processes, structural and "behavioral" dealignment. Structural dealignment refers to a reduction in the size of the parties' core groups of voters. In the case of the class cleavage, for example, the diminishing proportion of workers in the electorate deprives socialist parties of an important group of traditionally loyal supporters. Dealignment also occurs through a change in the voting behavior or the political preferences of some social groups. To keep the same example, the class cleavage may also lose in salience if a growing part of workers turns away from socialist or communist parties.

As far as the class cleavage is concerned, the most important evolutions leading to a dealignment in advanced industrial societies are an increasing level of affluence, a transformation of the employment's structure, and higher educational levels. According to the dealignment literature, all of these changes have contributed to blur differences between social classes. Regarding the religious cleavage, one of the key factors is social modernization and the ensuing secularization trend. It should result in a lower relevance of religious identities to citizens' voting choices.

How strong these changes are, however, is a point of controversy. Several scholars have argued that instead of a weakening of the traditional cleavages, we should expect their transformation. The impact of social-structural variables has certainly changed, but it may not necessarily have weakened – so the argument. As a matter of fact, empirical analyses of cleavages' evolution do not all point to the same conclusion.

In our view, there are two problems linked with the analysis of the class and religious cleavages. First, it is necessary to adopt a more complex representation of social groups. Analyses of the class cleavage, especially, are too often based on a simple dichotomy,

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opposing the working class to other occupational groups. A more refined class schema is certainly better suited to capture the specific interests linked with voters' employment situation. And as far as the religious cleavage is concerned, it is necessary to account not only for voters' religious denomination, but also for their degree of religiosity.
The second problem is measurement. If one turns to multicategory schemas of classes and religious groups, it becomes problematic to find an appropriate summary measure of a cleavage's strength.

Here, we shall try to overcome these difficulties, and analyze accordingly the evolution of these two cleavages in the German electorate, between 1969 and 1998. We shall present a theoretical argument that explains why class may still matter, and why accounting for both denomination and religiosity is important. Elaborating on the work of Brooks, Manza and Hout, we shall also propose a new way of measuring a cleavage's strength, which offers several advantages. It can deal with multiparty systems and with more complex class schemas. It can also be easily compared between countries and surveys, and it allows to distinguish between the structural and behavioral components of the dealignment process.

Transformation of the class structure

The traditional class cleavage was rooted in the opposition between the working class and the "old" middle class. The interests of these groups were articulated by trade-unions and socialist parties, on the one hand, and by conservative right parties, on the other hand. This alignment, however, has been affected by several evolutions. At a structural level, first of all, the size of these social groups has dramatically changed during the post-war period. Since the 1960s, the primary and secondary sectors in advanced industrial nations have become much smaller, while the size of the business services and of the community and social services – which form a large part of the "new" middle class – has exploded (Crouch 1999). Germany is not an exception. Data from the federal statistical office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*) show that the proportion of workers in the electorate has dropped from about 36% in 1953 to about 20% in 1998 (Weßels 2000: 146-148). Similarly, Gluchowski and von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1998: 17f.) find that between 1950 and 1993, the share of blue-collar workers diminished from 50% to 36%. This decline has been compensated by a strong growth in the number of service sector employees. Whilst they accounted for 34% of West German citizens in 1950, their share had rise to 57% in 1993 (1998: 17). The data we use reflect a similar evolution. Between 1969 and 1998, the proportion of workers (skilled and unskilled) has diminished from 50% of the electorate to 28%. During the same period, the number of service class employees has doubled, from 25% to 51%.[2]

Structural changes are not the only reason why the class cleavage may transform. Other developments affect both the homogeneity of social classes and their relationship with political parties. Several evolutions play an important role here: a process of cognitive mobilization, an increasing level of affluence, a higher level of social mobility, the changing role of the mass media, and cross-class party appeals.
Cognitive mobilization refers to the growing level of political sophistication of the electorate. Due to the spread of education and the decrease in the costs of acquiring political information, resulting from the process of social modernization, voters have become more independent of parties (Dalton 1984). "Cognitive mobilization means that citizens possess the level of political skills and resources necessary to become self-sufficient in politics" (Dalton 1988:

[2] Data based on the class membership of the head of household. Our operationalization of the class schema will be presented below.

18). Its most direct consequence is a decline in levels of party identification. But it is also relevant to the relationship between structural variables and party choice, especially when considered together with the other trends mentioned above. It is argued that increasing levels of affluence and of social mobility tend to blur differences between social classes, regarding values or life styles. Furthermore, political parties in many democracies do not target only their traditional, core constituencies, but try to appeal to a larger electorate, by relying on a "catch-all" strategy and cross-class appeals.
Following the dealignment literature, these changes should have resulted in a weakening of the link between social class membership and electoral choice.

However, this line of argumentation has been reassessed by some scholars. Even if classes change, they may remain important explaining factors. The structure of classes has become more complex, and it may give rise to new conflicts, as new segments within the employment structure are linked with specific interests. Kitschelt (1994; 1995), for example, shows how a voter's employment situation, and the type of tasks linked with one's occupation, can be related to political preferences. The traditional, simple opposition between a socialist working class and a conservative middle class is certainly not sufficient anymore. New political priorities and new issues have emerged. As a consequence, the relationships between classes and parties have transformed, and new, stable alignments have formed. To capture such evolutions, it is necessary to rely on a more detailed class schema.
The mere definition of the concept of social class is controversial.[3] Here, however, we shall not enter into the debate on the nature of classes, but simply present those aspects which are most directly relevant to our purpose.
A first distinction has to be made between "gradational" and "relational" conceptions of classes (Manza and Brooks 1999: 56).[4] In a gradational approach, the concept of class is thought of as unidimensional. The various groups are classified on a single scale. Prandy, for example, argues that "what has conventionally been seen as the 'class' element in voting behaviour is most adequately captured, theoretically and empirically, using not a set of distinct classes – homogeneous groups with distinct boundaries – but a hierarchical measure of general social advantage" (2000: 238). In a relational approach, on the other hand, classes are conceived of as different categories, which cannot be ranked on a single dimension. The distinctions between classes are most often based on individuals' employment situation. Whilst the first approach allows for more subtle distinctions between individuals, by not separating them between excluding categories, we think however that the assumption of a single dimension is not adequate. It may eventually be sufficient to study voting behavior in a two-party system – as Prandy does, for example, in the case of Britain (2000). But it is limited as it cannot deal adequately with multiparty systems.
A gradational approach is certainly better suited to our purpose. Such approaches distinguish "different clusters of occupation [which] are viewed as having similar—though not identical—employment situations and/or life chances" (Manza and Brooks 1999: 56). The class schema which is most often referred to in analyses of voting behavior is probably the "Goldthorpe schema" (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1993). It allows to capture essential differences between occupational categories, which are relevant to an analysis of electoral behavior.
There are several versions of Goldthorpe's class schema, with different number of categories. In its full version, it comprises 13 categories. A good reference point is the seven-class

[3] See for example the recent debate in the American Journal of Sociology (Goldthorpe 2000; Rueschemeyer and Mahoney 2000; Sørensen 2000; Wright 2000).
[4] See Bergman and Joye (2001) for a detailed discussion of various social stratification schemas.

schema, which is a collapsed version of the full schema. It distinguishes between the following groups (in parentheses, we indicate the codes used by Erikson and Goldthorpe):

- Service class (I, II)
- Routine non-manual workers (III)
- Petty bourgeoisie (IVa, IVb)
- Farmers (IVc)
- Skilled workers (V, VI)
- Non-skilled workers (VIIa)
- Agricultural laborers (VIIb)

In order to analyze the class cleavage, this schema is certainly much more promising and adequate than a simple dichotomy opposing blue-collar workers to the old middle class. However, we wish to refine it on one aspect: the treatment of the "new" middle class. Professionals form the service class I and II – while the other white-collar employees, in lower-grade occupations, constitute the group of "routine non-manual workers." In our view, this fails to capture essential differences *within* the new middle class.[5]

As many authors have pointed out, the new middle class is far from being a homogeneous group. It is made up of segments with very different occupations. Kriesi (1989; 1993; 1998) and Müller (1998; 1999) propose to distinguish between three groups. The occupations of *Managers* or *Administrative specialists* are characterized by the exercise of delegated authority. They are "employees in administrative hierarchies who run an organization, make administrative decisions, command and survey the work of others […] This should imply a high level of loyalty towards the employer or the employing organization" (Müller 1999: 143). Professionals, on the other hand, have in common the exercise of specialized knowledge and expertise. Referring to norms of their professional community, they are likely to claim for a higher level of autonomy from the organization they are employed in. This group, however, can further be split between *technocrats* or *technical experts*, on the one hand, and the *social and cultural services*, on the other hand. "For the latter, the organizational orientation is weakened by an additional element: the exchange with clients and the norms of care for them puts members of this group in a position where they are likely to be responsive to social rather than organizational concerns" (Müller 1999: 143). Furthermore, by identification with their clients, they should put a heavier emphasis on an egalitarian distribution of resources (Kriesi 1998: 169).

Such distinctions within the new middle class are important to the study of electoral choices. As we suggested, managers and administrative specialists are characterized by a high degree of loyalty towards their employers. They are likely to stand behind the aims and policies of their organization. For those working in the private sector, this should translate into a support toward liberal economic policies (Mayer and Schweisguth 1989: 280). Social-cultural specialists, on the other hand, should favor parties on the left, and technical experts should take an intermediary position.

Following this line of argumentation, it would be desirable to divide Goldthordpe's service class into three groups: a) managers and other professionals in social-administrative occupations, b) professionals with technical expertise, and c) social-cultural specialists. Such a distinction is only possible, however, on the basis of detailed information on voters' occupations, as provided, for example, by the ILO's *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO). While the use of such detailed classifications is usual in social surveys, it is not in electoral studies, where interviewees' occupations are most often classified into a

[5] In the "full" thirteen-class schema, both the "service class" and "routine non-manual workers" are further divided into more precise categories. This distinction, however, is based only on the opposition between lower-grade and higher-grade occupations, and thus diverges from the one we draw here.

small number of broadly defined categories (employees, civil servants, workers, etc.). These are eventually further refined by making additional distinctions between higher and lower grade positions – as it is the case in Germany. But with respect to the new middle class, this does not give us enough information on the type of tasks linked to a specific occupation.

We thus have to limit ourselves to the following, seven-category schema[6]:

1. Farmers
2. Other self-employed
3. Semiskilled and unskilled workers
4. Skilled workers and foremen
5. Routine non-manual workers
6. Service class employees
7. Non labor force participants

Social class will be constructed at the level of households – that is on the basis of the head of household's employment situation. Furthermore, we classify retired persons on the basis of their former occupation.[7] This has the advantage of increasing the number of cases. Using only characteristics of respondents would result in a substantial proportion of the sample being classified into a residual category. This concerns people in education, retired persons, and especially women. In the late 1960s, only a minority of women were labor force participants. In the 1969 sample, 75% of them were either retired, in education, or otherwise not employed, against 20% of men. This has changed, however, and this evolution is well reflected in our data. In the 1998 German electoral survey, the corresponding proportion was 47% for women and 38% for men.
Referring to the head of household and to a person's former occupation in constructing a measure of social class can however blur differences linked to one's employment *status*. The political interests of a retired worker, for example, will without any doubt share many similarities with those of a younger, employed worker. But being retired may have an impact of its own on voting preferences. In order to minimize such problems, we will also account for voters' employment *status*, by distinguishing between the three following groups: labor force participants, retired persons, and other not employed respondents (this last category being chiefly composed of housewives – and of a few housemen).

Whilst we cannot differentiate between the three segments of the service class, we can however approach this distinction by using sector of employment. This information is available in five of the nine surveys that we consider here. A large majority of managers and administrative specialists work in the private sector, while social and cultural specialists are more often employed in the public sector. Thus, combining membership in the service class and sector of employment may give us an insight into the oppositions *within* the new middle class.

Secularization and religious identities

Dealignment also influences the cleavage based on religion. The most important process, here, is the secularization trend observed in most advanced industrial societies. Rates of church membership and of church attendance have been declining. As far as structural dealignment is concerned, we observe in Germany that the proportion of citizens without a

[6] A detailed presentation of the class schema's operationalization can be found in the appendix.
[7] In the 1994 and 1998 surveys, however, there is no information on the head of household's occupation. This results in a larger proportion of missing data in our social class variable.

religious denomination has increased. In the national surveys that we analyze here, they accounted for less than 5% of voters in both 1969 and 1972, but for 15% of them in 1998. This strong increase, however, may not be the most important evolution. Even more pronounced is the decline in the frequency of church attendance, especially among Catholics. In the 1969 survey, Catholics made up half of the electorate, and two thirds of them were frequent churchgoers. In 1998, the proportion of Catholics in the electorate had decreased to 40%, and only 36% of them went to church at least once a month. Among Protestants, the evolution goes into the same direction, but is less pronounced. They made up 48% of the 1969 sample and 22% of them attended church on a regular basis. The corresponding proportions in 1998 were 43% and 15%, respectively.

Beyond these changes in the religious composition of the electorate, secularization also points more generally to an erosion of the impact of religious values and beliefs on political choices. Religious identities should become less important in guiding voters' electoral choices. These evolutions may however also lead to a new opposition. Some authors have suggested that while the old religious cleavage is loosing in salience, it may be replaced by a new opposition, based on voters' religiosity (Geissbühler 1999; Wolf 1996). In religiously mixed countries, like Germany, Protestants and Catholics are becoming more similar in their values and voting choices. However, secularization leads to stronger differences between devout Christians, who still have close ties to religious organizations, and the other citizens. In other words, the traditional cleavage between Protestants and Catholics may be replaced by a new opposition, based on *religiosity*.

To examine the empirical relevance of this argument, it is again necessary to turn to a slightly more complex representation of social groups. Instead of simply distinguishing between Protestants, Catholics, and other voters, we shall divide the two former groups into frequent churchgoers and other believers.

Measuring cleavages' strength

The discussion above has shown that multiple-category schemas were better suited than simple dichotomies to capture evolutions in the role of social cleavages. However, this specification of social groups leads to another measurement problem: how can the strength of a cleavage be compared between different elections? This question is all the more important as it has often been a point of controversy in the debate on the "end of class politics."

One obvious solution is to consider the models' goodness-of-fit. A good indication for this is the McFadden R^2, often referred to as the "pseudo R^2." This statistic is a measure of the proportional reduction of the model's Log likelihood, compared to a model where only a constant is included.[8] We could be tempted to compare simply the McFadden R^2 of our model in the different elections – and see whether the explanatory power of the structural variables tends to diminish with time. Analyzing the evolution of cleavages' impact in Germany, Schnell and Kohler (1995), for example, have relied on such an interpretation. This has been criticized by Müller (1997: 751f.) and by Jagodzinski and Quandt (1997: 766f.). The problem is that it does not vary only as a function of the strength of the variables' impact, but also with the distribution of the independent variables. In its reanalysis of Schnell and Kohler's data, Müller turns instead to the values of the regression coefficients. We also consider this as problematic, however, as it only partially summarizes the necessary information. When more

[8] McFadden's R^2 is computed as follows: $R^2 = 1 - \frac{\ln(\textit{log likelihood } M_1)}{\ln(\textit{log likelihood } M_0)}$, where M1 is the model to be tested and M0 is the model without regressors (Long 1997: 104).

classes are considered, the comparison over time of the various coefficients becomes difficult. Furthermore, these coefficients cannot be interpreted in an absolute way. They only indicate the relative difference between a given social group and the chosen reference category. Last of all, such a measure does not give any information on the respective impacts of structural and behavioral dealignment.

The solution we propose is to turn to probabilities of voting choice, estimated on the basis of the models' coefficients. To summarize these probabilities in a single numerical value, we use a modified version of an index proposed by Brooks, Hout, and Manza (Brooks and Manza 1997; Hout, Brooks and Manza 1995; Manza and Brooks 1999). Their 'kappa' index is a summary measure of the differences in social groups' voting behavior in a given election. They first developed it in studying the class cleavage – and thus providing a valuable alternative to the Alford index. But it can be and was applied to other cleavages as well. This index is defined as "the standard deviation of class differences in vote choice in a given election" (Hout, Brooks and Manza 1995: 813). It can be compared between successive elections to see whether the voting behavior of specific social groups becomes more similar – as would be expected in the case of a decline in a cleavage's strength. Furthermore, this index can be computed for models with very different specifications, thus allowing to determine whether differences between classes, for example, weaken when additional control variables are included. Another advantage of this measure is that it can be computed both with a binomial and a multinomial dependent variable.

Differences in vote choice – on which the index is based – can be computed on the basis of either log-odds-ratios or predicted probabilities. While each solution results in a different metric for the index, both are consistent (Manza and Brooks 1999: 62, note 46). The choice, which one to use is thus a matter of convenience. Here, we shall rely on predicted probabilities. In this case, and if we have a dichotomous dependent variable and a single election, κ is computed as follows (based on Brooks and Manza 1997: 940):

$$\kappa = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{s=1}^{S} (\hat{P}_S - \overline{P})^2}{S}} .$$

That is, it is computed as the standard deviation in voting choice between S social groups. $\hat{P}_S$ is the predicted voting probability for group s, and $\overline{P}$ is the average predicted probability across all S social groups. It can be extended to a categorical dependent variable, by summing both across social groups and across categories of the dependent variable.

Brooks, Hout, and Manza see as an advantage the fact that it is "margin-free," e.g. that it varies only with a change in the behavior of the groups, and not with a variation in their size (Brooks and Manza 1997: 940, note 6; Hout, Brooks and Manza 1995: 814). In our view, however, this poses a problem. We do not think it is adequate to give equal weight to all social groups. As we have seen above, the process of dealignment occurs not only through a change in the voting behavior of social classes and religious groups, but also through *structural* changes. The latter cannot be captured by the κ index.

Furthermore, the original κ is also problematic in the context of multiparty systems. It was used with a categorical dependent variable by Hout, Brooks and Manza (1995), and, more recently, by Nieuwbeerta and Manza (2002). The problem is similar to the one of groups' size: it does not account for variations in the *political parties'* size. Yet, this affects the overall importance of a cleavage in a given election – in the same way as a change in the size of social classes or religious groups does.

To avoid these two problems, we propose a modified version of the κ index. We do this by weighting differences between the predicted voting probability of a given social class and the average probability of supporting the corresponding party by a) the size of this social group, and by b) the total share of votes of this party. This modified index can be written in the following way:

$$\kappa = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{J} \omega_j \left[\sum_{s=1}^{S} \omega_s \left(\hat{P}_{sj} - \overline{P}_j \right)^2 \right]},$$

where $\hat{P}_{sj}$ is the predicted probability that social group *s* supports party *j*, $\overline{P}_j$ is the average estimated support for party *j*, ω_s is the proportion of voters belonging to social groups *s*, and ω_j is the estimated vote share of party *j*. Similarly to the original κ, it can range from 0 to 0.5.[9]

In the models we analyze, we consider simultaneously both cleavages, and include a set of control variables. As it is based on voting probabilities, the κ index is sensitive to the values chosen for the control variables.

Data and model

To analyze the evolution of the class and religious cleavages, we rely on multivariate models of voting choice in German elections. As far as social classes are concerned, we rely on the typology we have presented above (six occupational categories and a group including non-labor force participants). Regarding religious groups, we distinguish five groups: Catholics with a high level of Church attendance,[10] Catholics with a low level of Church attendance, two equivalent categories for Protestants, and a fifth group comprising respondents with no religion or of another confession. Besides these two main groups of variables, we also include a few controls: employment status (active, retired, and otherwise non-employed), age, gender, and education.[11] They are important correlates of social class, but they may have a distinct impact on voting choice – it is thus necessary to include them into the estimation. Furthermore, we also include a dummy for trade-union membership. This element plays a central role in the articulation of the class cleavage. In a given social class, we would expect strong differences between union members and other respondents. This is important in two respects when analyzing the strength of the cleavage. First of all, it is desirable to isolate the structural effect of class membership from this organizational element. Thus, by controlling for trade-union membership, we can examine the strength of the class cleavage *net* of the impact of union membership. Second, we can see how the class cleavage is affected when some occupational categories are divided into union members and non members.

Our dependent variable, voting choice, is a dummy opposing voters of the two major parties (the SPD on the left and the CDU/CSU on the right). The model, which will be estimated with a logistic regression, can be written formally as follows:

[9] It should be emphasized that a value of 0.5 can be obtained only if the dependent variable is dichotomous. When three or more parties are distinguished, the highest possible value will be smaller.

[10] Catholics and Protestants with a high level of attendance are those who go to church at least once a month.

[11] Employment status is included as a set of two dummies, one for retired respondents, and one for the other non-labor force participants. Age is coded in years, and centred around the mean (48 years). Gender is a dummy variable, taking the value 1 for female respondents. Education is a five-category variable, ranging from 0 (lowest level) to 1 (highest level).

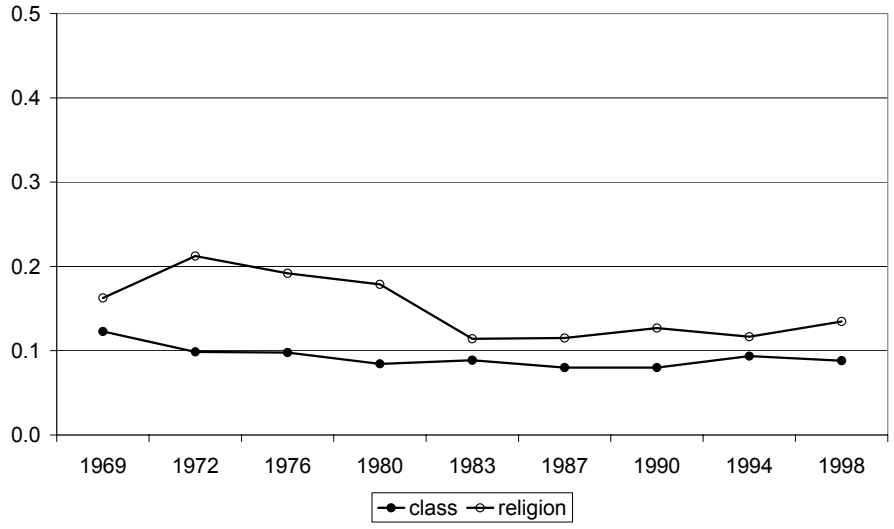
$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \sum_{k=1}^{K-1} \beta_{kj}^{C} C_{ik} + \sum_{l=1}^{L-1} \beta_{lj}^{R} R_{il} + \sum_{m=1}^{M} \beta_{mj}^{Z} Z_{im} + \varepsilon_{ij},$$

where y_i is the logistic transformation of the probability that person i supports party j; the C_{ik} are dummy variables for the K social classes; the R_{il} are dummy variables for the L religious groups; and the Z_{im} are our control variables.

We shall analyze this model separately for each election – in that way, we do not constrain the impact of the class and religious variables to follow a specific evolution over time – like a linear trend, for example. The estimation of the coefficient for the group of farmers poses a problem in 1990 and 1998: only a very small number of respondents belonged to this category, and none of them supported the SPD. To avoid this estimation problem while keeping results comparable from one survey to the next, we have excluded the group of farmers from our model.[12]

The model's estimated coefficients are presented in the appendix, in table A1. On this basis, we have computed predicted probabilities and the κ index for both the class and religious cleavages. As we mentioned above, its value depends on those of control variables. The strength of the class cleavage is based on respondents with the following characteristics: male, aged 48, professionally active, not member of a trade-union, Protestant, low level of church attendance. The evolution of the religious cleavage is based on a respondent with similar characteristics (without the religious variables, of course), and who belongs to the group of skilled workers. The resulting values of κ are displayed in figure 1.

Figure 1: Strength of the class and religious cleavages



As far as the class cleavage is concerned, its strength has actually weakened between 1969 and 1990. But this decline was extremely small; most of it takes place between 1969 and 1972. The value of the κ index is 0.12 for the 1969 election, and it varies between 0.08 and 0.10 in the following years. This relatively high level of stability is an important result. Contrary to the hypotheses of the dealignment literature, differences in voting choices between occupational categories do not appear to have become weaker during the last three

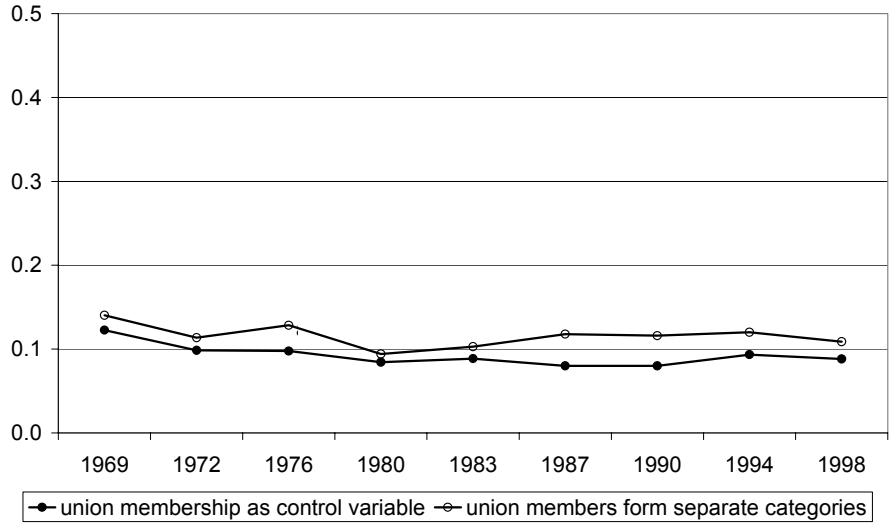
[12] For the seven surveys which allow it, we have also estimated the 'full' model, including the group of farmers. The resulting differences in the values of the κ index will be reported below.

decades. Furthermore, the observed differences are far from being negligible. As the κ index is expressed in the probability metric, it means that the standard deviation in the level of support of the different social classes for the SPD and the Union lies between 8 and 12% of votes.
These figures correspond to the model where the group of farmers has been excluded – as we explained above. But including them – when the data allows it – has only a small impact on the strength of the class cleavage. It increases the values of κ a little bit – but does not change the overall picture of a very slight decline.[13]

The evolution of the religious cleavage follows a different pattern. It was very strong in the early 1970s, has then weakened in the following decade, and remained relatively stable since 1983. The decline during the 1970s is very important. κ for this cleavage takes a value of 0.21 in the 1972 election, against 0.11 ten years later. Even if the decline in the cleavage's strength is unmistakable, the differences between religious groups are still substantial in the more recent elections. As a matter of fact, they are larger than the differences between occupational categories. On the basis of these first results, it does not appear that the secularization trend has been compensated by a realignment based on differences in the degree of religiosity – though this conclusion can only be temporary. We shall explore this hypothesis in more detail below.

In the figure above, the strength of the class cleavage was computed by distinguishing between six social classes. Union membership is included in the model as a control variable, but we did not use it to form separate groups within classes. As we explained before, however, it is meaningful to divide some occupational groups into union members and non members. On the basis of the same estimated coefficients as before, we have computed new values for κ, by splitting four groups according to trade union membership (unskilled workers, skilled workers, routine non-manual workers, and the service class). Figure 2 presents the corresponding results.

Figure 2: Strength of the class cleavage with and without separate categories for members of trade-unions



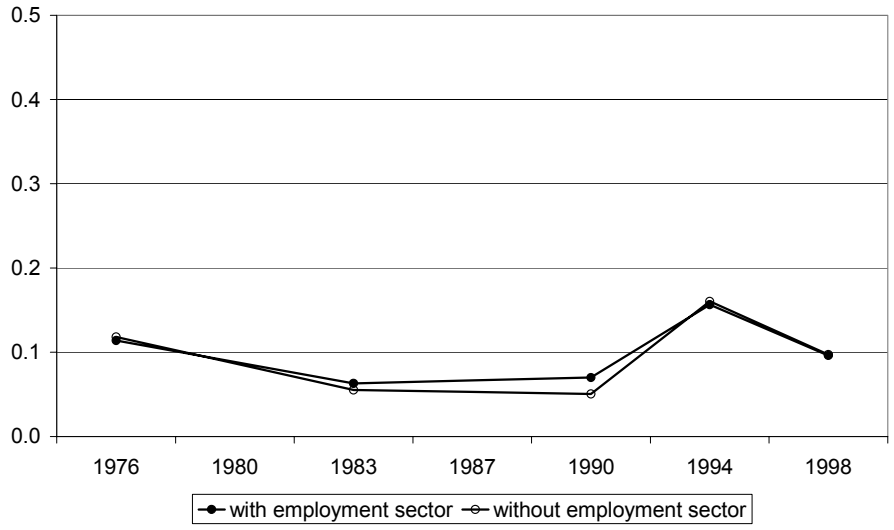
[13] For reasons of space, we do not present here the estimated coefficients of this model and of the other alternative models tested hereafter.

Forming separate groups for unionized respondents leads to an increase in the cleavage's strength. The difference in the value of κ varies between 0.01 and 0.04. It shows that including the cleavage's organizational element leads to a higher degree of polarization between social groups. Most important, however, is to see that the cleavage is even more stable when the organizational component is accounted for. It is as strong in the 1990s as it was in the early 1970s. We also see that the difference between the two series of values has become somewhat larger after 1983. It suggests that the impact of union membership has become stronger in the more recent elections.

Another important contrast to be tested relates to differences within the new middle class. We saw above that the service class, which is by far the most important group today, is quite a heterogeneous group. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient information to distinguish between administrative, technical, and social-cultural specialists. But in some elections, we can however contrast public and private sector employees. This is possible in the 1976, 1983, and 1990 to 1998 surveys. This may provide indirect evidence for oppositions within the new middle class. Administrative and technical specialists work predominantly in the private sector, while social and cultural specialists are more often employed in the public sector.

Accordingly, we have specified a new model, where the service class and routine non-manual workers are divided into public sector and private sector employees. A question on employment sector was included in five surveys (1976, 1983, 1990, 1994, and 1998). However, it is available only for respondents, and not for the head of household. Furthermore, in 1976 and 1994, this was asked only to respondents who were labor force participants at the time of the survey (and not, for example, to retired persons). This leads to a few additional modifications in the model's specification. We have to switch from the level of household to the level of respondents, and we must exclude non-labor force participants. As a consequence, the number of cases is much smaller than for the previous analyses.
In figure 3, we present the values of the κ index for the class cleavage. We have computed two series of values, with and without the private/public distinction. The value of κ for models without this distinction are slightly different from what we found above, as we use a restricted sample.

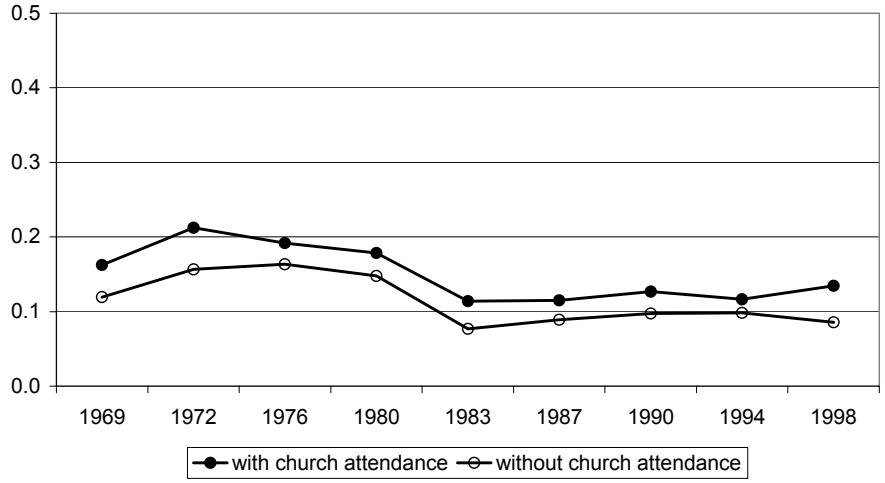
Figure 3: strength of the class cleavage, with and without the private sector/public sector distinction



These results show only a minimal increase in the class cleavage's strength when employment sector is included. Only in 1983 and 1990 does our index takes slightly higher values. Cleary, sectoral differences within the new middle class play only a marginal role. We can thus reject the hypothesis that the voting behavior of members of the new middle class employed in the public sector contrasts starkly with the choices of private sector employees. This, however, does *not* mean that the three segments we have identified within the service class vote in a similar way. As we said above, we could test this hypothesis only in a very imperfect way. Better data on respondents' occupation would be necessary for a more conclusive test.

We now turn again to the religious cleavage. The data presented above on the evolution of the cleavage's strength were based on a fivefold classification, combining religious denomination and frequency of church attendance. Here, we shall examine a possible transformation, from a cleavage based on denomination, to one based on religiosity. We have estimated a new series of models, by removing church attendance. How much this influences the values of κ can be seen in figure 4. The first series of values ("with church attendance") is the same as in figure 1. The second series results from the model based on a threefold classification of religious groups (Catholics, Protestants, no/other religion). The cleavage is always weaker in the latter case – and the difference is more important than what we observed when contrasting alternative models of the class cleavage. The smallest difference (0.02) is found in the 1994 election. In the other surveys, it lies between 0.03 and 0.06.

Figure 4: Strength of the religious cleavage, with and without church attendance



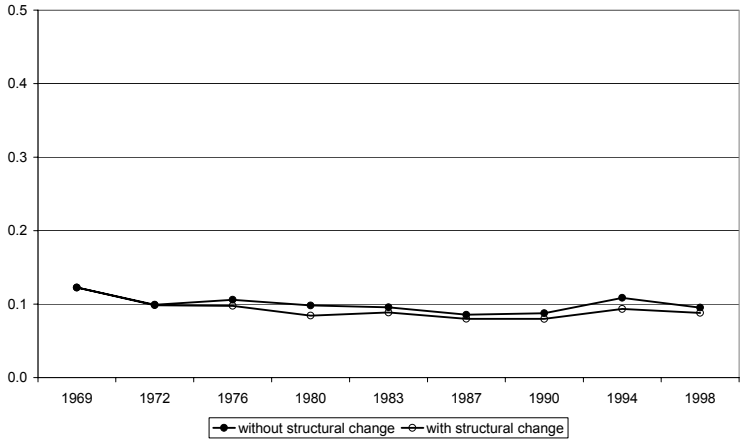
It is very clear from this comparison that church attendance is an important factor. Differences in voting choice between religious groups are much larger when both components of the cleavage are considered. However, our results do not show any *transformation* of the cleavage during these three decades. The evolution of the cleavage's strength is similar with both specifications of the model. Differences between the three groups of the second model (e.g. Catholics, Protestants, no/other religion) are less important in the late 1980s and in the 1990s than in the 1970s. But they have not entirely vanished. Rather than a transformation of the cleavage, we find that both denomination and involvement are important factors, during the whole period examined here.

A last aspect of cleavages' evolution must be examined. As we said above, the phenomenon of dealignment can occur in two ways: through a change in social groups' voting behavior, and/or through a change in the size of these social groups. The analysis we have performed so

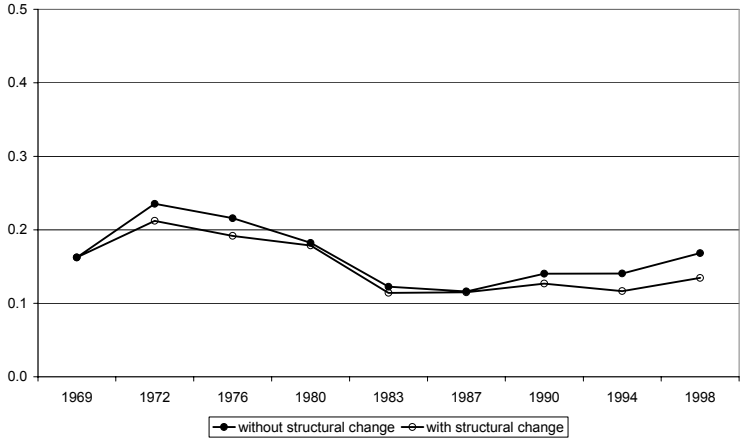
far allows us to distinguish between these two types of changes. To do this, we compute a new series of values for the κ index, by keeping groups' size constant, at their 1969 level. By comparing the two series of results – with and without structural change – we gain important information regarding the dynamic of the cleavages. We have done this comparison for the first model estimated – based on five religious groups and on a sevenfold classification of social classes. The corresponding values of the κ index are reported in figure 5.

The class cleavage (upper panel) is a little bit stronger when structural change is not accounted for – but the difference is very small. This result is very important. Despite the large changes in the employment structure of the electorate, the contrasts in the voting choices of the various employment categories have not become significantly weaker during this 30-years period. In other words, the impact of the "behavioral" component of the dealignment process has been very weak, at best. Differences between social classes are almost as strong today as in the late 1960s, whether changes in the employment structure are considered or not.

Figure 5: strength of the cleavages, with and without structural change
Class cleavage



Religious cleavage



Differences between the two curves are more marked with respect to the religious cleavage (Figure 5, lower panel). Here, too, disregarding structural changes results in a stronger cleavage. The differences are especially marked in the early 1970s and in the 1990s. When changes in groups' size are not accounted for, we observe an increase in the cleavage's strength since 1987. This result is in line with Wolf's hypothesis (1996) of a transformation of the cleavage, and of a reinforcement of the differences between devout Christians and other

voters. However, once structural changes are included, it appears that this change only contributes to a stabilization of the cleavages' decline. The impact of changes in the religious groups' voting behavior is compensated by structural dealignment.

Conclusion

We have presented here an analysis of the evolution of the class and religious cleavages in Germany, between 1969 and 1998. Taking as our starting point the literature on electoral dealignment, we have identified two controversial elements in this debate: the classification of social groups, and the measurement of cleavages' strength. As far as the first point is concerned, we have turned to a multicategory schema of social classes, based on citizens' employment situation. Regarding the religious cleavage, we have proposed to account both for voters' religious *denomination* and for their degree of *religiosity*. As regards measurement, we have relied on an index developed by Brooks, Hout, and Manza, and we have modified it to be able to distinguish between the "structural" and "behavioral" components of the dealignment process.

Our analyses point to different results for the two cleavages. As far as the class cleavage is concerned, we find a high level of stability. Its strength – measured by our index based on voting probabilities – has declined only by a very small margin during these three decades. Furthermore, we also found that it was even more stable when the cleavage's organizational component (e.g. membership in trade unions) was used to refine our class schema. These findings run counter to the dealignment hypothesis, which predicts a sharp decline in the impact of structural variables on voting choices. Quite to the contrary, we find that differences between structurally defined social groups have remained constant or have declined only slightly.

These results call for further investigations of the differences between social classes. They rather support the idea that new alignments may form between classes and parties, which could result in a transformed, but stable class cleavage. We have tried to explore such an avenue, by considering the impact of sectoral differences within the new middle class. However, this resulted only in a very marginal increase of the cleavage's strength. Yet, our data on voters' occupations were not precise enough to allow for a detailed operationalization of social classes.

As regards the religious cleavage, we observed a clear decline. Between the early 1970s and the early 1980s, the cleavages' strength was reduced by half. In the more recent period, however, it remained stable. This decline, however, does not mean that differences between religious groups have become irrelevant – quite to the contrary, they remain substantial. Evidence regarding a possible transformation of this cleavage, as hypothesized among others by Wolf, is mixed. On the one hand, we have seen that the net impact of religiosity on the cleavage's strength was almost constant over time. On the other hand, our last series of analyses has shown that the structural and "behavioral" components of the cleavage had opposite effects on the cleavage's evolution. Here, too, further examinations would be necessary.

Appendix I.

Table A1: Estimated coefficients (and standard errors) for the model of voting choice

	1969	1972	1976	1980	1983
Unskilled worker	-0.21	-0.65*	-0.32	-0.02	0.00
	(0.36)	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.44)	(0.37)
Skilled worker	-0.47	-0.85**	0.25	0.08	0.11
	(0.33)	(0.29)	(0.28)	(0.39)	(0.34)
Routine non-manual	-0.41	-0.56	0.35	0.17	0.09
	(0.44)	(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.41)	(0.38)
Service class	0.11	0.11	0.62*	0.40	0.50
	(0.35)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.38)	(0.34)
Self-employed	1.40**	0.40	1.36***	1.40**	1.32**
	(0.45)	(0.34)	(0.36)	(0.48)	(0.41)
Protestant, low att.	-0.30	0.21	0.25	0.22	0.16
	(0.74)	(0.39)	(0.30)	(0.44)	(0.33)
Protestant, high att.	0.27	0.83	0.46	0.48	0.71*
	(0.78)	(0.58)	(0.49)	(0.46)	(0.35)
Catholic, low att.	0.06	0.91*	0.99**	0.66	0.42
	(0.76)	(0.39)	(0.31)	(0.46)	(0.35)
Catholic, high att.	1.33†	2.64***	2.72***	2.01***	1.32***
	(0.75)	(0.41)	(0.35)	(0.44)	(0.34)
Retired	0.44	-0.47†	-0.29	-0.34	0.08
	(0.37)	(0.28)	(0.27)	(0.32)	(0.25)
Non labor force part.	0.01	-0.45*	-0.21	-0.07	0.02
	(0.28)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.25)	(0.21)
Education	0.80	1.22**	0.93*	0.27	-0.02
	(0.51)	(0.39)	(0.37)	(0.45)	(0.39)
Age	0.00	0.02**	0.02**	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender	0.35	-0.11	0.08	-0.46*	-0.32†
	(0.28)	(0.20)	(0.18)	(0.21)	(0.18)
Union member	-0.92**	-0.74**	-0.91***	-0.44†	-0.50*
	(0.31)	(0.23)	(0.20)	(0.24)	(0.21)
Constant	-0.62	-0.98*	-1.24**	-1.20*	-0.68
	(0.82)	(0.47)	(0.42)	(0.57)	(0.48)
N	583	966	958	670	826
McFadden R^2	0.15	0.19	.18	0.14	0.07

*† p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001*

(Continued on next page)

Table A1 *(continued)*

	1987	1990	1994	1998
Unskilled worker	0.63	0.05	0.21	-0.10
	(0.38)	(0.47)	(0.39)	(0.40)
Skilled worker	-0.03	-0.33	-0.61†	-0.49
	(0.33)	(0.38)	(0.32)	(0.35)
Routine non-manual	0.49	0.25	0.00	-0.99*
	(0.36)	(0.40)	(0.33)	(0.39)
Service class	0.50	0.25	0.23	-0.35
	(0.33)	(0.36)	(0.31)	(0.30)
Self-employed	1.00*	0.97*	1.02*	0.75†
	(0.39)	(0.46)	(0.49)	(0.42)
Protestant, low att.	0.24	-0.47	-0.38	-0.25
	(0.32)	(0.36)	(0.38)	(0.26)
Protestant, high att.	0.85*	0.12	0.22	0.64†
	(0.34)	(0.37)	(0.34)	(0.37)
Catholic, low att.	0.70*	0.01	0.49	0.20
	(0.34)	(0.38)	(0.37)	(0.28)
Catholic, high att.	1.33***	0.95**	1.08**	1.42***
	(0.32)	(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.32)
Retired	-0.31	0.36	0.13	-0.49†
	(0.23)	(0.28)	(0.31)	(0.28)
Non labor force part.	-0.23	-0.18	0.14	-0.07
	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.24)
Education	0.95*	-0.07	-0.03	0.51
	(0.37)	(0.35)	(0.37)	(0.37)
Age	0.01*	0.00	0.01	0.03***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender	-0.11	-0.45*	-0.69**	-0.07
	(0.16)	(0.19)	(0.23)	(0.19)
Union member	-0.94***	-0.86***	-0.86***	-1.03***
	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.30)
Constant	-1.01*	0.13	-0.12	-0.22
	(0.46)	(0.50)	(0.46)	(0.43)
N	995	678	573	708
McFadden R^2	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.13

*† p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001*

Note: the dependent variable takes the value 0 for SPD votes, and the value 1 for CDU votes.

Appendix II. Construction of the class schema

	1969-1987, 1998	1990	1994
Unskilled workers	Angelernte Arbeiter, ungelernte Arbeiter, landwirtschaftliche Arbeiter	Angelernte Arbeiter, ungelernte Arbeiter, Landarbeiter	Angelernte/ungelernte Arbeiter
Skilled workers	Facharbeiter, sehr qualifizierte Facharbeiter	Facharbeiter	Industrie- und Werkmeister im Angestelltenverhältnis, gelernte und Facharbeiter, Vorarbeiter und Kolonnenführer/Brigadier, Meister/Poliere
Routine non-manual employees	Ausführende Angestellte, einfache Angestellte, mittlere Angestellte, Beamte des einfachen Dienstes, Beamte des mittleren Dienstes	Angestellte mit einfacher Tätigkeit, Angestellte mit gehobener Tätigkeit, Mannschaftsdienstgrad, Unteroffiziere	Beamte im einfachen Dienst; Beamte im mittleren Dienst; Angestellte mit einfacher Tätigkeit; Angestellte, die schwierige Aufgaben nach allgemeiner Anweisung selbständig erledigen
Service class	Qualifizierte Angestellte, Leitende Angestellte, wissenschaftliche Angestellte, Beamte des gehobenen Dienstes, Beamte des höheren Dienstes	Angestellte mit leitender Tätigkeit, Richter, Offiziere	Beamte im gehobenen Dienst; Beamte im höheren Dienst; Angestellte, die selbständig Leistungen in verantwortungsvoller Tätigkeit erbringen oder begrenzte Verantwortung für die Tätigkeit anderer übernehmen; Angestellte mit umfassenden Führungsaufgaben und Entscheidungsbefugnissen
Self-employed	Freie Berufe, selbständige Akademiker, kleinere Selbständige, größere Selbständige, mittlere Selbständige	Selbständige	Akademische freie Berufe, Selbständige
Farmers	Selbständige Landwirte	Selbständige Landwirte	Selbständige in Landwirtschaft

Appendix III: Data sources

The datasets we have analyzed are listed below. All of them are available through the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung at the University of Köln, and on a CD-ROM delivered with a book edited by Markus Klein et al. (2000).

1969

Bundestagswahl 1969 (Voruntersuchung, September 1969 und Nachuntersuchung, Oktober-November 1969). ZA study number: 0426. Primary researchers: H.-D. Klingemann, F. U. Pappi, Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung, Universität zu Köln.

1972

Wahlstudie 1972 (Panel: Voruntersuchung, September-Oktober 1972, Oktober-November 1972; Nachuntersuchung, Dezember 1972). ZA study number: 0635. Primary researchers: M. Berger, W. G. Gibowski, M. Kaase, D. Roth, U. Schleth, R. Wildenmann, Lehrstuhl für politische Wissenschaft, Universität Mannheim.

1976

Wahlstudie 1976 (Panel: Voruntersuchungen, Mai-Juni 1976, August-September 1976; Nachuntersuchung, Oktober-November 1976). ZA study number: 0823. Primary researchers: M. Berger, W. G. Gibowski, E. Gruber, D. Roth, W. Schulte, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim; in collaboration with M. Kaase, H.-D. Klingemann, ZUMA, Mannheim; U. Schleth, Universität Heidelberg.

1980

October survey of the *Wahlstudie 1980*. ZA study number: 1053. Primary researchers: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen e.V., Mannheim.

1983

Wahlstudie 1983 (Panelstudie). ZA study number: 1276. Primary researchers: M. Berger, W. G. Gibowski, D. Roth, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim.

1987

Wahlstudie 1987 (Panelstudie). ZA study number: 1537. Primary researchers: M. Berger, W. G. Gibowski, D. Roth, W. Schulte, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim; M. Kaase, Universität Mannheim; H.-D. Klingemann, FU Berlin; F. U. Pappi, Universität Kiel; M. Küchler, Florida State University, Tallahassee.

1990

Wahlstudie 1990 (Panelstudie). ZA study number: 1919. Primary researchers: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim; in collaboration with M. Kaase, Universität Mannheim; H.-D. Klingemann, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; M. Küchler, Hunter College, New York; F. U. Pappi, Universitäten Kiel und Mannheim; H.A. Semetko, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

1994

Nachwahlstudie zur Bundestagswahl 1994. ZA study number: 2601. Primary researchers: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; ZUMA, Mannheim; M. Berger, M. Jung, D. Roth, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim; in collaboration with: W.G. Gibowski, Bundespresseamt Bonn; M. Kaase, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; H.D. Klingemann,

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; M. Küchler, Hunter College, New York; F.U. Pappi, Universität Mannheim; H.A. Semetko, Syracuse University.

1998

Politische Einstellungen, politische Partizipation und Wählerverhalten im vereinigten Deutschland. ZA study number: 3066. Primary researchers: Jürgen Falter (Universität Mainz), Oscar W. Gabriel (Universität Stuttgart), Hans Rattinger (Universität Bamberg)

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Müller, Walter (1998). “Klassenstruktur und Parteiensystem: Zum Wandel der Klassenspaltung im Wahlverhalten”, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 50(1): 3-46.

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