## Ideas in action: The politics of Prussian child labor reform, 1817-1839

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**Abstract:** This article explains the political origins of an 1839 law regulating the factory employment of children in Prussia. The paper has two aims. First, it seeks to explain why Prussia adopted the particular law that it did. Existing historical explanations of this particular policy change are incorrect, largely because they fail to take into account the actual motivations and intentions of key reformers. Second, the paper contributes to the theories of the role of ideas in public policymaking. Ideas *interact* with institutional and political factors to serve as motivators and as resources for policy change. As motivators, they drive political action and shape the content of policy programs; as resources, they enable political actors to recruit supporters and forge alliances. I offer a theory of the relationship between ideas, motivation, and political action, and I develop a methodological framework for assessing the reliability of political actors' expressed motivations. Further, I explain how political actors use ideas as resources by deploying three specific ideational strategies: framing, borrowing, and citing. By tracing how different understandings of the child labor problem motivated and were embodied in two competing child labor policy proposals, I show how the ideas underlying reform had significant consequences for policy outcomes.

Keywords: policy change, motivation, political action, ideas, institutions, ideational strategy, framing

Germany is widely viewed as the cradle of the modern welfare state. In the 1880s, so the story goes, Bismarck created national health insurance, industrial accident insurance, and old-age pensions because he wanted to move the locus of control over these social provisions from the labor unions to the state, thereby neutralizing the political threat of the socialist movement (see, for example, Steinmetz 1990, 1993). The nineteenth-century German welfare system is therefore often characterized as stemming from "authoritarian" impulses—as a form of patriarchal benevolence intended to lull the working class into complacency and to protect the position of the country's dominant classes, namely, the agrarian Junker aristocracy and the ascendant industrial bourgeoisie (Beck 1995). Much less is known, however, about the social policies that preceded and paved the way for the Bismarckian welfare state. In the early nineteenth century, a group of high-ranking Prussian officials initiated a wide range of

social reforms aimed at improving the lot of both rural and urban workers. Contrary to widespread perception, these top-level bureaucrats were not *all* motivated by an authoritarian desire to subdue the supposedly profligate, unruly, and potentially revolutionary lower classes. Some of these reformers saw public education and worker protections, particularly those aimed at children, as a way to liberate and cultivate the human capacities of the poor.

This paper relies on an analysis of original historical documents<sup>1</sup> to explain the political origins of one particularly important piece of early nineteenth-century Prussian social legislation. In 1839, Prussia became the first continental European state—and the second country in the world, after Great Britain—to pass a law regulating child labor in factories, mines, and quarries. The law, which set the minimum employment age at nine, prohibited children under 16 from working more than ten hours per day, and required children to obtain three years of schooling before working, represents Prussia's first attempt to regulate industrial workers' employment conditions.<sup>2</sup> Historians have designated it the "beginning of social policy in Prussia" (Kastner 2004; see also Köllman 1966, Gladen 1974, Schulz 1996). Although factory child labor was very widespread, the child labor law was nonetheless a major breakthrough, in that it formed the foundation for additional protections for child and adult workers in

These documents consist mainly of internal government communications, reports and legislative drafts collected from the Landeshauptarchiv (LHA) in Koblenz, Germany and from the Geheimes Staatsarchiv (GStA) in Berlin, Germany. These documents were not public at the time of their production. I relied primarily on the papers of Ernst von Bodelschwingh, governor of the Rhineland Province from 1834 to 1842, and the records of the Prussian Ministry of Industry and Commerce. These sets of documents represent the bulk of the surviving historical record of early Prussian child labor reform, as identified by various German historians. The materials were all handwritten in the old German script. I photocopied or scanned the documents, transcribed them, and summarized their content in detailed narratives, which I then used as the empirical basis of the analysis presented here. This original research was supplemented and verified by several secondary accounts of early Prussian child labor reform, especially Anton (1953) and Kastner (2004).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The law also required children under 16 to be given 1.5 hours of daily outdoor breaks; prohibited children from working at night, on Sundays or on holidays; and required that working children be granted the opportunity to receive religious instruction until confirmation. It required employers to keep a list of data on child workers, and imposed a system of modest fines for violations. It empowered local authorities to grant exceptions to the rules in cases of work interruptions caused by accidents or natural disasters.

the latter half of the nineteenth century. What is more, the law served as a legislative model upon which other continental European states based their own child labor regulations (Kastner 2004).<sup>3</sup>

The paper has two overall aims, one empirical and one theoretical. First, it seeks to explain why Prussia enacted child labor regulations, and why it adopted the particular law that it did. Existing historical explanations of this particular policy change are incorrect, largely because they fail to take into account the actual motivations and intentions of key reformers. Moreover, historians have not explained why Prussian ministers chose to enact the particular policy that they did, despite the fact that other options were available to them. Two well-articulated child labor policy proposals reached the upper levels of the Prussian bureaucracy, but only one of these was successful. The first, written in 1828 by the Minister of Cultural, Educational and Medical Affairs (hereafter Minister of Education), Karl Friedrich von Altenstein, was ignored, whereas the second, initially drafted in 1835 by the Governor of the Rhineland Province, Ernst von Bodelschwingh, was eventually adopted into law with some modifications. This presents a puzzle: why would top Prussian ministers pass over a proposal emanating from a member of their own ranks in favor of one coming from the provinces? I argue that the answer to this question has less to do with the content of the two policy proposals than with each man's ability to attract and harness the real or apparent support of various political allies. This ability, in turn, hinged on their respective positions within the institutional context and changing political environment of the 1820s and 1830s, as well as on the ideational strategies they used to build a coalition of supporters.

Second, this paper seeks to contribute to the burgeoning theoretical literature on the role of ideas in public policymaking. Since "national culture" explanations of social policy variation across countries

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Many other European states passed laws specifically regulating the industrial labor of children in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These included: Bavaria (1840); Baden (1840); France (1841); Italy (1843); Austria (1859); Saxony (1861); Württemberg (1862); Denmark (1873); Switzerland (1873); Netherlands (1872); Sweden (1881); Belgium (1884); Russia (1882); and Finland (1889). The United States did not regulate child labor at the federal level until 1938, with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Many American states adopted their own child labor regulations, however, beginning with Massachusetts in 1842. Meyer (1894); Trattner (1970); Rahikainen (2004).

were roundly rejected as overly simplistic and incapable of accounting for the timing, content and political fate of particular policy initiatives (Orloff and Skocpol 1984, Skocpol 1992), dominant theories of social policy development have tended to treat culture and ideas as epiphenomenal dependent variables that are ultimately determined by more "fundamental" structural conditions (Sewell 1992; Steinmetz 1999; Padamsee 2009). The result has been "a large lacuna the center of our understanding of public policy" (Hall 1989 4). However, recent years have witnessed a resurgence of scholarship which takes the role of culture and ideas in politics more seriously (e.g. Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Dobbin 1994; Biernacki 1995; Berman 1998; Steinmetz 1999; Blyth 2002; Somers and Block 2005; Hall 1989, 1993; Campbell 1998, 2002, 2004; Steensland 2006, 2008; Béland and Cox 2011). These scholars do not argue that ideational explanations should *supplant* those focusing on how power resources, state structures and actors, or institutional constraints and opportunities shape policy outcomes. Rather, they contend that cultural and ideational factors *interact* with these other influences in various significant ways-for instance, by shaping how interest groups understand their political goals, by providing roadmaps for state actors in times of crisis and uncertainty, by providing actors with rhetorical resources for recruiting allies, and by contributing to the reproduction of institutions (for an overview see Padamsee 2009).

I seek to contribute to this growing literature on ideas and policy by considering two questions. First, how do normative and paradigmatic ideas (these terms will be defined below) *motivate* political action? In general, motivation remains under-theorized in sociology; and in particular, the role of ideas as political motivators has yet to be systematically considered. I seek to address this omission by developing a theory of policymaking which incorporates insights from Weber and Joas on the relationship between ideas, motivation and action. Furthermore, I propose four criteria by which to assess whether evidence of motivation is reliable. By paying attention to whether political actors'

motivational claims are temporally constant, consistent across contexts, socially embedded, and artless, researchers can minimize the methodological pitfalls inherent to studying motivation.

Second, why do certain programmatic policy ideas (again, this term is defined below) "win" while others "lose"? Several scholars (Hall 1989; Mehta 2011) have identified the need to systematically compare policy proposals that are adopted into law with those that are not, in order to identify more precisely what enables certain policy ideas to succeed where others fail. The case of early Prussian child labor reform, in which the success of the Bodelschwingh plan can be compared against the failure of the Altenstein plan, offers the opportunity to conduct exactly such a comparison. In answering this question, I shift my focus from the motivational role of ideas to their role as strategic *resources*. While the success of particular policy programs can never be wholly attributed to their proponents' ideational strategies, such strategies can help actors take advantage of political opportunities, negotiate political constraints and overcome institutional barriers. As political actors seek to attract allies and win over gatekeepers, they deploy ideas as resources to convince others of the merit of their policy plans. Furthermore, just as ideas can be used as assets to build support, they can also act as *liabilities* blocking reformers from building a winning coalition of political allies.

I focus on contributing to our understanding of how ideas relate to political action and policy outcomes under conditions of uncertainty, when policy problems are new. While child labor was hardly an unknown phenomenon in early nineteenth-century Prussia, changing modes of production brought about new forms of child employment and pushed the issue into the open. As children left their parents' homes and fields and began toiling in factories, their plight became more apparent and a "new" policy problem was born. Political actors responded to this problem in different ways. While most viewed it with either indifference or resigned consternation, a few were concerned enough to raise an alarm and to take concrete steps in the direction of enacting laws regulating the labor of children in factories. (Child

labor in agriculture, in workshops and other smaller manufacturing establishments, in retail, on the street, and in private homes was not deemed suitable for regulation until the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). By explaining the motivations underlying these actors' efforts to regulate child labor in Prussia, this paper sheds light on how and why worker protection policy originated in Europe.

# Existing explanations of nineteenth century Prussian child labor reform

Although no sociologist has directly analyzed early continental European child labor legislation, explanations offered by historians who have studied the Prussian reform tend to align with existing sociological theories of state-building and social provision. Historical explanations of why nineteenthcentury Prussian child labor regulations emerged when they did, and took the form that they did, generally emphasize either military priorities or class relations. In this section, I consider both types of explanations, and show why neither can account for the emergence of child labor regulation in Prussia.

The dominant account of German child labor reform is that of the Marxist historian Jürgen Kuczynski, who, in his influential "cannon fodder" thesis, maintains that the 1839 child labor law emanated from Prussian militarism and concerns that premature factory work yielded sickly, deformed young men unfit for military service (Kuczynski 1958). Other historians have echoed Kuczynski's argument, albeit in less strident terms (Köllman 1966, Erdbrügger 1972, Nipperdey 1977, Bucher 1983). In this view, child labor reform is seen as part of Prussia's efforts to improve its standing vis-a-vis its European rivals by resurrecting its army in the wake of the devastating Napoleonic Wars. This argument indirectly echoes Charles Tilly's (1990) contention that European state building occurred at the juncture of capital and coercion. During the "nationalization" phase of European state building, occurring roughly between 1700 and 1850, states created mass armies composed of their own citizens, a move that required sovereigns to absorb both the armed forces and the fiscal apparatus directly into their own administrations (C. Tilly 1990 29). Just as the "wielders of coercion" extracted monetary resources from

the "manipulators of capital" in order to develop their standing armies (C. Tilly 1990 16), they also asserted control over the physical bodies of young people. When children's wholesale appropriation by capital was perceived as undermining the state's national security and military ambitions, child labor regulation was deemed necessary. In this view, the regulation of a child's employment and education, instituted to pave the way for his subsequent military conscription, represented just another form of resource extraction for the purpose of national state-building through war.

The "cannon fodder" thesis rests primarily on evidence that in 1828, King Frederick William III ordered his top ministers to develop a child labor law in response to reports that Prussia's industrial regions were failing to meet conscription quotas because local men were physically stunted due to premature and excessive factory labor. While this evidence may at first glance appear conclusive, the analysis I present here will demonstrate that the political origins of Prussian child labor reform actually preceded the king's order by about a decade. Moreover, the king was not a politically powerful player in the child labor reform movement. In the age of "bureaucratic absolutism" that characterized pre-1848 Prussia (Rosenberg 1966), top ministers could, and did, ignore the king's decree. The officials who led child labor reform were not, in fact, motivated by military concerns; at most, they cited military issues as a strategic framing device when presenting their legislative proposals to the king. In short, Frederick William's military priorities may have facilitated the final passage of a child labor law, but they certainly did not drive reform. In actuality, Prussian child labor reform was not simply another manifestation of the state's coercive and extractive priorities, but part of a broader state-building project, carried over from the previous century, that sought to discipline, socialize, and cultivate a new, improved Prussian citizen-subject (Gorski 1993, 2003).

A second type of argument seeking to explain the creation of Prussia's 1839 child labor law portrays the policy as a tool designed to advance class interests. This argument has taken two forms. The

first formulation contends that top Prussian bureaucrats, most of whom were members of the aristocracy, pushed through child labor regulations in order to stem the rising power of the bourgeoisie (Bülter 1953). There is little evidence to support this claim. Many Prussian ministers had been schooled in liberal economic theories and were, in fact, very sympathetic to the interests of industry and sensitive to the potential impact of the child labor law on factory output (Beck 1992, 1998; see Steinmetz 1993 for a similar argument pertaining to the later nineteenth century). Many of them viewed the advancement of industry as critical to Prussia's national interests. The liberal Chancellor von Hardenberg, for example, called industrialization the source of "culture and welfare in the flourishing lands."<sup>4</sup> Another such official, Interior Minister Friedrich von Schuckmann, blocked the passage of child labor legislation for years because he feared it would threaten Prussian industrialists' ability to withstand British competition. When it finally did pass, the authors of the Prussian child labor law were careful not to make its provisions more stringent than those contained in England's 1833 Factory Act. The law even contained language stipulating that its educational requirements be implemented in such a way as to "disturb factory operations as little as possible." In short, there is little evidence to suggest that the law was intended to advance the interests of the aristocracy by harming Prussian capitalists.

The second formulation of the class-based explanation is that the child labor law was intended to assuage working-class discontent and to mitigate any impetus for a potentially disruptive workers' movement (Bülter 1953). The argument that child labor reformers in the 1830s, like Bismarck in the 1880s, enacted social legislation because they felt threatened by a proto-socialist political movement is unconvincing, simply because such a movement did not exist in Germany at this point in history. Rather, the political threat that Prussian elites *were* concerned about was the spread of a French-style social revolution to the German-speaking lands. In this context, the working-class "rabble" [*Pöbel*] was to be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Letter from Hardenberg to Merckel in Breslau, von Heydebreck in Berlin, von Bülow in Magdeburg, von Vincke in Münster, and Count Solms-Laubach in Cologne and Minister von Ingersleben in Koblenz, 9/5/1817. In Hoppe, Kuczynski and Waldmann (1960), p. 23-26.

feared, not because it was politically organized, but because it might use any incipient bourgeoisintellectual revolutionary agitation as an opportunity to rise up against brutal working and living conditions (Conze 1954, R. Tilly 1980). In this formulation of the class-based theory, child labor reform was a way to redress the grievances underlying these actual and potential disruptions by mitigating some of the worst abuses of the factory system. This argument mirrors theories of the welfare state (and earlier forms of social policy), which maintain that social welfare policies and provisions arose out of the need to preserve economic and political order in the face of working-class unrest or perceived threats thereof (Piven and Cloward 1971, C. Tilly 1975).

There is evidence to support the interpretation that early Prussian child labor regulations were seen by some of their proponents as a way to prevent workers' uprisings. Many Prussian elites were indeed very worried about rumblings of discontent they felt from below. Political protests, food riots and uprisings against unfair labor practices were relatively common, especially during the *Hungerkrisen* of 1816-1817 and 1830-1831 (R. Tilly 1980; Bass 1991). More generally, the lower classes posed a threat of "inchoate social disorder" in the form of pauperism, crime, begging, banditry, and gangs of ragged children who roamed and roughhoused in the city streets (Steinmetz 1993 46). However, the contention that reformers thought child labor laws would dissuade workers from rioting and other disruptive behaviors by directly redressing their grievances is wrong. German workers did not want restrictions on children's labor and were unhappy with the law once it passed, because it took away an important source of income from poverty-stricken families. In the industrial Rhenish town of Sieg, for example, parents held a large demonstration in front of the mayor's house to protest the law's limitation on children's working hours (Kastner 2004). Prussian reformers did not pass child labor legislation to please workers; rather, they thought it would give working-class children greater access to education, which would, in turn, teach them skills and values that would obviate their impulse to protest.

In actuality, then, the state was not responding directly to pressure from the aristocracy or from workers, but was instead pursuing its own state-building agenda. The semi-autonomous government bureaucrats who initiated child labor regulation were acting as mediators between labor, capital, and the aristocracy; at least in this case, they represented the immediate interests of none of these groups. By working to protect and discipline the next generation of Prussian workers, they were instead trying to pursue what they perceived as the social and economic goals of the state, while at the same time refraining from placing too great a burden on industrial capitalists, whose prosperity they also saw as vital to Prussia's economic regeneration (Skocpol, Evans, Reuschemeyer 1985; Steinmetz 1990).

The weakness common to both the bellicist and class-based explanations of child labor policy is that neither theory pays sufficient attention to the actual motivations underlying reform. Both theories run roughshod over real historical actors involved, and instead treat the goals of "state bureaucrats" or "the aristocracy" or "the workers" as deriving automatically from their social-historical locations. I contend that explaining the causes of Prussian child labor reform requires understanding the specific motivations and intentions of the main actors involved. Policy change does not happen without political action, and action is grounded in the motivations and intentions of the actors in question. Taking motivations and intentions seriously in causal analysis requires abandoning the tendency to treat actors' "interests" as given, and demands instead that we scrutinize how actors construct their interests and goals in dialogue with ideas.

Although all of the key promoters of child labor regulation shared the view that protecting working children was vital to the interests of the Prussian state, they differed markedly in their interpretation of those interests and how they related to the child labor problem. Bureaucratic state actors, like members of the capitalist, working, and aristocratic classes, possess some measure of individual autonomy when it comes to defining interests and choosing policy preferences and goals.

These interpretations were, in turn, manifested in the policy plans they proposed, and ultimately, in how child labor reform was carried out in Prussia.

## Ideas and policy change

#### Ideas as motivators: Weber and his critics

Whether explicitly or implicitly, contemporary work on the relationship between ideas and policymaking builds on classical Weberian sociology. However, whereas Weber treated ideas as playing primarily a motivational role in social action, much of the contemporary work has veered away from this conceptualization of their function. For Weber, the task of sociology as an academic discipline was to arrive at an interpretive understanding of social action in order to explain its causes and effects (1964 88). He called this methodological strategy Verstehen. Uncovering individual actors' motives and intentions is critical to this endeavor, he thought, because these are the key to identifying the causes of social action and of social change more generally. Moreover, identifying motivations necessarily requires paying attention to the ideas upon which they are based. Weber argued that ideas interact with interests (he regarded the two as distinct) to direct individual action like "switchmen" toward one goal or another: "Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest" (Weber 1946 280). Thus, in Weber's view, ideological beliefs play a constitutive role in shaping how people define their interests and in motivating them to pursue particular ends over others (Weber 1954; 1930).

Due, perhaps, to skepticism regarding (both material and ideal) interest-maximization models of human behavior, and an associated revival of pragmatist theory in sociology, Weber's "teleological" view of the relationship between ideas and action has come under attack. Contemporary theorists have

criticized Weber's understanding of the relationship between motivation and action, arguing that Weber's reliance on a means-ends model of action, in which action is systematically directed toward the pursuit of previously chosen normative or instrumental ends, represents an artificial and inaccurate description of how humans actually behave. For these scholars, agency and rationality inhere in individuals' creative ability to define and maneuver within emerging situations, not in their strategic pursuit of ultimate life objectives (Swidler 1986, 2001; Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Biernacki 2005). This conceptualization of action runs the risk, however, of over-emphasizing the contingent, ad-hoc, situational aspects of action while neglecting the ways in which actors are also guided by long-standing value commitments, beliefs, and aspirations.

In his work on the "creativity of action," Hans Joas (1996) constructs a compelling synthesis between of the "teleological interpretation" (158) and a view of action in which actors simply negotiate emerging situations without regard to larger instrumentally and/or normatively motivated goals. Joas places all action in situational contexts in which actors, when faced with non-routine situations, creatively modify means and ends in response to new information and changing conditions. However, actors also possess enduring socially embedded "dispositions towards goals, which are constantly at work even when [they] have not set…any immediate goals" (161). In problematic or unexpected situations, actors adopt a reflective stance and choose courses of action, in line with their pre-reflective dispositions, more deliberatively (162). In this way, Joas grants actors deliberative intentionality in choosing their initial course of non-routine action, while at the same time allowing for the creative, adaptive nature of action as it progresses, and firmly grounding all action in psychological, biographical and social context.

The foregoing discussion of Weber and his critics suggests that accepting the role of ideas as motivators requires modifying Weber's teleological view of social action. Any theory of political action

should include a consideration of how ideas constitute goals and motivate action, while also recognizing that actors, though guided by relatively stable dispositions towards goals, are highly adaptive and creative. I turn to developing such a theory in the next section.

## *Types of ideas and political motivation*

The most influential recent attempt to categorize policy-relevant ideas comes from John Campbell (2004). Campbell proposes a four-fold typology of ideas in which he distinguishes normative from causal ideas; ideas that constrain action from those that enable it; and ideas operating in the background of policy debates from those working in the foreground. In his typology, *cognitive paradigms* are taken-for-granted background assumptions about causal relationships (e.g. theories) that *constrain* which policy alternatives are perceived as useful. *Public sentiments* are taken-for-granted background values and identities that *constrain* which policy alternatives are perceived as normatively legitimate. *Policy programs* are causal ideas operating in the foreground of policy discourse that *enable* decision-makers to chart clear courses of action and solve policy problems. Finally, *frames* are normative claims operating in the foreground of policy discourse that *enable* policymakers to justify positions and attract support.

The major shortcoming of this otherwise useful typology is that it does not recognize the motivational role of ideas. Norms and paradigms are construed primarily as barriers to social change, and not as potential sources of inspiration or motivation for reform. Moreover, those ideas characterized as enabling action and change are viewed through an instrumentalist lens: frames and programs are useful in helping policymakers to strategically pursue their goals once they have been identified, but they do not constitute those goals. Thus, Campbell's framework does not address the question of how political actors choose or identify their goals in the first place, and leaves out the essential role ideas play in constituting these goals and motivating people to pursue them.

Other work on the relationship between ideas and policy change is also characterized by an instrumentalist view of how ideas work in policymaking. In this literature, ideas are alternately construed as post-hoc justifications for actors' political goals, as guides actors use to figure out what to do in times of crisis, or as frames actors deploy strategically to win allies. For example, in his analysis of the shift from a Keynesian to a monetarist macro-economic policy paradigm in Britain in the 1970s, Hall (1993) argues that conservatives seized upon monetarism "because it provided a new rationale for many measures which they had long supported" (286). In other words, monetarist economic theory didn't inspire new economic policy; it was used as a justification for an already-existing conservative policy agenda.<sup>5</sup> In addition to portraying ideas as strategic weapons, ideational scholars have also treated them as guides politicians turn to in times of uncertainty or crisis. Following Goldstein and Keohane (1993), Blyth (2002) argues that when existing policy paradigms no longer provide answers to the problems political actors face, they cast about for new, more appropriate ideological "roadmaps" for action. In this formulation, exogenous economic or political crises drive policy change; ideas serve mainly as useful guidelines for how to cope with such crises. Finally, a large literature on framing processes explores how political actors strategically mobilize policy frames to garner support for their agendas (Snow et. al. 1986; Snow & Benford 1988; Hilgartner & Bosk 1988; Snow & Benford 1992; Lichterman 1996; Babb 1996; Steinberg 1999; Ferree 2003; Béland 2005).

Some scholars do recognize the motivating role of ideas in politics. Most prominently, Steensland (2008) shows how four competing paradigms of welfare motivated Nixon-era political actors to propose different policy responses to poverty. Though containing many overlapping elements, each paradigm's unique combination of causal ideas pushed its proponents down a distinct path of political action. Most recently, several contributors to Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox's (2011) edited

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> In his earlier work on the rise of Keynesianism, Hall makes similar claims: "Keynesian ideas were a potent weapon in the hands of those who sought to justify a new role for the state against the arguments of the old laissez faire... Politicians take up a new set of economic ideas to wield like a weapon in political conflict" (1989 366-367).

volume on ideas and politics construe ideas as motivators. For example, Colin Hay argues forcefully that it is not objective material interests, but rather *ideas about* interests, that motivate political action. He pays no attention, however, to the motivating role of ideas *other* than interests, such as the paradigms and norms analyzed here. Other contributors, including Berman and Lieberman, do treat normative and paradigmatic political ideologies as motivators, but what is missing from these and other accounts is a well-developed theory of precisely *how* ideas motivate individual action that might potentially be applicable across political contexts. What roles do different types of ideas play in motivation? How is motivation translated into particular courses of political action? To what extent do different types of motivating ideas tend to change as their proponents engage in the political process and encounter new information, solicit support for their proposals, and strike compromises with opponents and allies? How can Joas' insights about the creativity of action be combined with a model of purposive action in which motivating ideas play a central role?

The first step in developing a theory of how ideas motivate political action is to define the different types of policy-relevant ideas and identify their specific motivating function. It seems valuable, for analytic purposes, to keep both the distinction between normative ideas (norms and values) and causal ideas (paradigms),<sup>6</sup> as well as the separation between these two types of background ideas and foreground ideas (policy programs). Here, to borrow from Goldstein and Keohane's (1993) terminology, norms refer to general beliefs about what is right and wrong, just and unjust. Norms motivate political action by giving actors the ability to evaluate a situation as morally wrong or unjust (or right and just), and therefore as demanding rectification (or preservation). However, norms do not offer much guidance with respect to what, precisely, they should do. Paradigms, on the other hand, refer to beliefs about fundamental causal relationships. They motivate political action by enabling actors to articulate *why* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>o</sup> Of course, in discourse and in practice, norms and paradigms very often swim together and can be quite difficult to distinguish. This distinction is primarily an analytic, not an ontological, one.

something is a problem and what the long- and short-term negative consequences of inaction would be. Furthermore, paradigms move actors beyond the mere conviction that action is necessary by providing the basic framework (though not the details) for what the content of that action should be. To use Goldstein and Keohane's (1993) terminology again, paradigms offer actors the broad outlines of a "roadmap" for action.

Once political actors are sufficiently motivated to tackle a problematic situation through some sort of policy intervention, they need to figure out what, precisely, to do. This is the point at which policy programs come into play. Programs, as Campbell and Hall have both defined them, are ideas that specify practical responses to policy problems. They are often grounded in norms and paradigms, in that they may reflect broader moral evaluations and theoretical understandings of the problem at hand, but they are more specific and narrow in content than either of these "background" ideas. And, as others have pointed out (e.g. Hall 1993), programs are more malleable than either norms or paradigms. It is in the development and negotiation of programs that the creativity of action is most evident in politics.

This perspective on ideas, motivation, and political action incorporates Joas' contention that ends are unfixed and malleable and that action is a creative problem-solving process, while at the same time retaining Weber's argument that ideas direct action by constituting its ultimate ends. By conceptualizing policy-relevant ideas as *layered*—with norms and paradigms residing at a more fundamental and obdurate level than the programs arising from them—we can reconcile the notion that actors are creative and flexible with the observable fact that in politics and other spheres of life, most people have broad value commitments and beliefs which guide them toward relatively stable, if broad, goals over the course of many years and even entire lifetimes.

Two methodological challenges to studying motivation

Two challenges present themselves when trying to demonstrate that ideas motivate political action. Fortunately, there are checks researchers can use to test whether ideas are actually playing a causal role in any given case. The first challenge inherent to studying the motivations of actors whether they be interview subjects, survey respondents, or historical figures whose voices survive only in archival materials—is determining whether expressions of motivation are sincere. When explaining their reasons for pursuing a particular course of action, actors may have a strong incentive to simply say whatever they think their audience wants to hear. (The pitfalls of trusting motives expressed through discursive, rather than practical, consciousness are discussed at length by Vaisey (2009)). It is of course impossible to read minds, but four criteria help to bolster our ability to plausibly identify a research subject's motives for acting. Discursively expressed motives are more likely to be real and sincere if they meet some or all of the following criteria: (1) constancy: an actor articulates similar motives at different points in time; (2) consistency: an actor expresses similar motivating concerns in response to a variety of different issues; (3) embeddedness: an actor's expressed motives align with concerns raised by at least some other members of his/her proximate social or professional circle; and/or (4) artlessness: the arguments an actor uses to justify an action do not align with the known concerns or priorities of his/her audience. The more of these criteria met, the more certain we can be that expressed motives are sincere. As I will show, two or more of these conditions applied when Altenstein and Bodelschwingh explained their reasons for pursuing child labor legislation in Prussia, allowing me to conclude with relative certainty that these reasons did in fact reflect their true motivations.

The second challenge involves determining whether the ideas motivating actors are wholly reducible to their structural positions or their administrative responsibilities. In other words, in order to convincingly demonstrate that ideas matter in politics, one must show that they exert some independent causal influence, and are not merely intervening variables standing between political action and its

structural causes. The simplest way to do this is to compare the expressed ideational motivations of similarly situated political actors (for a particularly good example of this method, see Parsons (2011)). If all the relevant similarly situated actors express equivalent ideas and goals, then one must accept that their ideas are determined by their positions and are, in themselves, causally inconsequential. If, however, significant differences exist in how at least some similarly situated actors interpret the problem at hand—and if these differences are directly related to the policy responses (programs) they propose or support—then one can safely conclude that ideational factors (norms and paradigms) play a real causal role in political action. (This does not contradict the embeddedness criteria for sincerity mentioned above, because it is possible for an actor to electively share views with some situationally similar actors (an indicator of embeddedness) while disagreeing with others (an indicator of a non-deterministic relationship between structural position and ideas)). As I will show, the ideas motivating Altenstein and Bodelschwingh were significantly different not only from one another, but also from some of their close associates. While their structural positions did shape their response the child labor problem, they did not rigidly determine their thinking.

### Ideas as resources and liabilities

In addition to highlighting the essential role ideas play in motivating political action, this paper also aims to cast light on the question of why some programmatic ideas gain traction and are enacted into policy, whereas others fail. In answering this question, I, like other researchers, emphasize the instrumental function of ideas as resources actors use to develop programs and to attract supporters to their policy agendas. Furthermore, just as ideas can be used as assets to build support, they can also act as liabilities blocking reformers from building a winning coalition of political allies. In either case, ideas cannot *fully* account for political outcomes; rather, they *interact* with "structural" factors in driving political events. The diverging fates of Altenstein's and Bodelschwingh's programmatic policy ideas can be attributed to a *confluence* of institutional, political and ideational causes. Ideas may contribute to actors' ability to attract supporters or to better negotiate institutional or political barriers; alternatively, they may undermine actors' ability to surmount such barriers or to take advantage of institutional or political opportunities. The task at hand is to identify how ideas interact with other causal factors in shaping policy outcomes—not to reduce policy outcomes to the influence of ideas.

When conceptualizing ideas as resources, I mean the ways in which they can be used by actors to accomplish their policy goals. Here, I focus on three *ideational strategies* through which normative, paradigmatic, and programmatic ideas can be deployed as resources. The first strategy, which I call borrowing, comes into play when actors are constructing their policy programs. Borrowing simply refers to political actors reusing and recombining others' ideas—particularly programmatic ideas—to create new programs suited to their goals.<sup>7</sup> The other two strategies both relate to actors' efforts recruit allies or apparent allies-to their policy agendas. The second strategy is *citation*. I borrow this concept from Latour's (1987, 1988) work on science in action, in which he argues that scientific ideas succeed not because they are inherently correct, but because of the power of the alliance network behind them. To create the appearance that they are allied with esteemed members of their field, scientists cite one another's work. In the same way, political actors may "cite" or give public credit to those whose programmatic ideas they borrow, in order to give the impression that their political goals are shared by a variety of respected members of the polity. The third strategy, *framing*, has been much discussed in the social movements and political sociology literature (Snow et. Al 1986; Béland 2005). In this literature, framing refers to a strategy through which the proponents of particular programs try to enlist supporters by rhetorically connecting those programs with what they perceive to be the material interests,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Borrowing is similar to what Sewell (1992) calls the transposition of schemas from one context to another; but whereas Sewell conceptualizes resources as "actual" (i.e. non-virtual) and thus as distinct from schemas and ideas (10-11), I treat ideas as a type of resource.

normative values, and/or paradigmatic beliefs held by their audiences.8

Ideas can also serve as liabilities in policymaking in at least two ways. First, when actors choose inappropriate or ineffective paradigmatic or normative ideas as strategic frames, their policy proposals are likely to fall flat as they fail to achieve resonance with their audiences. Second, frames can act as red flags, marking a political actor as a member of a discredited, unpopular, or otherwise politically unpowerful group, and thereby diminishing his/her effectiveness as a policy advocate. Both processes help to explain why Altenstein failed to achieve legislative success with his child labor policy proposal.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, in order to introduce the political context in which child labor reform took place, I provide an overview of education policy in early nineteenth-century Prussia. Given that child labor reform grew out of the state's ambitious public education goals, the former cannot be fully understood without taking the latter into account. Second, I provide an historical overview of the child labor reform movement between 1817 and 1839, and discuss the origin and fate of the Altenstein and Bodelschwingh policy plans. Finally, I address why Prussia adopted the particular child labor law that it did, and the implications of this outcome for our theoretical understanding of why certain policy ideas "win" while others "fail". In this section, I also address how the story of Prussian child labor reform illustrates how ideas serve as both motivators and resources for political action.

## Background: Education reform and reaction in early nineteenth-century Prussia

In 1806, Napoleon's army decisively defeated Prussia at Jena-Auerstädt. As a result, Prussia lost half of its territories and population, and was saddled with impossibly huge war reparations to France. This humiliating defeat shook Prussia's conservative society to the core and ushered in a brief but consequential period of far-reaching domestic reforms. Led by Chancellor Karl von Stein and his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>s</sup> The conceptualization of framing as a strategy deployed to garner support for policy proposals is new and differs from Goffman's original conceptualization of frames as cognitive lenses through which people perceive, categorize, and make sense of the world (Goffmann 1974; see also Bleich 2002).

successor Karl August von Hardenberg, a "reform party" of Enlightenment-educated, liberal bureaucrats seized control of the highest positions of the Prussian civil service. These bureaucrats believed that in order to survive as a state, Prussia needed to be revitalized, not by a bloody revolution from below, but by an orderly revolution directed from above by the most educated and enlightened members of society (Nipperdey 1983, Kitchen 2006, Clark 2006).

Among the central platforms of the reform agenda was the issue of improving public education for the masses. This renewed commitment to education was spurred by long-standing concerns about social disorder and national disunity that were deepened by the immediate crisis of war. The perception that Prussian subjects had responded passively to French aggression suggested to the Prussian leadership that a common sense of patriotism was foundational to the creation of a no longer merely obedient, but also participatory, active citizenry willing to labor and sacrifice for the Fatherland. Alongside universal military conscription, educational reforms at all levels were intended to build up and deepen this sense of national loyalty (Ramirez and Boli 1987; Kocka 1990 24-26). They were also conceived as a vehicle for combating the social disorder produced by crisis-level overpopulation and economic transformation. The demise of the social commitments embedded in feudalism produced a large population of extremely vulnerable free laborers. Dislocations caused by the end of serfdom, the rise of large-scale commercial agriculture, and nascent industrialization spurred mass migrations of peasants and formerly independent craftspeople into the factories and urban centers (Hubert 1998). Together with rapidly rising living costs, these demographic upheavals and economic changes brought about widespread unemployment, poverty and various accompanying social ills (Conze 1954; Gray 1986). The new uprootedness of the lower classes contributed to what was widely perceived as a "moral decline and psychological dissolution" among them (Nipperdey 1983 198). Elites became panicked about "pauperization" and the social

unraveling they saw around them, and some turned to public education as a means to restore morality [*Sittlichkeit*] and orderliness to lower-class life (Schleunes 1989).

At first, under the leadership of Chancellors Stein and Hardenberg, who interpreted Prussia's crushing defeat by France as an indictment of its traditionalism, the direction of educational reforms took a progressive, enlightened, liberationist turn. Stein, whose brief tenure as Chancellor ended when Napoleon forced him into exile in 1808, wrote in his final address before fleeing Berlin that his aim for Prussia had been to "lift the disharmony among the people, to quash the unhappy conflict between the estates, so that each person may freely develop his capabilities in a moral direction, and in this way to compel the people to love their King and Fatherland and to gladly sacrifice their property and lives for them." For Stein, the key to achieving this national unity and patriotic loyalty was education: "The best results can be expected from educating and instructing the youth. If their every intellectual ability is developed from the inside out on the basis of their natural human capacities... and if their impulse to love God, King and Fatherland, which has heretofore been neglected and met with shallow indifference, is carefully cultivated, then we can hope for the birth of a physically and morally vigorous generation and a better future" (Stein 1960).

Stein and his appointees to the education division of the Ministry of the Interior—including the famous educational reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt—were inspired by the neo-Kantian philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte's teachings regarding the importance of mass education in rebuilding Germany following the war. In an influential series of lectures delivered in the winter of 1807-1808 at the Academy of Sciences in Berlin, Fichte argued that "a total change of the existing system of education" was the "sole means of preserving the existence of the German nation" (Fichte 1922 13). The education system he called for should aim to fashion a new German subject, one no longer motivated by materialism and self-love but instead by love of "the good" (21, 23); one capable of applying his

imagination and independent thinking to the pursuit of "the social order of mankind as it ought to be... for the sake of the community" (32, 34). The Prussian subject's newfound capacity for "living thought" and "clear knowledge" would bring him into "immediate contact with God;" thus, "education to true religion," Fichte concluded, "is...the final task of the new education." (37-38). Fichte exhorted his audience to include the working masses in the new system of education, "so that it is not the education of a single class, but the education of the nation;" otherwise, he said, the masses would "desert us and be lost on us" (15). Fichte's contention that moral, free-thinking people would form the heart of the German nation expressed the ideological basis for progressive school reform, and later, for Altenstein's attempts to protect working children.

Fichte's followers believed that education could simultaneously liberate the masses and elicit their loyal service to King and country. This view was not shared by everybody, however. Conservatives within the king's administration had long feared that this type of mass education would lead to disrespect for authority and tradition, popular discontent, social unrest, and possibly even revolution (Nipperdey 1977, Schleunes 1989, Kuhlemann 1992). These fears seemed validated in the late 1810s when student protests against a conservative resurgence in both academia and government culminated in the murder of a conservative playwright. After a commission appointed by the king concluded in 1821 that "the growing moral corruption" had emerged from "the school and educational system of the Prussian state," the administration began to clamp down (Schleunes 1989 94). Education was no longer supposed to unleash the inherent human capacities of the masses—it was supposed to restrict intellectual freedom and impose order. It was against the backdrop of this conservative backlash that Altenstein, a progressive member of the Stein-Hardenberg reform party, took office as Prussia's first Minister of Education in 1822.

In sum, different ideological motives underlay early nineteenth-century Prussian educational reform. Progressives saw universal education as a way to liberate and invigorate the masses by cultivating their inherent human capacities. Conservatives thought education should impart only basic knowledge and teach lower-class children to accept unquestioningly their lot in life. But members of both sides thought mass education was essential for instilling in Prussia's geographically, religiously and culturally fragmented population a common sense of unity, national identity and devotion to King and country. Both sides viewed public education as a powerful tool for the creation of a moral and loyal Prussian citizen-subject. To reap the full benefits of this, the state would have to ensure that its new educational system reached everyone—even the poorest children who toiled in mills and factories instead of going to school.

## Child labor policy reform in Prussia, 1817-1839

The story of early Prussian child labor policy reform has relatively few characters. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the timeframe in which this reform effort takes place, the Prussian political landscape was quite circumscribed. Industrial labor and capital were still largely unorganized beyond the local level and had little influence on the policy debate surrounding child labor regulation.<sup>9</sup> A few reform advocates, such as the pedagogue Adolf Diesterweg, were active, but they acted without the benefit of an organized group to back them up. Political parties and a federal legislature did not exist prior to the Revolution of 1848. Undoubtedly, ordinary citizens, journalists, the clergy, capitalists, and working-class parents had opinions about the child labor problem, but their views rarely came to the attention of policymakers and had little influence over the course of reform. Instead, the early period of child labor reform took place at the zenith of Prussian "bureaucratic absolutism," when the collective

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> An exception to this was the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Handels- und Gewerbeverein* [General German Association of Commerce and Industry], founded in 1819 by Friedrich List to advocate for tariff reforms. This Association did not get involved in the policy debates surrounding child labor reform.

power of civil servants outstripped that of all other political actors, with the possible exception of the landed aristocracy (Rosenberg 1966, Beck 1995). Hence, the key players in early Prussian child labor reform were restricted to top Prussian bureaucrats at both the national and provincial levels. The king and the provincial parliament [*Landtag*] of the Rhineland also played important supporting roles. In short, early Prussian child labor reform represents one of the purest possible cases of "state-centered" policymaking (Skocpol 1985).

The first phase of Prussian child labor reform spanned from 1817-1839, and despite the oft-noted efficiency of the Prussian bureaucracy, was marked by several false starts and delays. Highly aware of reform efforts taking place in England, and at the same time hesitant to initiate changes that would compromise Prussia's economic competitiveness, top officials limited themselves to investigation at first. Moreover, liberal economic philosophies had taken hold in some circles, and several leading Prussian officials viewed labor market regulation of any kind with skepticism. Furthermore, the assumption that paid work was normal and actually beneficial to children predominated. Even at the height of the early nineteenth-century reform movement, the Education Minister, Karl von Altenstein, a long-time advocate of child labor regulation, asserted that factory work encouraged children to develop diligence, endurance and a sense of order at a young age.<sup>10</sup> Altenstein and his contemporaries by no means wished to abolish child labor in factories; they merely wanted to regulate it. The socio-cultural shift to viewing children as "priceless" objects of parental love, universally unfit for gainful employment, had not yet occurred at this point in the nineteenth century (Zelizer 1981).

#### **Investigation and inaction, 1817-1828**

The Prussian government conducted major surveys of the child labor situation in 1817 and in 1824. The first of these was initiated by Chancellor Hardenberg. In September 1817, Hardenberg sent a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Altenstein to Schuckmann. 7/4/1828. GstA Berlin Rep 120 BB VII 1.4 Vol 1, p. 30b.

survey of factory conditions to five district governors of industrialized regions in Prussia.<sup>11</sup> This move came during the severe economic downturn of 1816/1817, which hit the industrial regions of the Rhineland and Silesia especially hard. The lifting of Napoleon's continental blockade in 1814 had flooded the European markets with cheap English goods, leading to business failures and rising unemployment. In 1816, poor harvests in the Rhineland caused food price increases just when many industrial workers could least afford them; the result was widespread hunger (Bass 1991, Rowe 2003). It was this lack of self-sufficiency among unemployed industrial workers that first turned Hardenberg's attention to the child labor problem. One of the roots of the current crisis, he argued, was child labor: "Each child is an additional tie that binds the worker to the factory, and these people, who have been raised by the factory, soon become accustomed to their dependence on it" and incapable of pursuing other work when factory jobs dry up. According to Hardenberg, the factory system had created a "whole new stock of people" whose factory training had come at the cost of their civic and human education. The state must step in, he maintained, on the basis of two prerogatives: education and military conscription. Factory owners must be made aware that they would no longer be able to count on the state's support if they continued to undermine its interests by destroying its human resources. Thus, the paradigmatic idea motivating Hardenberg was the notion that industrial child labor destroyed the state's human capital.

Though he received detailed and thoughtful responses from the five governors, Hardenberg failed to push the child labor issue further. At this point in his career, he was besieged by a conservative backlash that forced him to abandon much of his reform agenda (Hermann 2003). After his death in 1822, the next person to take up the cause of child labor reform was Education Minister Karl von Altenstein. As Hardenberg's protégé, Altenstein had risen rapidly through the ranks of Prussian

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Hardenberg to Merckel in Breslau, von Heydebreck in Berlin, von Bülow in Magdeburg, von Vincke in Münster, and Count Solms-Laubach in Cologne and Minister von Ingersleben in Koblenz, 9/5/1817. In Hoppe (1958), p. 70-74; see also Hoppe, Kuczynski and Waldmann (1960), p. 23-26.

government bureaucracy as a young man; at the age of 38 he was appointed Finance Minister, only to be forced to step down two years later, in part due to his failure to raise sufficient funds for the war reparations demanded by France. Characterized as enlightened and thoughtful, but mild-mannered, reclusive and indecisive by historians, he seems to have been somewhat unsuited for the rough-andtumble politics that prevailed in post-war Prussia. In 1818, he was named head of the newly created Ministry for Cultural, Educational and Medical Affairs, a post he held until his death in 1840. As Education Minister, he enjoyed a greater measure of success, particularly in the area of higher education (Goldschmidt 1893).

As a longtime member of the Stein-Hardenberg reform party, Altenstein viewed public education as one of the key engines of a revitalized, productive, and unified Prussian nation (Schuurmanns 1998). In 1807, as Hardenberg's assistant, he accompanied the temporarily exiled Chancellor to Riga, where the two men each wrote their own memoranda [Denkschriften] outlining their respective visions for the future of Prussia. Altenstein's memo makes clear how much the statesman was influenced by his friend and sometime collaborator, the philosopher Fichte. Prussia, Altenstein wrote, was "a state without a nation," an administration without a community. To construct that community would require tapping into the Prussian people's productive and creative potential. In addition to various economic and social reforms, Altenstein stressed the need to improve the education system so that it would "train [students'] ability to think, leading them to the higher and the spiritual" (246). Like Fichte, Altenstein argued that the new education should regard the advancement of "religiosity as its highest goal" and should focus on cultivating students' innate spiritual receptiveness (261). Only through a broad spiritual awakening would it be possible to create a true Prussian nation, which he defined as "a union of people inspired by the same spirit"—a spirit which would replace narrow self-interest with a collective dedication to a higher good (Altenstein 1918). In sum, the paradigmatic idea motivating much of Altenstein's domestic

policy agenda was his belief that the Prussian people needed to achieve collective moral, spiritual and physical vitality in order for the Prussian state to become a strong nation. These humanist ideas, which he shared with other members of the reform party, remained stable throughout his career and would strongly influence his approach to the child labor problem.

The Education Minister first turned his attention to child labor in 1824. When he learned that a spinning mill near Düsseldorf was working children through the night (Anton 1953 21), Altenstein was appalled. Determined to find out whether such abuses were common, he sent a survey to the governments of ten of Prussia's most industrialized districts.<sup>12</sup> Altenstein's questions strongly reflected his interpretation of the child labor problem. He paid particular attention to whether the health of working children was being compromised, but also addressed the impact of early employment on children's education and moral condition. Results of the survey revealed that conditions were indeed bad: night work among young children as young as six was common, and children typically worked between 11 and 14 hours per day. Some employers had established factory schools, but children typically attended school one or two hours a day at the most. Generally, they were too exhausted to learn much: according to one observer, the monotonous work had "lamed their spirits" and rendered them incapable of benefiting from even this meager education. Numerous health problems were observed among working children: aside from general ill-health brought on by poverty, hunger and neglect, many also suffered from workplace-specific ailments, including respiratory problems caused by breathing bad air, and poisoning caused by handling hazardous materials. Reports of adolescent promiscuity and

<sup>&</sup>quot; "Zirkularreskript des Kultusministers." June 26, 1824. Transcribed in Anton (1953), p. 189-190. . The survey consisted of the following questions: (1) Are children employed in the factories in the region? (2) In what occupations? (3) At what age? (4) How many hours per day, and at what hours in the day or night? (5) How do the living conditions of these working children compare to other children of the same class? (6) How does the health of these children compare to other children of the same class? (7) If the working children's health is poorer, what is the reason for this? (8) How does the health of adults who worked as children compare to the health of those who did not? (9) In light of these findings, what legal regulations does the regional government consider desirable? (10) How is the necessary schooling secured for these children? (11) What is their moral condition?

delinquency also surfaced, as well as concerns that children were exposed to crude adult behavior, introduced prematurely to alcohol and tobacco, and subjected to "all manner of [unnamed] abuses."

Already upon receiving the first two survey responses, Altenstein approached Interior Minister Friedrich von Schuckmann with his intention of drafting a child labor law,<sup>13</sup> but the Minister, along with his deputy, Finance Councilor Peter Beuth, was resistant. Decision making in the upper reaches of the Prussian bureaucracy was carried out collectively, with each minister, and sometimes his top deputies, weighing in on decisions relevant to his domain. Under this system of collegialism, each participating minister had to approve a new policy proposal before it could be presenting to the king for approval. As a result, each was empowered to act as his own personal veto point on change (Tsebelis 2002). This practice of collegial decision-making created an institutional governance structure vulnerable to political impasses, blocking and stalling (Weber 1978 222, 271-282; Müller 1984 135; Kiser & Schneider 1994; Beck 1998 128). In the case of child labor policy, the responsible parties included not just the Minister of Education but also the Interior and Commerce Ministers, and so Altenstein needed to win their approval in order to proceed with reform. Altenstein's identification with the humanist ideas of the earlier reform cohort had become a distinct liability in his dealings with Schuckmann, however, and the relationship between the two men had been tense for years.<sup>14</sup> Schuckmann's sensibilities were authoritarian and regressive: he agreed that Prussian society had become dangerously amoral and atomized, but he believed the solution was to return to the patriarchal order of the past (Müsebeck 1918) 124-125). Citing concerns that any child labor regulation would undermine German industrialists' ability to withstand English competition, he nixed Altenstein's proposed law. At least for the time being, he said, he wanted to wait and see what the consequences of the 1819 British Child Labor Act would

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Altenstein to Schuckmann. 11/8/1825. GstA Berlin Rep 120 BB VII 1.4 vol. 1, p. 17a-17b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Schulze, Johannes. GstA Rep. 92, Altenstein, A. Via, Nr. 36. Transcribed in Müsebeck (1918), p. 293-307.

be.<sup>15</sup> Schuckmann's delay tactics continued to stymie reform for the next three years. Because of this interaction between ideational liabilities and institutional barriers, Altenstein's reform efforts were effectively paralyzed.

## The Altenstein plan

In 1828, the child labor issue was resurrected by an unexpected source. In a report to King Frederick William III, Army Lieutenant General Horn noted that industrial regions of the monarchy had failed to meet their military draft quotas, and that as a result, their shortfalls had to be made up by agricultural districts. Horn connected this failure with the pervasive "evil" that many children in the factory districts were forced to work at night, which caused them to grow up feeble and unfit for military service. Horn's observations dismayed the king: "I can tolerate such practices even less given that the physical education of our tender youth is thereby undermined, creating the danger that, in the factory regions, the future generation will be even weaker and more crippled than the current one reportedly is." He

Altenstein responded to the king's directive with enthusiasm, and lost no time preparing a proposal for a child labor law. His detailed plan offers a revealing picture of how he translated his humanist paradigmatic ideas about the deleterious consequences of factory child labor into a concrete policy program.<sup>17</sup> In doing so, he relied heavily on the ideational strategy of borrowing: many components of his plan were based on policy suggestions made by officials who responded to his 1824 survey. Altenstein argued that the problem lay not with child employment *per se*, but with excessive and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> The 1819 British child labor act established 9 as the minimum working age, limited working hours to 12 a day, and prohibited night work for children. The law had little practical impact, however, because its inspection and enforcement mechanism was weak. Nonetheless, it was an important advance on the 1802 Apprentices Act—which applied only to apprentices—in that it represented the first attempt at state regulation of the free labor market (Thomas 1948).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Frederick William III to Altenstein and Schuckmann. 5/12/1828. GstA Berlin, Rep. 120 B.B. VII 3.1, p. 85a.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Altenstein to Schuckmann. 7/4/1828. GstA Berlin Rep 12 BB VII 1.4 Vol. 1, p. 30a-36a.

abusive forms of it. He defined abusive child labor as that which was premature, unhealthy, or overly arduous; taking place in the company of immoral adults; or causing the neglect of the child's religious and intellectual education. Abusive factory labor damaged children in several important ways: it made them physically weak and unhealthy; it undermined their spiritual and intellectual [*geistige*] capacities by creating barriers to school attendance; it spoiled their childlike cheerfulness; it encouraged them to engage in mischief and brutality; and it morally corrupted them by tempting them to smoke, drink spirits and commit "carnal sins." With this critique, Altenstein demonstrated his understanding of excessive child labor as damaging to the whole person; as threatening to the child's physical, intellectual, spiritual and moral well-being, and by extension, to the overall quality of Prussia's working class.

Altenstein's proposal centered on establishing local commissions composed of various officials, factory owners, and "several of the most diligent, prudent and righteous factory workers," which would be responsible for implementing regulations on factory child labor in accordance with local conditions and needs. Altenstein placed great stock in granting the commissions flexibility, but his proposal nevertheless contained quite a few specific requirements and restrictions. For example, it set the minimum working age at eight; allowed only half-day employment for children age eight to fourteen; mandated that children be able to read and write, and undergo a medical examination, before being allowed to work; and required children to receive religious instruction and attend school until their priest or pastor [*Seelsorger*] deemed them to have acquired knowledge sufficient for their station in life. It also required factory owners to keep their buildings well-aired and clean, and suggested a system in which child workers would monitor one another's behavior to enforce discipline and prevent cursing, smoking, and drinking spirits. Altenstein's proposal was unusual, compared to child labor legislation in England and later Prussian legislative proposals, in that it placed special emphasis on the issue of safeguarding

working children's morality, and specifically sought to shield them from uncouth adults and to combat inappropriate behavior among them.

Whereas Hardenberg had conceived of the child labor problem primarily in economic terms, and the king conceived of it as a military issue, Altenstein viewed excessive child labor as a threat to the overall spiritual, moral, physical and intellectual quality of working-class Prussians. His plan reflected this understanding of the problem by placing equal weight on promoting children's education, health, and morality. The Education Minister saw child labor regulation as part of Prussian reformers' larger agenda of creating a new and improved citizen-subject. For Altenstein, elementary education and religious instruction for factory children were not means of thought control, but paths to intellectual and spiritual enlightenment, community building, and the creation of a vigorous, spiritually unified nation.

Skeptics might argue that it is impossible to determine for certain whether Altenstein was truly motivated by these noble aims, or was just using them as a justification for pursuing some other, less exalted goal. Of course, it is never possible to prove with absolute certainty that the statements historical subjects leave behind are sincere. However, this case satisfies all four of the criteria I outlined above for ascertaining the sincerity of expressed motives. First, Altenstein expressed these sentiments at different times and under different circumstances: first, in 1807, when he wrote about the need to rejuvenate a defeated Prussia through universal education in his Riga *Denkschrift*; and then again in 1828, in his child labor policy proposal. Such constancy of opinion over time, even in the face of a changing political environment, suggests that Altenstein's ideas were not just strategic justifications for his policy positions. Second, Altenstein used similar arguments when discussing a wide variety of policy initiatives, from education reform to economic liberalization to child labor regulation. Third, his humanist motivations for pursuing child labor legislation were developed in dialogue with a broader reformist discourse of Prussian national regeneration in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. That

Altenstein continued to justify his legislative program on the basis of his mentors' humanist values, even in the face of the conservative backlash of the 1820s, further bolsters the likelihood that that his expressed motives were sincere. Finally, though Altenstein did tone down his humanist rhetoric when addressing Schuckmann, he never abandoned it and never couched his appeals for child labor regulation in terms that might have been more appealing to the Interior Minister. For example, he never borrowed Hardenberg's argument that child labor undermined the Prussian economy, which might have gone over better with Schuckmann. In sum, the constancy, consistency, embeddedness, and artlessness of Altenstein's expressed motivations strongly suggest that he was indeed inspired by a true commitment to cultivating the human capacities of working children for the sake of building a more unified and productive Prussian society.

Furthermore, Altenstein's interpretation of the child labor problem cannot be reduced to his structural location or to the demands of his administrative position. While his views clearly reflected those of his political and intellectual mentors—including Hardenberg, Stein and Fichte—they differed markedly from those of other members of his political and social class—including Schuckmann, Beuth, and the next Interior Minister, Gustav von Rochow, who will be profiled below. Despite the fact that they were nearly all Protestant aristocrats, there was great diversity of opinion among elite bureaucrats with regard to issues like how to revitalize the Prussian economy, whether to expand political representation and create a national assembly, and how to deal with popular unrest among students and workers. The child labor issue was no exception to this diversity.

Unfortunately for the Education Minister, even the king's direct intervention was not enough to move the recalcitrant Interior Minister to action. Noting dryly that not only factories, but also the rigorous high schools [*Gymnasien*] that Altenstein had championed, produced weaklings unfit for military service, Schuckmann continued to drag his feet (Anton 1953). In the conservative political

environment of the 1820s, the isolated Education Minister, tainted by his ideological affiliation with humanist reformism, lacked allies at the top of the Prussian bureaucracy. Because of the institutional barriers created by collegialism, Altenstein's child labor proposal could not become law in Prussia.

#### The Bodelschwingh Plan

In 1835, it had been eighteen years since Chancellor Hardenberg first broached the need for child labor legislation in Prussia, and still no law had been passed. In the face of this continued lack of progress, the appointed Governor of the Rhineland, Ernst von Bodelschwingh, decided to take the matter into his own hands and pursue a child labor law for his province. The Rhineland was Prussia's most industrialized region and was the center of its post-war economic resurgence. By the 1830s, aided by a German customs union [*Zollverein*] and protective tariff first established in 1818, as well as by agricultural modernization and by the availability of cheap semi-processed materials from Britain, Prussian industrialization had entered the early phase of its "take off" period. Production, trade, capital accumulation, and investment were all beginning to ramp up (R. Tilly 1990). The textile and small metal goods industries, both of which relied heavily on child and female labor, were particularly successful.

A Lutheran liberal who could quote Adam Smith as easily as the Bible, Bodelschwingh was very concerned about the impact of child labor on the education of working people (Kastner 2004). He belonged to a group of German liberals who rejected absolute laissez-faire and instead saw the state as bearing a responsibility to stem the rising tide of discontent and ensure social order (Sheehan 1978). Earlier in his career, as mayor of Trier, Bodelschwingh had made public education one of his top priorities (Gerhardt 1950 38). He was, ultimately, a political moderate at heart; as Interior Minister during the Revolution of 1848, he convinced Frederick William to make certain democratic concessions, but remained steadfast in his loyalty to the King and in his opposition to the revolutionary agitators. His

writings from that time period reveal him to be sympathetic to demands for a constitution and press freedoms, but disdainful and afraid of the working-class "rabble"<sup>18</sup> which used public disorder as an opportunity to protest employment conditions, poverty, and joblessness (Clark 2006 469-471).

Bodelschwingh's initial proposal for a Rhenish child labor law was very brief, minimally detailed, and focused squarely on the issue of educating working children.<sup>19</sup> It sought to require children to complete 3 years of schooling before being allowed to work in a factory; to restrict the workday for children under 14 to 10 hours; and to require children working in factories to attend school for at least 8 hours per week. As motivation, he cited only the "unfortunate condition" of the education of children working in factories and the impossibility of imposing the "normal educational requirements" on such children. Before presenting his proposal to the national government in Berlin, Bodelschwingh sent it to the district governments in Aachen, Cologne and Düsseldorf for comment.

The governments' responses to Bodelschwingh's proposal focused on the need to promote school attendance among factory children, but also stressed the need to protect their health as a second reason for reform. Düsseldorf officials went so far as to say that denying children access to education amounted to a violation of their natural rights.<sup>20</sup> Cologne officials echoed the sentiment that instruction was a right and a duty: "It is the holy duty," the Cologne government wrote, "for the lawgiver... to work against the total neglect of the children's spiritual and civic education. We would deem the protection of industrial interests as too dearly bought if it is paid for by a youth ... crippled in soul and body, and we fear that [these children] will not only fail to realize the purpose of their own lives, but will also prove dangerous to human society as a whole."<sup>21</sup> Cologne officials feared that children left unschooled and unexposed to the disciplinary effects of education would later contribute to social disorder and popular

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Bodelscwingh to A.D. Fallenstein, 3/30/1848. Reprinted in Diest (1898), p. 14-27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Bodelschwingh to the district governments of Düsseldorf, Aachen and Cologne, 3/31/1935, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 1-2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> District government of Düsseldorf to Bodelschwingh, 8/22/1835, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 7-19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> District government of Cologne to Bodelschwingh, 11/9/1835, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 43-44.

unrest. This point of view represents a marked departure from the humanist, liberationist goals that had motivated top Prussian bureaucrats to reform education in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

In addition to its own commentary, the Aachen government also sent along two reports submitted by the Aachen and the Eupen<sup>22</sup> chambers of commerce (*Handelskammern*). These reports offer a sense of how members of the Rhenish capitalist class responded to the state's first attempt to regulate employment conditions. The two chambers took completely opposite stances on the issue. The Aachen chamber declared its wholehearted support for the proposal; in fact, it went further than Bodelschwingh by recommending that all children be prohibited from working before the age of nine, and that children between the ages of nine and twelve only be allowed to work half-days.<sup>23</sup> A solid elementary education for working-class children would benefit bourgeois society by improving the general morality, opening up greater opportunities for individual workers, and combating social disorder, idleness and begging. In contrast, the Eupen chamber opposed many of Bodelschwingh's proposals because it believed they would be damaging to the economy.<sup>24</sup> It argued that removing children from their jobs to send them to school would be "highly damaging to industry," and it rejected the proposal that working children attend school 8 hours a week as "infeasible." Furthermore, if children were only to work ten hours per day, the chamber argued, then they would "spend the rest of the time playing in the streets or swarming about doing mischief, ripping their clothes, whereas currently they help to support the household of their parents." The stark contrast between the reports submitted by the Aachen and Eupen chambers of commerce warn against making assumptions about capitalists' attitudes toward child labor regulation in early nineteenth-century Prussia. The capitalist class had not yet formed any unified agenda with respect to state intervention in employment conditions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> An industrial town within the Aachen district.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> District government of Aachen to Bodelschwingh, 9/6/1835, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 25-29; Aachen chamber of commerce to Aachen district government, 6/16/1835, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Eupen chamber of commerce to Aachen district government, 7/3/1835, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 33-34.

In November 1835, Bodelschwingh sent a revised proposal to Altenstein in Berlin.<sup>25</sup> This draft provides evidence of Bodelschwingh's savvy use of ideas as resources. Not only did he borrow programmatic suggestions from the local governments to improve his plan, but he also made a point of citing those governments' contributions. This use of citation made the proposal seem like it was coming not only from him, but from a larger network of local officials who agreed with the governor's policy plan. He also included an introduction in which he outlined his motivating rationale for pursuing a child labor law: "Only a thorough religious and moral education of the youth in the factory regions will prevent an overpopulation of crude individuals, drawn to every excess, who, as recent experiences have repeatedly demonstrated, [are likely to] avenge themselves through violent uprisings against those who abused them irresponsibly in their youth."<sup>26</sup> The comment about "recent experiences" almost certainly refers to an upwelling of protest activity across Germany in the early 1830s. These uprisings were often political in nature, led by students and intellectuals against repressive government policies, but many also included workers protesting high grain prices and unfair labor practices (R. Tilly 1980). Of the 136 popular disturbances in Germany between 1830 and 1839 (up from only 29 total disturbances between 1816 and 1829), about 20 percent were in response to adverse socio-economic conditions (ibid. 152-154). For example, in the Rhineland, a major riot broke out in 1830 when the wages of workers at a textile factory in Aachen were docked for supposedly shoddy workmanship. The civic guard was called in, the rebellion was quelled, and 150 participants were arrested (Rowe 2003 276-277). A smaller riot took place in the town of Elberfeld, near Düsseldorf, the following night (Bass 1991 328). Since these disturbances came on the heels of the 1830 July Revolution in France, some Prussian elites feared that they could evolve into a full-blown revolution. Though these incidents produced no lasting consequences and only a small amount of private property damage, they drove home for Rhenish

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Bodelschwingh to Altenstein. LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 49-61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Bodelschwingh, 11/21/1835. LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 52.

officials the fact that revolutionary agitation was no longer exclusively the province of bourgeois intellectuals seeking constitutional guarantees and political representation. The growth of an angry, hungry and potentially violent new working class also had to be reckoned with. A "religious and moral" education for working children was one way of addressing this threat.

Thus, the paradigmatic idea motivating Bodelschwingh to pursue child labor regulation was quite different the one motivating Altenstein. Whereas the Education Minister hoped that a law designed to promote the health, education, and morality of working children would help to cultivate their human capacities and thereby turn them into productive and patriotic citizens, Bodelschwingh saw these children as a potential source of social disorder that needed to be disciplined. For him, the aim of mass education was not intellectual and spiritual liberation; it was social control.

Again, a skeptic might question whether Bodelschwingh was truly motivated by the concerns he expressed in the introduction to his policy proposal, or whether his statement about the need for a "religious and moral education" to prevent uprisings was simply a convenient way to frame his plan. Unfortunately, unlike in the case of Altenstein, the historical record does not contain directly relevant statements from Bodelschwingh from multiple points in time. However, we do know that Bodelschwingh did make public education a priority earlier in his political career (Gerhardt 1950 38), and that he continued to make education his primary goal throughout the child labor reform process. We also know that Bodelschwingh's fear of the revolutionary threat posed by the "rabble" remained consistent over time, as evidenced by later statements in the context of the Revolution of 1848. Furthermore, like Altenstein, the concerns Bodelschwingh expressed matched those voiced by others in his proximate political circle. The Cologne government, as well as the Aachen and Eupen chambers of commerce, all mentioned the potential threat working-class children posed to social order in their responses to the Bodelschwingh plan. Bodelschwingh's interpretation of the child labor issue was

grounded not only in his personal experiences (whether direct or indirect) as a local official confronting workers' uprisings in the Rhineland, but also in a broader elite discourse of fear generated by perceptions of a dangerous working class. The congruence between Bodelschwingh's statements and those of some of his colleagues further bolsters the likelihood that his expressed motives were genuine. Most importantly, the fact that Bodelschwingh used this social control argument when addressing Altenstein is telling. Had Bodelschwingh simply been trying to strategically frame the child labor problem in terms that would appeal to the Education Minister, then he likely would have chosen a different line of argument, one more in keeping with Altenstein's well-known liberal-humanist leanings. Thus, Bodelschwingh's expressed motivations meet the embeddedess and artlessness criteria, though there is not enough evidence to ascertain the degree to which his statements were constant over time and consistent across different issue areas.

Bodelschwingh's interpretation of the child labor problem also cannot be reduced to his structural position or to the functional needs of his administrative job responsibilities. His emphasis on education as a mechanism of social control was not shared by *all* of the members of his proximate political circle. While some of the local officials with which he dealt viewed child labor as a social control issue, others saw it mainly as a violation of children's rights and as a threat to their physical health. The Düsseldorf government, in particular, framed the problem as a violation of children's natural right to an education. Düsseldorf officials later openly disagreed with Bodelschwingh's perspective that child labor was primarily a threat to social stability, arguing that protecting children's health and wellbeing should be the primary purpose of the law, and that education should be secondary, because schooling could only be effective if children were healthy and because children should not be "condemned in their early childhood to a crippled and unhappy life...".<sup>27</sup> Thus, despite the fact that local

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> This quote is taken from a report produced by a committee formed in 1837 to study the child labor problem. In particular, the committee criticized Bodelschwingh's characterization of his proposal as a "Factory-School Law," arguing that the

Rhenish officials had to deal with the problems of rioting and social disorder even more directly than the governor did, they did not all share his exclusive focus on education as a disciplinary tool.

Bodelschwingh must have hoped that the Education Minister would endorse his plan and promote it within the upper bureaucracy, but Altenstein ignored it. Instead of seizing the opportunity to form a potentially effective political alliance with Bodelschwingh, Altenstein allowed his proposal to languish unnoticed for the next two years.

In 1837, the initiative was again re-seized outside of Berlin, this time by an industrialist and member of the Rhineland's provincial Parliament (Landtag) named Johannes Schuchard, who soon would emerge as an indispensable ally in Bodelschwingh's child labor reform campaign. Schuchard was a prominent textile manufacturer and legislator from the town of Barmen who, from the 1820s until his death in 1855, played a major role in public discussions surrounding Rhenish economic revitalization and industrialization. He represented Barmen in the *Landtag* from 1826 until 1843, where he ardently defended the interests of the dwindling group of manufacturers, to which he belonged, who still relied on the putting-out system (Boch 1991 75-84). As such, Schuchard clearly had a strong financial stake in imposing regulations on factories, which were rapidly displacing organized cottage industry. In March 1837, he wrote the following in an essay on the child labor problem for a newspaper that was used as an organ by the Rhenish business elite<sup>28</sup>: "The humanitarian shudders, when he looks to the future and sees... the huge, massive buildings multiplying, in which a mass of children are locked in from early morning till late at night," deprived of air, sun, and everything else that children need to "thrive and be happy," often because their "work-averse parents" choose begging over fulfilling their parental responsibilities. "The spirit of the age has befriended industry... lifting it, like in England, onto an iron throne, to rule like a mighty despot over the land: since such a power cannot be resisted, so I beg you,

central problem was *not* the lack of school attendance among working children, but rather the fact that they were overworked. Jacobi, Altgelt, Viebahn and Woringen to Bodelschwingh, 4/29/1837, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 85-112. <sup>28</sup> Ibid.

friends of humanity and of the King, to ask our lawgivers to have mercy upon the little ones." Unlike bureaucrats like Altenstein and Bodelschwingh, who relied on paradigmatic rather than normative frames when writing about the child labor problem, Schuchard's appeal was distinctly (and likely selfservingly) emotional in tone and normative in its argument.

Schuchard's well-timed intervention soon turned him into an unwitting ally in Bodelschwingh's campaign for child labor reform in the Rhineland. For over a year, Bodelschwingh had been awaiting a response from Berlin regarding his legislative proposal. Several of his letters to Minister von Altenstein had gone unacknowledged.<sup>29</sup> Schuchard's editorial prompted the governor to press Altenstein once again for a response, since he could now say that the child labor problem had "elicited public outcry."<sup>30</sup> But unbeknownst to Bodelschwingh, Schuchard had legislative plans of his own. Soon after his article appeared, he submitted his own child labor law to the *Landtag* (Kastner 2004). Whereas Bodelschwingh's proposal put primacy on the importance of educating working children, Schuchard's emphasized the need to protect them from unhealthy over-exertion. It is not clear whether Schuchard knew anything about Bodelschwingh's proposal, but in any case, that was still collecting dust in the Ministry of Education. After three times reminding Altenstein of the need for action,<sup>31</sup> Bodelschwingh grew impatient with this lack of progress, and decided to have his own law brought before the *Landtag*, as well. And so it was that in the spring of 1837, not one, but two, child labor law proposals were put before the fifth Rhineland *Landtag* for consideration.

The *Landtag* met to discuss a composite bill that combined the key features of Bodelschwingh's and Schuchard's proposals on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1837.<sup>32</sup> Schuchard was the first to weigh in on the debate. After

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Bodelschwingh to Altenstein, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082: 11/21/1835, p. 49-61; undated, p. 68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Bodelschwingh to Altenstein, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> Bodelschwingh to Altenstein and Rother, undated, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 68; Bodelschwingh to Altenstein, undated, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 79; Bodelschwingh to Altenstein, 6/15/1837, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 81;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the Fifth Landtag of the Rhineland Province, 7/6/1837. Archiv des Landschaftverbandes Rheinland, Nr. 278, p. 486-501.

he rose to argue that factory labor undermined children's health, a prominent cotton manufacturer countered that the law would reduce families' earnings and would undermine Prussian manufacturers' ability to compete with England. In spite of these and other members' objections, the Landtag voted unanimously to require children to obtain three years of schooling before working in a factory, but to allow exceptions, to be granted by the local authorities, if necessitated by local conditions. The members also voted unanimously to support the provision setting the minimum working age at 9. By far the most controversial provision of the bill was that which sought to restrict children's working hours to ten per day. Some representatives argued that the allowable hours should be reduced even further, to eight, to protect children from developing physical defects. In response, a representative named Bauer vehemently opposed such a restriction, arguing that factories, far from heaping misery upon their workers, actually reduced the hardships faced by the working classes: "Factories that employ children, which you judge so harshly, do not produce the misery you have depicted with such vehemence, but rather mitigate it. A surplus of workers, who can no longer be absorbed by the agricultural sector, is streaming into these establishments in search of work, in search of bread. The factories can only exist in places where people can find no other useful work." Another representative pointed out that the English Factory Act of 1833, which set children's maximum daily working hours at nine, had also been found to be too ambitious to be enforced; he maintained that the law should be made flexible to allow exceptions if local conditions required. Someone called for a vote, and after Bauer reiterated his objections, Schuchard arose with the plea: "If you could only imagine, esteemed gentlemen, that piteous scene wherein these poor, delicate children, with tears and reluctance, are dragged from their mothers at 5 in the morning, in cold or wet weather, only to be locked in such a jail, then your hearts, too, would break." The vote was again called, and the assembly overwhelmingly endorsed the 10-hour restriction (the vote was 60 in favor, to 9 against).

Bodelschwingh formulated the *Landtag's* recommendations into a new legislative proposal and sent it on to Berlin as a formal petition to the king. The petition spurred Frederick William III once again to demand a child labor law for the entire monarchy,<sup>33</sup> but just as in 1828, even the king's direct intervention was not enough to bestir the ministers to action. After waiting a full year for news, Bodelschwingh wrote Altenstein and the new Minister of the Interior, Gustav von Rochow, to urge them to get moving.<sup>34</sup> Rochow had not previously been involved in the child labor reform issue; Bodelschwingh must have appealed to him because he finally realized that Altenstein was of no help to him. Rochow, a hard-line conservative who had replaced Schuckmann in 1834, is best known for his staunch opposition to the creation of a national representative assembly. In 1837, he enraged liberals when he wrote that critics of the dismissal of seven progressive professors—including the Brothers Grimm—from the University of Göttingen possessed "limited understanding" [beschränkter *Untertanenverstand*] and should refrain from "offering, with ignorant presumptuousness and limited insight, a public opinion about the legitimacy of the decisions of their superiors" (Wipperman 1983). In the conservative climate of the 1820s and 1830s, an authoritarian like Rochow possessed far greater sway than a liberal humanist like Altenstein. It was fortunate for Bodelschwingh, then, when in November 1838, the Interior Minister seized upon child labor regulation and commissioned the governor to draft a federal child labor law.<sup>35</sup> Why Rochow decided to back child labor reform is somewhat of a mystery—the historical record up to 1839 does not include any definitive statements by Rochow in this regard. In any case, he quickly emerged as the key mover behind child labor reform in Berlin.

Bodelschwingh got to work right away and soon submitted a draft he entitled, "An ordinance to secure sufficient schooling and religious instruction for children employed in factories, mines and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Altenstein to Bodelschwingh, 8/20/1837, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 124.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Bodelschwingh to the Ministers of Education and the Interior. 8/1/1838. LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 129-130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Ministry of the Interior to Bodelschwingh. 11/20/1838. GstA Berlin, Rep. 120 BB VII 1,4 Bd. 1 p. 119.

quarries.<sup>336</sup> The proposal's eight articles included many of the suggestions of Schuchard and the Rhineland *Landtag*. Soon after, Bodelschwingh was called to Berlin to meet with representatives from the Ministries of Education, Finance and the Interior to hammer out a final child labor law.<sup>37</sup> The five participants went over Bodelschwingh's proposal point by point and made several modifications. One significant change was to strike an exception to the 9-year-old age limit that Bodelschwingh had offered to employers who established on-site factory schools, since, it was argued, such schools could not mitigate the negative physical impact of premature employment. The participants also opted to change the title of the law because they did not want to imply that its purpose was exclusively educational. In February 1839, the Ministry of State formally endorsed the proposal and urged the king to apply the law to the entire monarchy. In his presentation of the bill to the king, Rochow stressed the military concerns that had prompted Frederick William to call for child labor legislation over a decade earlier, as well as the positive influence that schooling would have on children's "moral development."<sup>38</sup> The king signed the law a few days later, and the Prussian "Regulative regarding the Employment of Children in Factories" went into effect on March 9, 1839.

What was the impact of this law on child labor in Prussia? Unfortunately, general statistics documenting the extent of child labor in factories do not exist before the 1840s, making it impossible to compare the overall extent of child labor before and after the 1839 law was passed. However, the number of children working in factories did, indeed, drop dramatically during the decades following its enactment and the enactment of strengthening amendments in 1854: from 31,000 children under the age of 14 in 1846, to 22,000 in 1854, to 12,600 in 1858 (Feldenkirchen 1981). Was this decline simply, as Nardinelli (1980) argues to explain similar trends in England, the result of children being rendered redundant by new technology? Feldenkirchen (1981) maintains that the decline cannot be wholly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Bodelschwingh.to Altenstein. LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 139-142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Heshe. 12/21/1838. LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 151-172.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Rochow to Frederick William III. GstA Berlin, Rep. 120 B.B. VII 3.1, p. 72a-80b.

attributed to technological changes, because child labor *increased* during the same time period in the neighboring Kingdom of Saxony, where identical technology was in place but child labor regulations were not enacted until 1861 (see also Kocka 1990 470). In 1846, for example, 5.1 percent of spinning mill workers in the Prussian province of Saxony were children, whereas the figure was 13.4 percent in the neighboring kingdom. Overall, 1.12 percent of children in the kingdom worked in factories, whereas only 0.21 percent did so in the province. Feldenkirchen concludes from this evidence that the child labor laws of 1839 and 1854 must have had some deterrent effect on the spread of child labor in factories in Prussia. Moreover, anecdotal evidence that many factory owners, rather than dealing with the regulations, stopped hiring young children altogether, supports this conclusion. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that by the 1870s, the notion that children under twelve did not belong in factories had become taken for granted by Prussian industrialists, but not by factory owners elsewhere in Germany.<sup>39</sup>

#### Ideas as motivators and resources for political action

For early nineteenth-century Prussian child labor reformers and their opponents, ideas served as both a motivation and a resource for political action. Hardenberg, Altenstein, Schuckmann, Bodelschwingh, Schuchard, Rochow and Frederick William III were all motivated by different paradigmatic theories about why child labor was (or was not) detrimental to children and to the Prussian state. These diverse underlying understandings of the child labor issue manifested themselves in two different policy programs; in turn, the eventual passage of one of these programs shaped, in significant ways, how child labor regulation was actually carried out. Although this political history—particularly the prominent role

<sup>»</sup> Ergebnisse der ueber die Frauen- und Kinder-Arbeit in den Fabriken auf Beschluss des Bundesraths angestellten Erhebungen. 1877. Berlin: Carl Henmann's Verlag;

Report of Professor Dr. Brentano (Breslau), July 6, 1872. Verhandlungen der Eisenacher Versammlung, zur Besprechung der Sozialen Frage am 6. Und 7. October, 1872. Auf Grund der stenographischen Niederschrift von Heinrich Koller in Berlin, hg. Vom Staendigen Ausschuss. Leipzig 1873, p. 14-15.

played by top-level bureaucrats—demonstrates individual agents' power to create political change, none of these individuals acted alone or succeeded in effecting change without the help of political allies. In their quest for influence, ideas served not only as motivators, but also as resources actors could draw upon to construct programs, justify claims, and attract supporters to their cause.

### Ideas as motivators and the creativity of action

As motivators, paradigmatic and normative ideas drive political action and shape the content of policy programs. The radically different paradigmatic ideas motivating Altenstein and Bodelschwingh inspired them to propose policy programs that differed in several significant respects. With respect to protecting children's health, Altenstein's plan went beyond Bodelschwingh's by requiring that children be examined by a physician before working, by restricting children under 14 to half-day workdays, and by demanding that factories be kept clean and ventilated. Furthermore, despite the governor's emphasis on education, Altenstein's educational requirements were actually more extensive than Bodelschwingh's. The Education Minister's plan stipulated that children actually be able to read and write before working, whereas Bodelschwingh's simply required them to attend three years of school, followed by religious instruction until confirmation. By allowing only half-days for children under 14, Altenstein's proposal also made room for children to continue their education after they started a job. Ironically, even the problems of "immoral" behavior and social disorder might have been tackled more effectively had Altenstein's plan been adopted. The Education Minister's proposal stressed workplace discipline and suggested using monitors to stamp out drinking, cursing, and rowdy behavior among young workers. Had Altenstein prevailed, moreover, child labor regulation in Prussia would have been organized completely differently. Whereas Bodelschwingh's law contained no oversight mechanism,

under the Altenstein plan local child labor commissions would have been established to enforce the law.<sup>40</sup>

Differences between Altenstein's and Bodelschwingh's paradigmatic viewpoints can be attributed, in large part, to the time periods in which they came of age politically, and the different cohort of political actors with whom they interacted. Altenstein was a young man during the reform era of the early nineteenth century, and he was profoundly influenced by luminaries like Stein and Hardenberg who connected universal education with liberation, national unity, and the revitalization of Prussia. In contrast, Bodelschwingh's political career began at the height of the conservative reactionary period. His experience as governor was also influenced by the upswing in riot and protest activity in the early 1830s, and he was in regular contact with local officials who had to deal with the unrest directly and who expressed apprehensions about the threats posed by the nascent industrial working class. Thus, during their early political careers, Altenstein was immersed in a discourse of liberal, humanist reform, whereas Bodelschwingh was surrounded by elites who feared social disorder and who stressed the need to use education as a disciplinary tool. It would be inaccurate, though, to *reduce* their paradigmatic interpretations of the child labor problem to social and political context. First, there was no direct and necessary connection between industrial child labor and national regeneration or the threat of workingclass unrest. Second, as we have seen, there was heterogeneity in how elites from both generations interpreted the dangers posed children's factory labor. Altenstein's and Bodelschwingh's views were formed in response to their political environments, but were not determined by them.

This independence of thought is also manifested in the simultaneous stability and flexibility that characterized the two men's ideas. Both displayed a stable, even stubborn, commitment to the particular paradigmatic lens through which they viewed and interpreted child labor. Altenstein's commitment to

Altenstein to Schuckmann. 7/4/1828. GstA Berlin Rep 12 BB VII 1.4 Vol. 1, p. 30a-36a; Bodelschwingh to the district governments of Düsseldorf, Aachen and Cologne, 3/31/1935, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 1-2; see also Kastner (2004), p. 154

the idea that excessive child labor damaged the whole person and the overall quality of working-class Prussians reflected long-standing views dating to the Napoleonic period and remained constant throughout the child labor policy debate, even when he had little to gain from them. But he did exhibit creative flexibility when it came to the implementation of his paradigmatic ideas into a concrete policy program. When it became clear that political circumstances favored Bodelschwingh's plan over his, he tried, unsuccessfully, to initiate a compromise by inserting a few of his own recommendations into the proposed law. These included measures to protect the health of workers through workplace sanitation, and to safeguard children's morality by regulating workplace conduct.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Bodelschwingh was unwavering in his interpretation of child labor as mainly an educational issue, even though his allies and critics often pointed out that other concerns, particularly health, were equally important.<sup>42</sup> This is most clearly exemplified in the title of his final legislative draft, which he chose despite the fact that the law included more than just educational provisions. At the same time, however, his readiness to include health and other measures in his draft indicates that Bodelschwingh, too, was open to compromise and inclusivity when it came to actually implementing his ideas as programs. Thus, although both Altenstein and Bodelschwingh each maintained their commitment to a fundamental paradigmatic viewpoint, the creativity of their political action is revealed in the way they modified their programmatic agendas in response to emerging political pressures and constraints.

By comparing the law that might have been to the law that actually was passed, we can see that the paradigmatic ideas motivating political action do indeed have real policy consequences. Because of these differences, the "victory" of Bodelschwingh's plan over Altenstein's had significant consequences

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Rochow to Altenstein. 9/13/1838. GstA Berlin, Rep. 120 B.B. VII 3.1, p. 24a-26b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> For example, District government of Düsseldorf to Bodelschwingh, 8/22/1835, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 7-19; Jacobi, Altgelt, Viebahn and Woringen to Bodelschwingh, 4/29/1837, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 85-112.

for child labor policy outcomes and for the working children of Prussia. In short, working children would probably have received better protection under the Altenstein plan.

# Why do certain programmatic policy ideas "win out" over others? Ideas as resources and liabilities in policymaking.

Given the difference in their structural positions—one, the young governor of a new province; the other, an experienced minister at the national level of government—it may at first seem puzzling that Bodelschwingh's proposal for a child labor law received such favorable attention, whereas Altenstein's was sidelined. Although the solution to this puzzle has chiefly to do with a variety of political and institutional factors, the role of ideas as strategic resources (and liabilities) plays a supporting, but essential, role in the explanation. As resources, ideas enable political actors to develop programs, recruit supporters and forge alliances. In this section, I explain how ideational strategies interacted with political and institutional conditions to pave the way for Bodelschwingh's success.

Like the scientific ideas examined by Latour, the success of Bodelschwingh's programmatic plan, and the failure of Altenstein's, cannot be explained simply by their content. First, institutional structures (particularly collegialism) and political context (particularly the resurgence of conservatism in Berlin after 1820) mattered. Under collegialism, a political actor's chances of success depended on his ability to build coalitions to overcome resistance. Altenstein lacked this ability. As the last remaining member of the short-lived Stein-Hardenberg reform party, his political capital was greatly diminished in the conservative political environment of the 1820s and 1830s. By 1825, all the other reformers on whom Altenstein could have counted for support had either resigned or died. Thus, Altenstein had no natural allies within the bureaucracy to help him when Interior Minister Schuckmann blocked his every attempt to pursue a child labor law between 1825 and 1832. Altenstein was left similarly isolated when Schuckmann's successor, Rochow, tried in 1828 to exclude him from further child labor policy negotiations and ignored his every suggestion for improvements to the Bodelschwingh plan. Rochow reacted to these critiques dismissively, and Altenstein's suggestions were ultimately ignored.<sup>43</sup>

Altenstein's marginalization at this stage of the policy process points to the role of ideas as liabilities in political coalition-building. His critiques of the Bodelschwingh plan were rejected, not because they were infeasible or undesirable, but because their source was the last progressive reformer left in the king's administration. Nobody wanted to listen to this romantic relic of a bygone era, who presumably still believed in Hardenberg's dream that Prussia could be "revolutionized from above." Altenstein's ideological association with these dead and departed reformers made it very difficult for him to influence the conservatives who had taken their place. Through this example, we can see clearly how an actor's reputation as an ideological outsider can permanently weaken his political influence.

Institutional barriers, political power dynamics and ideological liabilities together account for why Altenstein failed to influence child labor policy development, but they cannot fully explain why Bodelschwingh, an outsider from the provinces, was so much more effective. An important reason for the success of Bodelschwingh's plan over Altenstein's is that between 1828 and 1835, the political situation in Prussia had grown more volatile, and fears of social disorder were high. This situation may have made ministers like Rochow more receptive to social legislation aimed at pacifying the masses.

However, Bodelschwingh's success hinged not only on rising social disorder, but also on his *framing* of this disorder as something which could be ameliorated by child labor regulation. The connection between disorder and child labor was by no means obvious or straightforward. The Prussian government could have dealt with working-class discontent in a variety of more direct ways—for example, by regulating the employment conditions of adult workers or by offering assistance to the unemployed and destitute. Instead, it went with child labor reform, despite the fact that working families demonstrably did not want the government to interfere with their children's earning potential.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Rochow to Altenstein. 9/13/1838. GstA Berlin, Rep. 120 B.B. VII 3.1, p. 24a-26b.

This decision was likely due, at least in part, to the fact that Bodelschwingh's social disorder frame matched the priorities and concerns that predominated among conservative bureaucrats in Berlin. Moreover, one of Bodelschwingh's most important political allies, Johannes Schuchard, was highly skilled at framing child labor in such a way as to appeal to the normative concerns of his audiences. In particular, when addressing the Rhineland *Landtag*, he adopted a strategically emotional tone that aroused members' compassion. Appealing to the legislators' pity, rather than to material interests or to broader state-building goals, was effective given the diversity of his non-bureaucratic audience and its lack of knowledge about the child labor issue. Thus, the framing strategies used by Bodelschwingh and Schuchard helped them to take advantage of the political opportunity created by rising levels of social unrest and to recruit important allies (first the *Landtag* and then Rochow) to their policy agenda. In short, whereas Bodelschwingh and Schuchard achieved frame resonance with powerful gatekeepers (Snow et. al. 1986; Snow & Benford 1988), Altenstein did not.

A further reason Bodelschwingh succeeded where Altenstein failed was that he was much more successful than the Education Minister at creating the *appearance* of allies through the ideational strategy of citation (Latour 1987). Although both Altenstein and Bodelschwingh built their policy programs by borrowing and combining programmatic ideas suggested to them by others, Bodelschwingh was the only one to publicly credit the sources of these suggestions. Altenstein did rely on the information and suggestions provided by the regional governments he surveyed in 1824—his policy plan included many of their ideas, including the creation of local child labor commissions. Nonetheless, he presented the proposal as his work alone. He thereby created the impression that the plan was something endorsed and desired by no one other than himself. In contrast, Bodelschwingh never failed to give due credit to his allies when presenting his proposal to potential supporters. In his initial proposal submitted to the government in Berlin in 1835, he was careful to mention right away that he had

consulted with the municipal governments of Cologne, Aachen and Düsseldorf and had included many of their suggestions in his plan.<sup>44</sup> These local governments did not agree with every aspect of Bodelschwingh's proposal, but the governor obscured this fact to create an impression of unity when communicating with Berlin. Later, when Schuchard published his emotional editorial, Bodelschwingh turned it into an opportunity to tell Berlin that a "public outcry" was now calling for child labor reform.<sup>45</sup> Now, he could claim that not only a prominent Rhenish industrialist, but also public opinion, were on his side. Finally, Bodelschwingh won over his most important supporter when he and Schuchard managed to get the Rhineland *Landtag* to turn its attention to child labor reform and endorse the same education, minimum age and maximum hours regulations that Bodelschwingh had been advocating for years. It was the support of the *Landtag* that finally caught Rochow's attention and prompted the powerful Interior Minister to push Bodelschwingh's plan forward to enactment.<sup>46</sup> Each of these allies—the local governments, Schuchard, the Rhineland *Landtag*—served as an additional reference that Bodelschwingh could cite in his communications with Berlin in order to create the appearance of an ever-growing network of supporters.

As suggested by the preceding discussion, the multiplicity of meanings contained in child labor reform facilitated Bodelschwingh's alliance-building efforts. Child labor meant different things to different people. While clearly expressing the governor's motives and interpretations, the proposed law's limitation on working hours also pleased those, like municipal government officials, who saw the issue primarily as a public health problem. The addition of an article requiring children to be given daily breaks for outdoor play further addressed the concerns of those, like Schuchard, who saw child labor not only as a barrier to health, but also to childhood happiness and freedom. Finally, the law's combination

<sup>&</sup>quot;Bodelschwingh. 11/21/1835. LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082 p. 49-61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Bodelschwingh to Altenstein, LHA Koblenz Best. 403 Nr. 8082, p. 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Rochow to Altenstein. 9/13/1838. GstA Berlin, Rep. 120 B.B. VII 3.1, p. 24a-26b; Rochow to Altenstein, 1/6/1839, GstA Berlin, Rep. 120 B.B. VII 3.1, p. 53a-54b.

of health and education measures allowed the king to see in it an answer to his own concerns about national security and the quality of Prussia's army recruits. In short, it did not matter whether one saw child labor as primarily an educational, health, childhood happiness, or military issue; everyone could see his own definition of the problem expressed and redressed in Bodelschwingh's evolving proposal.

This observation about how multiplicity of meanings contained in Prussian child labor reform facilitated alliance-building resembles arguments made by other scholars, but it is also different in one important respect. For example, Latour argues that scientists join coalitions with other actors "only if they see that their interests, or what they are led to believe are their interests, are served" by them (1988 65). Similarly, Palier (2005 137) contends that the ambiguity of the new policies allowed various stakeholders to all interpret the proposed changes as advantageous to them. In both of these interpretations, the linchpin holding alliances together was the perception that the new policy or practice would advance the professional or material *interests* of each ally in some way. In the case of child labor reform, in contrast, the linchpin was the way in which the proposed law expressed the varied paradigmatic and normative *ideas* that motivated each actor. Their cooperation was based not on the mutually assured interest maximization; rather, it was founded on a shared perception that excessive and premature child labor was deplorable and in need of regulation, though for different reasons. The proposed policy's appeal lay in the fact that it contained multiple meanings to which each coalition member could attach himself, depending on his predominant understanding of the child labor problem.

In sum, Bodelschwingh's programmatic plan succeeded because he was able to recruit allies inside and outside of Berlin, whereas Altenstein was not. This outcome can be attributed to institutional structures, particularly collegialism, and political context, particularly rising social disorder and the dominance of conservative ministers during the restoration period. But ideas—as both resources and liabilities—play a crucial supporting role in the explanation. These findings suggest that programmatic

policy ideas are more likely to "win" when the following ideational conditions are met: (1) their proponents are not burdened by serious ideological liabilities, given the political context in which they are operating; (2) their proponents frame policy problems and their solutions in ways which resonate with contemporary political/social conditions and with the concerns and values of audiences and gatekeepers; (3) their proponents not only borrow others' programmatic ideas as resources, but also cite their sources to bolster the appearance of alliances; and (4) their content can be interpreted by audiences as conforming to a variety of normative and paradigmatic interpretations of the problem at hand.

### Conclusion

Previous analyses of Prussian child labor reform have argued that the 1839 law was developed in response to the recruitment needs of the Prussian army, the aristocracy's desire to thwart the ascendant bourgeoisie, and the state's need to appease a potentially revolutionary working class. The first of these explanations, possibly due to its conformity with popular images of "Prussian militarism", has been particularly enduring and influential. My analysis shows, however, that all three of these explanations are wrong. They share the mistake of attributing to various actors—the aristocracy, state bureaucrats, workers—motivations and goals derived deterministically from their structural positions. My analysis corrects this error by offering a close reading of key reformers' actual interpretations of the child labor problem and what to do about it. In short, my approach highlights the need to take seriously these actors' ideas, and to treat these ideas as having real influence on political action and policy outcomes.

Ideas matter in policymaking, but not only because they constrain how political actors think about problems and their solutions, or because they enable actors to strategically pursue their goals. This paper's central contribution has been to demonstrate the crucial role ideas—particularly paradigms play in motivating individuals to take political action in the first place. Particular motivations lead

political actors to propose particular programs, ones that express their understanding of the nature of the problem at hand. By tracing the process whereby normative and paradigmatic ideas are translated into programs, and ultimately, laws, we can see quite clearly the significant ways in which ideas affect policy outcomes. Moreover, the analysis of how ideas motivate political action and influence policy outcomes can be greatly improved if we use four criteria I propose—constancy, consistency, embeddedness and artlessness—to more reliably assess the sincerity of political actors' expressed motives.

Highlighting the role of ideas as political motivators does not require us to accept a teleological view of the relationship between ideas and action. By conceptualizing ideas as layered, we can reconcile Weber's portrayal of ideas as stable beliefs and values which direct action, with the pragmatic view that beliefs and values evolve as actors creatively negotiate emerging situations. Whereas norms and paradigms tend to remain fairly stable over the course of actors' political careers, continuously directing them towards certain broad goals, their thinking about how best to achieve those goals through concrete policy programs can be quite flexible. It is in the construction and revision of programs designed to address new policy problems that the creativity of action is most apparent in politics.

At the same time, ideas do serve as strategic resources for policy change. First, existing programmatic ideas can be borrowed and used as raw materials for the construction of new programs. Second, as actors negotiate the policy process, they deploy frames and citations to recruit political allies. These ideational strategies can help actors take advantage of political opportunities and overcome institutional barriers, which may be of fundamental importance in explaining the success of certain programmatic ideas over others. Certainly, policy change can never be wholly *reduced* to its ideational components; but neither can ideas be ignored entirely if one wants to develop a complete explanation of the causes and content of political reform.

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## **Intellectual Biography**

Elisabeth Anderson is a PhD candidate in sociology at Northwestern University. Her research spans political, comparative-historical, and cultural sociology, centers on explaining how ideas and institutions interact to shape social policy change, particularly policies aimed at helping those, like children, who lack political voice. Her published work includes "Experts, Ideas and Policy Change: The Russell Sage Foundation and Small Loan Reform, 1909-1941" (Theory & Society 2008). Her dissertation is a comparative-historical study of the political origins and evolution of child labor regulation in Germany and the United States.