



**Center for
Sociology and the Study
of the Life Course**

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Research Program and Research Projects

Sociological Research at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development

Sociology as a scientific discipline is interested in the formation of institutions and in the social behavior and actions of individuals embedded in institutions. Within the specific context of an interdisciplinary institute for human development, sociology can make two kinds of contributions. First, it examines the roles that the family, the educational and training system, the occupational structure, and the welfare state play in the development and life courses of individuals. Second, it examines the way in which specific life-course patterns express and affect the distribution of life chances.

We share substantive topics, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches with other centers of the Institute, for example, the interest in the conditions of attainment in education and training with the Center for Educational Research. We are also interested in both the individual and social consequences of differential educational attainment. The longitudinal surveys of the two centers overlap in the life phase which occurs at the completion of schooling and commencement of early labor market experience. We just recently concluded the new version of the German Education Report. Together with the Center for Lifespan Psychology we share an interest in the full life course from birth to death, particularly the interplay between social environments and individual development. These common interests resulted in the joint Berlin Aging Study and joint research on psychological covariates of employment trajectories in East Germany during the unification process.

Goals of the Research Program

The research program is oriented toward answering three sets of questions:

(1) The first set of questions focuses on the relationships between the macrolevel structure of societies and patterns of the life course. In what manner and with which outcomes do institutions shape the patterns and distributions of individual life courses? We look at life courses generated by social norms, by institutional configurations, and by opportunity structures, all of which vary across social groups as well as specific national and historical contexts. Life courses are a summary concept for the intertwined processes of residential migration, family history, education and training trajectories, employment, and occupational careers as well as the temporal patterns of relationships to the social insurance systems. Therefore, with respect to institutions, we are primarily interested in schools and training institutions, the occupational structure and labor market, the family, and the welfare state. The relevant time dimension, here, is the historical time of socioeconomic change.

Key References

Mayer, K. U. (forthcoming). Life courses and life chances in a comparative perspective. In S. Svallfors (Ed.), *Analyzing inequality: Life chances and social mobility in comparative perspective*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Mayer, K. U. (2004c). Whose lives? How history, societies and institutions define and shape life courses. *Research in Human Development*, 1, 161–187.

(2) The second set of questions focuses on the levels of individual and group action. How do individuals and families actively construct their lives? How do they experience their individual and collective life histories under the given conditions of their own prior biography, their immediate family and work environments, and the generational contexts of their peer birth cohorts? Here, we are primarily interested in the proximate influences of the mesolevel of informal groups, formal organizations, and local opportunity structures as well as microlevel endogenous processes of the individual life course. The relevant time dimensions, here, are chronological age and the individual aging process, the duration of membership in families, households, and firms as well as the time dimension of cohort and generational succession.

(3) The third set of questions focuses on feedback processes from the microlevel of individual action to the macrolevel of structural and institutional constraints. How do changes in life-course patterns shape distributional and aggregative features of social structure and institutional arrangements? What are the implications of such processes for social policies? Irrespective of how they arise, life-course patterns are powerful contexts for individual and group action. Life courses form the qualitative and quantitative basis for macrosocial change and for collective political decision making. Accordingly, the empirical and descriptive social accounting of life-course patterns is an important research task.

We use **four perspectives** in investigating life courses.

First, we see individual life courses as a part and a product of social and historical processes operating on different levels. Individual life courses are linked to the life courses of other persons (parents, partners, children, colleagues, friends) and are embedded in the dynamics of small groups, especially the family. But, life courses are also subject to the influences of social organization and the macroinstitutions of society, including their development over time.

Second, the life course is a multidimensional process. On the one hand, it unfolds in the different, but mutually related life domains (e.g., family cycle and working life), on the other hand, it is dependent on intraindividual processes of organic and psychological development.

Third, the life course is a self-referential process. The individual behaves and acts self-reflectively on the basis of past experiences and resources, making the life course, to some extent, an endogenous causal process. This is also partially true for the collective life history of birth cohorts. The past and initial conditions and characteristics of a cohort impact both on their later collective life history (e.g., in the relationship between working lives and life in old age) and on the adjacent cohorts. The different age groups live together in the same time period, but they bring to the present their distinctive past histories.

Fourth, through the manner in which persons shape their own life courses, they reproduce and transform the social structure. This can

happen via "simple" processes of aggregation or in the form of institutional feedback.

Research Areas

The Center's research program is currently organized into the following areas:

Education, Training, and Employment

The transition between education, training, and employment is a major topic of investigation in the Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course. This life phase is crucial for both intergenerational status allocation and the later life history. In reconstructing the collective transition experiences of successive cohorts, we gain empirical insights in the changing institutional linkages between the school and training systems, on the one hand, and between the labor market and the occupational structure, on the other. Moreover, we can examine controversial hypotheses about the lengthening and fragmentation of this

transition period, and about the increasing polarization of the opportunities for skill acquisition and early occupational careers. Other topics of research interest include the following: What are the consequences of educational expansion for working lives? Is there a crisis in the dual system of vocational training and how can this be accounted for? How widespread and serious are the problems of mismatch between acquired and required skills in the labor market? Our guiding hypothesis in this research area is that despite massive distributional shifts and intense pressure for labor market flexibilization, the close linkage between education, training, and occupation persists.

Research Area 1

Hillmert, S., & Mayer, K. U. (Eds.). (2004). *Geboren 1964 und 1971. Neuere Untersuchungen zu Ausbildungs- und Berufschancen in Westdeutschland*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Jacob, M. (2004). *Mehrfachausbildungen in Deutschland. Karriere, Collage, Kompensation?* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Büchel, F., de Grip, A., & Mertens, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Overeducation in Europe: Current issues in theory and policy*. Cheltenham, UK: Elgar.

Hillmert, S., & Jacob, M. (2003b). Social inequality in higher education: Is vocational training a pathway leading to or away from university? *European Sociological Review*, 19, 319–334.

Key References

Research Area 2

Life Courses in the Transformation of Former Socialist Countries

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany not only provided a major challenge for the social sciences to understand and guide this transition, it also provided unique opportunities for theory-guided research. On the one hand, the transformation allowed us to examine how the former socialist society functioned and why it failed. On the other hand, it provided ample opportunities for the investigation of life courses under the impact of such a sudden dramatic institutional change. We have collected selected cohort and life-course data on both the German Democratic Republic

and the transformation process. In addition, we have intensified cooperation with Polish social scientists for the purposes of comparative study. Our investigations concentrate on the micromechanisms of individual adjustment, adaptation in the domains of family and work, the life-course consequences of institutional transfer from West to East Germany, and individual-level processes in the transformation of the system of social stratification and class. Our studies have revealed some rather surprising findings: Despite a rapid increase in labor market mobility and considerable breaks in individual careers, we also find remarkable continuities.

Key References

Diewald, M., Goedicke, A., & Mayer, K. U. (Eds.). (forthcoming). *After the fall of the Berlin Wall: Life courses in the transformation of East Germany*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Matthes, B. (2004c). Intergenerationale Mobilität beim Erwerbseinstieg während der ostdeutschen Transformation. In M. Szydlik (Ed.), *Generation und Ungleichheit* (pp. 168–190). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Rosenfeld, R. A., Trappe, H., & Gornick, J. C. (2004). Gender and work in Germany: Before and after reunification. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 103–124.

Trappe, H., & Rosenfeld, R. A. (2004). Occupational sex segregation and family formation in the former East and West Germany. *Work and Occupations*, 31, 155–192.

Research Area 3

Welfare State, Life Courses, and Social Inequalities

In this research area we focus on conceptual and empirical studies on the impact of various national institutional configurations on life-course outcomes. The macroinstitutions of the modern welfare state and the specific provisions and rules of the social insurance systems are among the major determining factors in the life course and in the distribution of life opportunities. The

role of the welfare state may prove to be especially important in current societal adaptations to global competition and decreasing public finances. Microanalytic and cross-national studies are required to unravel the mechanisms and consequences of different welfare state regimes. Our guiding hypothesis for Germany holds that life courses are still relatively protected from pressures of flexibility, and that stability and continuity prevail.

Key References

Mayer, K. U. (2001). The paradox of global social change and national path dependencies: Life course patterns in advanced societies. In A. E. Woodward & M. Kohli (Eds.), *Inclusions and exclusions in European societies* (pp. 89–110). London: Routledge.

McGinnity, F. (2004b). *Welfare for the unemployed in Britain and Germany: Who benefits?* Cheltenham: Elgar.

Mertens, A., & McGinnity, F. (2004). Wages and wage growth of fixed-term workers in East and West Germany. *Applied Economics Quarterly*, 50, 139–163.

Hillmert, S., & Mayer, K. U. (Eds.). (2004). *Geboren 1964 und 1971. Neuere Untersuchungen zu Ausbildungs- und Berufschancen in Westdeutschland*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Hillmert, S. (2002). Labour market integration and institutions: An Anglo-German comparison. *Work, Employment and Society*, 16 (4), 675–701.

Life-Course Research and Analysis: Theory, Methods, and Synthesis

This research area focuses on overarching topics and tasks: the provision of the empirical database for our studies, methodological problems of measurement, analysis, modeling, issues of general theory, and empirical work on the full set of cohort studies.

The Center's research program is empirically based on a series of eight surveys. These surveys rely on population probability samples and were conducted from the early 1980s up to the present day. They now comprise quantified life histories of about 8,500 West German women and men (the cohorts born 1919–21, 1929–31, 1939–41, 1949–51, 1954–56, 1959–61, 1964, and 1971) and about 2,900 East German women and men (the cohorts born 1929–31, 1939–41, 1951–53, 1959–61, and 1971). Detailed life histories were also obtained for the 516 participants of the Berlin Aging Study, who were born between 1887 and 1922. These surveys are retrospective studies. We also carried out two panel studies. In the first panel we reinterviewed our East German respondents from 1991/92 in 1996/97. In the second panel we are reinterviewing in 2004/05 our East and West German respondents born

1971. The first panel study was also employed to analyze the reliability of retrospective measurement. We incorporated a methods experiment in the second panel in order to improve reliability on the basis of insights from the psychology of autobiographical memory. As a supplement to the second panel, we are also conducting a series of narrative biographical interviews. Data editing, the development and maintenance of the database, and data documentation form an important part of our ongoing research work. Currently we also concentrate on establishing a more user-friendly database containing these cohort studies and putting the data documentation into an electronic format.

The Research Center's own data sets are complemented with other German and non-German longitudinal studies, including the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), the Microcensus, the 1% sample of the Employment Register, the BIBB/IAB (Federal Institute for Vocational Training and the Institute for Labor Market and Employment Research) Employment Survey, and the British Household Panel Study (BHPS). Our major methodological tools consist of dynamic models of discrete change in continuous time.

Brückner, H., & Mayer, K. U. (forthcoming). The de-standardization of the life course: What it might mean and if it means anything whether it actually took place. *Advances in Life Course Research*.

Hillmert, S. (2003b). "Ausbildungs- und Berufsverläufe der Geburtskohorten 1964 und 1971 in Westdeutschland": Die jüngste Teilstudie der Lebensverlaufsstudie als Scientific Use File. *ZA-Information*, 53, 167–177.

Matthes, B. (2003). Das Teilprojekt "Ostdeutsche Lebensverläufe im Transformationsprozess (LV-Ost)" der Deutschen Lebensverlaufsstudie. *ZA-Information*, 53, 156–166.

Reimer, M. (2003). *Autobiografisches Gedächtnis und retrospektive Datenerhebung: Die Rekonstruktion und Validität von Lebensverläufen*. Doctoral dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin.

Key References

Current Research Projects and Research Associates of the Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course

Research Area 1 Education, Training, and Employment

Early Careers and Family Formation: Life Courses of the Birth Cohorts 1971 in East and West Germany	Karl Ulrich Mayer Britta Matthes Maïke Reimer Holger Seibert
Education and Mismatch in the Labor Market	Felix Büchel + Matthias Pollmann-Schult Laura Romeu (Postdoc)

Research Area 2 Life Courses in the Transformation of Former Socialist Countries

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall: Life Courses in the Transformation of East Germany	Britta Matthes Karl Ulrich Mayer Heike Trappe Martin Diewald (Bielefeld) Anne Goedicke (Essen)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissertation Project Employment Risks and Chances Within Households. Careers of Couples During East Germany's Transformation 	Anke Höhne
Transformation Processes in Poland and East Germany	Bogdan Mach Britta Matthes Karl Ulrich Mayer
Bourgeois and Non-Bourgeois Intelligentsia in the GDR	Erika M. Hoerning

Research Area 3 Welfare State, Life Courses, and Social Inequalities

Employment Relationships at Risk	Antje Mertens Frances McGinnity Vanessa Gash
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissertation Project Fixed-Term Contracts Over the Life-Course 	Stefanie Gundert
Gender Segregation After Reunification in East and West Germany	Heike Trappe

Research Area 4 Life-Course Research and Analysis: Theory, Methods, and Synthesis

Post World War II Social Development as Collective History of Cohorts	Karl Ulrich Mayer Matthias Pollmann-Schult Holger Seibert
Cognition and Communication in Longitudinal Data Collection	Maïke Reimer

Projects and Dissertations Concluded in 2003–2004

Education, Training, and Careers: Life Courses of the 1964 and 1971 Birth Cohorts in West Germany

Karl Ulrich Mayer
Steffen Hillmert
Antje Mertens
Heike Trappe

Political Economy and the Life Course in Advanced Societies (POLIS)

Frances McGinnity
Steffen Hillmert
Karl Ulrich Mayer

Higher Education: Expansion, Institutional Forms, and Equality of Opportunity
(International Comparative Project)

Karl Ulrich Mayer

Higher Education in Germany and the USA

Gero Lenhardt

- Dissertation Project**
Patchwork or Career? Causes and Consequences of Multiple Educational Episodes

Marita Jacob

- Dissertation Project**
Psychology of Autobiographical Memory and the Reliability of Retrospective Measurements

Maïke Reimer

- Dissertation Project**
Overeducation in a Longitudinal Perspective

Matthias Pollmann-Schult

- Dissertation Project**
Occupational Placement of Foreign Apprentices of West German Birth Cohorts 1960 to 1971

Holger Seibert

Education, Training, and Occupational Careers

Born 1964 and 1971: The Collective History of Two Cohorts

What life prospects did young West Germans have in the 1980s and 1990s? What were the conditions under which they went through school and vocational education and entered the labor market? How grave were the consequences of “false starts”? How easy or difficult was it in these two decades for young women and men to overcome the first hurdles of work and family life in the transition to adulthood? To what extent did the accident of birth place young West Germans in a privileged position, compared to their East German peers? Did young East Germans reap greater rewards from reunification than West Germans or did they encounter setbacks in the years immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall?

Both public and academic debate on these questions in the last two decades has been characterized by a multitude of grim crisis scenarios. The question of whether there would be an adequate number of training positions available to young school leavers cast a long shadow over the end of nearly every school year of the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this period, the constantly increasing unemployment rate also began to affect new entrants to the labor force. Germany's traditionally low rate of youth unemployment steadily approached the level among over-25-year-olds. Although problems of finding a first job after finishing school or higher education were less evident than the overall lack of apprenticeships, the perception was widespread that young people faced ever more acute difficulties in embarking on a career—particularly those without vocational education, but increasingly those with vocational education, and since the 1970s, even university graduates as well. At the same time, “patchwork biography” and “individualization” appeared as catchphrases for a pre-

sumed increasing differentiation of life trajectories and biographies. From the 1970s onward, these ideas were associated with a broadening range of opportunities and options for a self-defined life, but were also linked to a change in values that placed greater emphasis on personal development and individual autonomy than on mere material success. The connotation of these themes changed over time, however. For many young people, the belief that rising prosperity created greater opportunities to actively chart the course of their own lives was slowly replaced by the perception of narrowing prospects, increasing hurdles on their educational and career paths, and disappointed expectations, for example, regarding the value of completed educational degrees. In 1998 and 1999 we collected nearly 3,000 quantitative life histories of women and men born 1964 and 1971 and living in West Germany using computer-assisted telephone interviews. In the following, we present a summary of main findings. The empirical analyses are published in a monograph (Hillmert &

Key Reference

Hillmert, S., & Mayer, K. U. (Eds.). (2004). *Geboren 1964 und 1971. Neuere Untersuchungen zu Ausbildungs- und Berufschancen in Westdeutschland*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.





Mayer, 2004). Also available is an extensive documentation of data and methods (Hillmert, Künster, Spengemann, & Mayer, 2004). To enable comparison and to present a more complete picture, we also draw on data from a study we conducted in 1996 on the life courses of men and women born in East Germany in 1971.

The young people born in 1964 and 1971 were shaped by specific generational experiences. On the one hand, the period in which they grew up was the end of a phase of extraordinary prosperity and dramatically increased educational opportunities. In comparison to those born before and after them—and particularly in comparison to their parents—these young people were thus extremely privileged. On the other hand, this was a period of increasing insecurity regarding the actual value of their improved educational attainment for later income, status, and career. An ironic self-portrayal of this generation can be found in Florian Illies' highly popular book "Generation Golf." This image reflects a particular mixture of characteristics and attitudes: high levels of consumption during childhood, a distance from the sociopolitical engagement of the 68-generation, a hedonistic sense of self-entitlement, and disillusionment about their labor market prospects. The 1980s and 1990s were also a time when institutions were perceived as increasingly rigid and inflexible, and insecurity over career goals and opportunities was rising. By the time of the late-1990s IT revolution at the very latest, tensions had come to a head between

the old educational structures and the demand for new kinds of occupational qualifications. Our analyses do not attempt to recapitulate these public debates and views in detail, but rather trace the factual developments in the life courses of two specific birth cohorts. We do not rely on the usual cross-sectional data from official statistics, but on representative data on the life courses of the women and men who went through the formative phase of life in the 1990s. This makes it possible not only to follow their educational and occupational development but also to study the way external conditions are reflected in individual life courses, and how positive and negative life circumstances at an early stage of life affect the further experiences of an entire generation.

What Are Our Central Questions?

First of all, how did the specific historical period during which these young people born in 1964 and 1971 went through childhood affect the first part of their collective life history (period effects)? Second, how did the specific conditions at the start of their lives affect later steps in life and the internal dynamics of their educational and professional careers? Thus, this question deals not only with their different experiences at specific points in time under very specific conditions but also with what the members of these two cohorts have in common and how these common experiences affect their further life course (cohort effects). Third, what is the temporal structure of these processes: for example, at what age did those born

in 1964 and 1971 typically reach and cross important thresholds (age effects)? Fourth, what effects did the early phase of the transition from school to career have on other areas of life, for example, personal events related to partnerships, establishing a household, or starting a family (life area interdependencies). Fifth, how do West Germans under relatively stable social conditions differ from East Germans under the turbulent conditions of German reunification? What does the specific "heritage" of East or West Germany bring with it (system effects)? Sixth, how similar or different are women and men? Can we identify trends toward increasing equality of opportunity, or has gender inequality remained constant or even worsened (gender inequality)? Seventh, are there tendencies toward social exclusion (marginalization)? Finally, eighth, do the empirical findings confirm the critical assessments of these issues and prognoses for their outcomes expressed in contemporary public and academic debates?

Surprising Stability and its Price: The Transition From School to the Working World in the 1980s and 1990s

During the 1980s and 1990s, West Germany experienced a dramatic decline in economic growth, two long phases of recession interrupted only by one brief period of upswing (brought about in part by reunification), steadily increasing unemployment, severe shortages of public funds, and concomitant sharp restrictions on the hiring of new public employees. However, this period was also characterized by a steadily increasing rate of participation in education at the secondary level and rapid structural change caused by developments in information technology and an expansion of jobs in the service industry. Government activities under both Kohl and Schröder embraced neither the pro-neoliberalism of 1982 nor the anti-neoliberalism of 1998; rather, they pursued a "best-of-both-worlds" policy combining increased flexibility and social security. German reunifi-

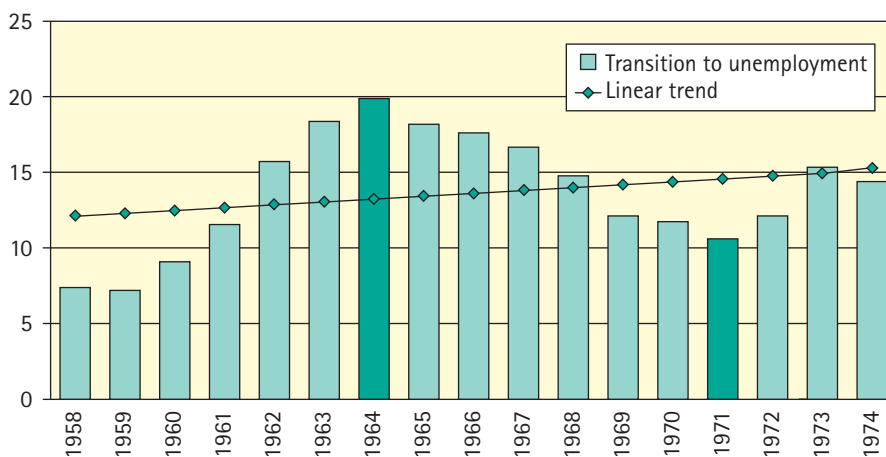


Figure 1. Direct transitions into unemployment after apprenticeship (in % of all transitions).

Source. Hillmert, 2004a, p. 36.

cation was carried out under a similar banner: The promise of a rapid increase in living standards in the East without any sacrifices for the West. What were the negative consequences of this difficult historical situation for the birth cohorts studied here? On the whole, the effects were astonishingly few and minor. We provide evidence both of the strained situation on the educational training market and the difficult transition at the second threshold to the labor market for the 1964 cohort with its 20% unemployment rate (see Figure 1), and of the difficult labor market situation at the point when the 1971 cohort started its vocational education. Nevertheless, for both the 1964 and the 1971 cohort, the rate of apprenticeship training was— with a percentage of two thirds—very high. Furthermore, occupational education ratios (vocational training plus university-level education) were higher than ever before at 86%. For men, medium occupational status at the start of their career was just as high for these birth cohorts as for men born between 1950 and 1960. The attainment of occupational status suggests continuity rather than a decline. Indeed, the highest percentile of the 1964 cohort appears if anything to be rising in status. In the case of women, we see significant improvements in average occupational status but also increases in the lowest and highest groups. This stability has, however, been achieved at a price. The percentage of individuals with multiple education has increased markedly. A small portion thereof represent a reaction to unemployment, a larger portion

of these individuals are attaining higher qualifications. First jobs with limited-term contracts have increased as well, but these appear to generate no further notable adverse effects on employment chances a few years later. For our cohorts, then, the picture that comes into focus is that competition increases, but what is actually achieved remains fairly constant. This situation resembles a football stadium in which everyone is standing on his or her toes to see more: In the end, no one gets a better view.

A Successful Transition to Work Despite Adverse Conditions—But With Detours and Delays

Life courses are defined not only by the particular historical conditions at a specific place and time but also by the collective life history of one's own particular generation (cohort). One aspect of a cohort with potentially serious consequences is the number of its members, both in absolute terms and relative to those immediately preceding and following it. A large cohort means that more people compete for limited resources, for example, for positions on the vocational education or job market. A large cohort also usually means that a family's financial resources are spread more thinly among a larger number of siblings. However, even members of small cohorts following large cohorts can be confronted with a more difficult competitive situation on the job market, especially when members of the larger preceding cohort fill specific positions first. It is especially interesting in our context to see whether relative disadvantages can

really be proven for the very large cohorts of the 1964 generation. While political measures were effective for the most part in compensating for the shortage of apprenticeships, when the 1964 generation arrived at the second threshold after completion of training, they faced major problems in finding a job that fit their qualifications. This may have been due to the fact that a relatively large number of men had only been able to find an apprenticeship in one of the trades. A smaller percentage of this birth cohort completed the *Abitur* (upper secondary school-leaving certificate) or a university education (around one third less than the 1971 and 1960 cohorts). They were also more often overqualified for their first jobs than the other cohorts.

On the Way to a Seven-Threshold Society?

For both of our birth cohorts, the difficult conditions on the educational and labor market—together with the extended educational phases—had the main effect of shifting the transitional phase preceding working life to a later point in time. On average, men and women born in 1964 and 1971 were 20 years old and those born in 1971 were 21 when they started their first job, and approximately one year older when they started their first stable job, that is, one lasting at least six months. A clear trend can also be seen in the rising percentage of individuals undergoing a second period of vocational training or general education. By the age of 27, just under 30% of both cohorts had started a second training program and ap-

proximately 15% had finished one. Although the majority of these individuals were attaining higher qualifications and only a small percentage switched their occupation after a period of unemployment, this aspect demonstrates that starting a career takes longer and is more fraught with difficulties than in the past. The fact that almost 40% of the 1964 generation had started a second period of training by the age of 33 and one third had already finished one provides further evidence that a new structure of educational and occupational life courses is emerging. A further indication of this is the growing average number of different jobs that members of the two cohorts held up to the age of 27, whereas men from the 1964 cohort had held around two jobs, the 1971 men had held nearly five, and women went from holding under two to nearly three jobs. The typical (male) life course traditionally included two thresholds: starting school and making the transition from school to working life. First for men and then gradually for women as well, a third threshold emerged with the increased prevalence of a specific educational phase: The transition to fixed employment after completion of vocational education, including the risk of not being offered a job at the company where training took place. The expansion of secondary schooling led to a further threshold becoming anchored in school life. Almost 40% of our two cohorts successfully completed *Realschule* (intermediate secondary school), while over one fifth of the 1964 and almost one third of the 1971 cohort

completed the *Abitur*. For a very large minority, a second period of training brings with it two further thresholds (entry and completion). Finally, even the first job is ever more rarely a stable one. After the first fixed-term job, another transition takes place—either to a permanent position with the same company or a change to another company. Although we have evidence that after eight years, fixed-term employees do not differ from permanent employees in their employment chances, they also find that these employees' life courses are more complicated and potentially riskier. We therefore appear to be on the way toward what could be called a "seven-threshold society"—an obstacle course with numerous hurdles.

Look Before You Leap? Establishing a Household, Marrying or Living With a Partner, Starting a Family

The decisions young people make about when to move out of their parents' home and into their own apartments, when to move in with a partner, get married, and have children are often expressions of values and social norms. The trend toward an increasing value placed on individual autonomy is indisputable. Decisions like these affecting the private sphere are also frequently influenced by the length of educational phases, difficulties encountered in making the transition to the labor market, and individual perceptions of how promising one's employment and income prospects are. On average, the men in the 1964 cohort started their first household at the age of 24, married at the age of 29, and became fathers at the

age of 33. The men born in 1971 also moved out on their own at the age of 24, but at the age of 27 only 17% of them were married and only 11% were fathers. The women born in 1964 started their first household at over 22 years of age, married at almost 26, and had their first child at 28. The women born in 1971 started their first household at 22 and at the age of 27, only 39% were married and only 27% had children. In a longer-term comparison of the cohorts, for those born in 1964 and 1971 the age at which personal life events occur remains relatively constant rather than showing noticeable deviations from the trend. West German men and women tend to move out of their parents' homes at a relatively early age, live with their partners before marriage, marry relatively late, and become parents late—if at all. The percentage of women without any children has increased dramatically to over 30%. Of women born in 1940, 10% were childless, as were 15% of those born in 1950, and 20% of those born in 1955. Estimates for women born in 1960 and 1965 are between 23% and 31%. For women who have completed a university degree, childlessness has become almost the norm, such that in the year 2000, 44% of women with a university degree still had no child by the age of 39. This means that a pattern is emerging of delaying events associated with family life to later points in time (with the exception of starting one's own household), and that with our two cohorts, these events have been pushed even further into the future. Starting a family increasingly

only takes place in the fourth decade of life, and for one third of the individuals in our cohorts, parenthood is not a part of their life experience at all.

Integration Accompanied by Handicaps: Starting a Career in East and West Germany

The reunification of the two German states and cultures offers social scientists an extraordinarily unusual "natural experiment" that makes it possible to examine the collective life history of one birth cohort in the context of two dramatically different systems. From our life-course studies, we have data on the men and women born in 1971 in both West Germany (including West Berlin) and East Germany. This enables comparison of the two groups from a twofold perspective. On the one hand, we can better estimate how large (or small) the problems and difficulties of West Germans are under "normal" business cycles and structural crises in contrast to the much more dramatic upheavals that East Germans underwent through the system change from socialism to a social market economy. On the other hand, we can look at the life courses of East Germans as a result of disadvantages stemming from exogenously triggered system change. Up to their 18th year of life, the life courses of East and West Germans born in 1970 were fundamentally shaped by their different social contexts. Nevertheless, East and West Germany had in common a strong vocational orientation in their educational systems and a high vocational segmentation of labor markets. The percentage of East

Germans who had not completed vocational education was much lower, though, the number of individuals in training was higher, and the percentage of individuals attending upper secondary school in preparation for the *Abitur* (22% vs. 32%) or the university (17% vs. 23%) was lower. This also meant—mainly because of the less differentiated school system—a much higher standardization in age at the transition from school to working life. As a result, at the beginning of their working lives (and around the time when the Berlin Wall fell), East Germans had higher vocational qualifications than West Germans, while the latter had higher levels of schooling.

But what effects did this upheaval have thereafter? Above all, it created different risks of unemployment: Half of the East Germans and one fifth of the West Germans either lost or did not find a job after finishing school and vocational training. The young people from the two German states also made very different discoveries about the "stability" of the first profession they had trained for. Seven years after the fall of the Berlin Wall (and after they had, on average, completed their first period of vocational training), 42% of the West Germans and 34% of the East Germans still worked in the same occupation they had started in. This means that even under the more "normal" conditions of the West German labor market, a majority of young people still had to reorient themselves, but not the extreme majority of two thirds seen in East Germany. Many people in both East and West undertook major

efforts to get training in a new field, with the surprising result that a similarly large proportion ultimately worked in a field for which they had completed training, although not in their first occupation (approximately 65%). However, not only do East and West Germany differ in terms of the percentages completing training for a second career (26% in the East, 15% in the West), they also differ in terms of the level of the second career relative to the first: In West Germany, almost half of these individuals obtained a higher level of qualification, while in East Germany up to two thirds obtained different qualifications at the same level in order to avoid becoming unemployed or having to take up unskilled work. Astonishingly, East and West Germans from the 1971 cohort—despite their different risks of unemployment—do not show different rates of labor force participation at the end of the observation period (1996). This is due in part to the extensive labor market measures undertaken in East Germany, in part to the marked and much stronger tendency of East German women to participate in the labor market. East Germans broke with the “normal biography” of German Democratic Republic (GDR) times in one other respect: Of those born in 1960, 76% of the women and 50% of the men were married by the age of 25, while 86% were mothers and 70% fathers. This biographical “given” disintegrated under the uncertainties of German reunification: By the age of 25, only 26% of women and 11% of men were married, while 32% had become mothers and 13% fathers.

How should these different experiences be interpreted beyond the individual level? First, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the East Germans born in 1971 already had an important relative advantage for several reasons: Most had by that time already completed a vocational education (which was shorter than in the West), their East German educational degrees were recognized under the unification treaty of August 1990, and the overall rate of vocational education had been higher in the East. Second, the forced privatization and restructuring of the East German economy and thus of occupational structures compelled East Germans to achieve much more in terms of adjusting and reorienting themselves, although some also received government support through occupational training or retraining measures. Third, East Germans made the transition into working life approximately two years sooner in the beginning (at the age of 19 rather than 21), but the transition later became much more difficult and dramatic. In the final result, they achieved levels of integration into the labor market similar to West Germans, but on a lower level of occupational status—a legacy of the GDR occupational structures.

Ongoing Gender Inequalities Despite Promotion of Occupational Equality and Increasing Similarity of Life-Course Patterns

The life courses of (West German) women have come to resemble those of men in many respects in recent decades. With historical delays, they have caught up in educational participation and university

attendance and have even overtaken men in schooling. Women show a rate of educational participation at the beginning of working life that is as high as men's, and they disrupt their careers less often and for shorter periods after the birth of their first child. Given the difficult overall situation of the 1964 and 1971 cohorts at the beginning of working life, the question arises whether women have suffered more from these difficulties than men and whether their gains in educational and occupational opportunities stagnated or even declined again. In their first jobs, women worked in occupations with a higher average occupational status than men. While the initial occupational status of the men in our cohorts tended to stagnate, the women achieved steady gains. This is no doubt a result of the fact that women profited more from the growth of the service industries. The women in our two cohorts overtook men by a large margin, both in attendance of *Realschule* and completion of the

Abitur. In university attendance as well, men and women are nearly equal (with approximately 17% holding a university degree). In the rate of occupational training, however, men remain ahead. In our cohorts, the percentage of women without any occupational training has dropped significantly, but is still twice as high as the percentage of men. While the percentage of the men in our two cohorts who took jobs for which they were overqualified was comparatively large in historical comparison (11% and 9% respectively), the percentages were lower among women (8% and 4% respectively). Women also show better results in terms of working in the occupation for which they were last trained: In our cohorts, the percentages of individuals working in an occupation different from the last trained are for the first time lower among women (approximately 17%) than among men (almost 25%). The improved position of women appears less positive, however, when

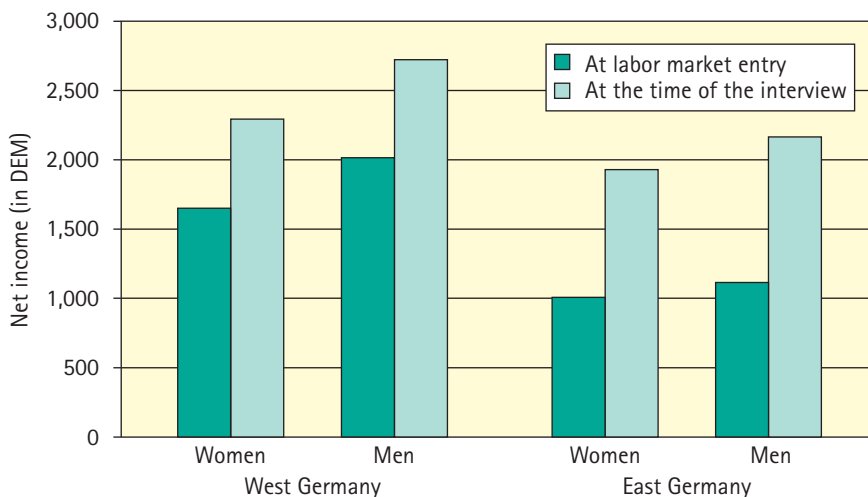


Figure 2. Average net income (in DEM) of full-time employed women and men born in 1971.

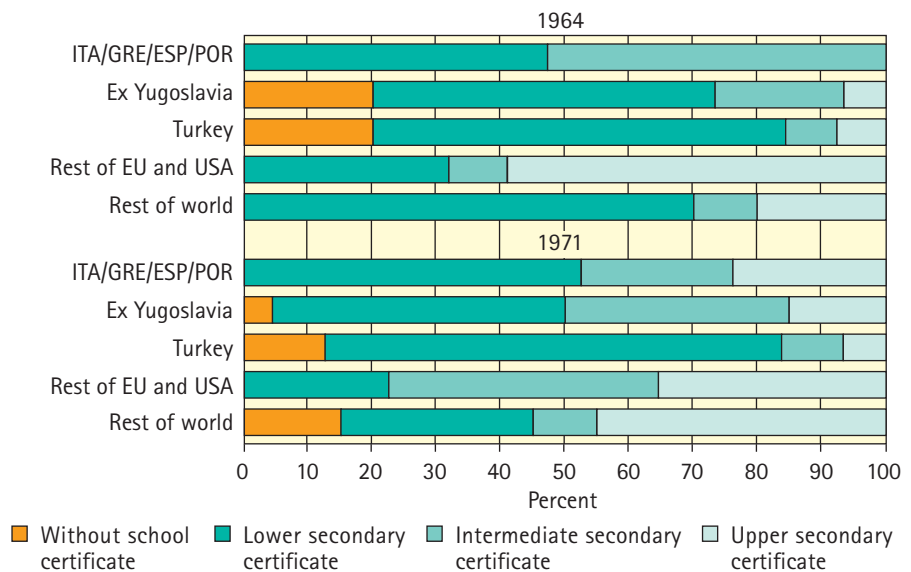
Source: Trappe, 2004, p. 150.

one looks at limited-term first job contracts and occupational training for a second career. The percentage of fixed-term contracts is not higher for women in full-time jobs, but their part-time jobs tend to be fixed-term, and part-time employment is generally concentrated in fields of "women's work." Although women have caught up with and even overtaken men to some extent in their first period of occupational training, the gap widens again with the second. Not only do women go through a second period of training less often than men (25% to 39%); when they do, it is less frequently for the purpose of achieving a higher level of qualification. Women also earn less than men overall, despite equal levels of education and a higher average occupational status: 82% of men's wages at the start of their career and 85% at the point in time of the interview (see Figure 2).

Marginalization Through a Lack of Education and Training?

In the 1980s and 1990s, concerns intensified that the youth growing up at the time were becoming a "lost generation," ever more marginalized and expendable. Our findings fundamentally refute that view. Although the paths to a job and a career have become more difficult and protracted, the life prospects of the young people born in these years in West Germany do not differ markedly from previous generations. In part, and particularly for women, their chances are significantly better. At the same time, it is important to carefully evaluate whether tendencies toward social exclusion exist, how large the groups affected are, and what mechanisms underlie these tendencies. In our study we are looking at three groups for which one could expect social and economic exclusion: young foreigners and young adults with low levels

Figure 3. School degrees of foreign birth cohorts 1964 and 1971 by countries of origin.



Source: Seibert, 2004b, p. 101.

of schooling and occupational training, East Germans, and foreigners. Bringing in additional data on non-Germans is crucial because they correct the otherwise too positive picture that emerges here due to the fact that in our representative sample we have too few cases without German citizenship.

But first, we turn to the lack of education among the West Germans in our birth cohorts: Approximately 6% of the girls and 9% of the boys left school without having completed the *Hauptschule* (lower secondary school) while 4% attend a *Sonderschule* (remedial school). Furthermore, approximately one third of those born in 1964 and 1971 only completed *Hauptschule*.

The low levels of schooling mean above all lower chances of obtaining vocational education. Of those members of our cohorts who had not completed school, almost 40% also did not complete vocational education, and of those who had only completed *Hauptschule*, approximately 10%. A lower level of schooling means also more frequent and longer periods of unemployment. Forty percent of individuals who had not completed *Hauptschule* were unemployed, and almost half of these were long-term unemployed. Many of these young adults ultimately have to take menial jobs: one third of those who had not completed school and one fourth of those who had completed only *Hauptschule*.

Slightly more than 10% of the men and women born in 1964 and almost 20% of those born in 1971 do not have German citizenship. Of these, approximately three fourths

come from what are known as the "recruitment countries" (of them approximately one third from Turkey) and the Balkans. Of the Turkish foreign nationals, who make up the most important problem group, one fifth of those born in 1964 had not completed school at all, and nearly two thirds had only completed *Hauptschule*; among those born in 1971 it was over 10% and 70% respectively (see Figure 3). Less than 30% of Turkish members of the former cohort received occupational training, and approximately 40% of the latter cohort. On the one hand, we can see from this comparison of the two cohorts that the disadvantaging and adverse overall starting conditions are unlikely to continue affecting later cohorts to this same degree if the young people were born and went to school in Germany. On the other hand, however, this will undoubtedly mean that around half of these Turkish members of the cohorts observed here will spend the rest of their lives on the lower margins of society. It is obviously difficult to extrapolate from these figures precisely how large a marginal socioeconomic group may exist in our two birth years. However, we can say with some degree of certainty that between 5% and 15% of these individuals will find themselves in precarious living situations in the relatively long term.

Contrary to Expectations: Evidence of Stability in Change

The men and women born in West Germany in 1964 and 1971 crossed the thresholds crucial for the later course of their lives during two

decades profoundly affected by structural crisis and major problems on the educational and labor market, and by the effects of German reunification. In the assessment of many contemporary observers, these difficult conditions caused a structural break and a dramatic trend reversal, resulting in major upheavals in the relationship between schooling, occupational training, and the initial years of working life, and producing entirely new life-course patterns. The life prospects of these generations were also influenced by two demographic developments: the large birth cohort sizes of the early 1960s and the sharp decline thereafter (with the introduction of the birth control pill) as well as the major inflow of people born outside of Germany into these cohorts. Thus, in addition to assuming a "generational break," critical observers also expected to see dramatically increasing "generational inequality" in the sense of a significant decline in educational and occupational opportunities, and even long-term impoverishment and marginalization. Our findings do not confirm these grim prognoses. Rather, we find first of all overwhelming evidence of a relatively high level of continuity in the basic structures of transition between school and career, and relatively stable payoffs on individual investments in occupational training. Second, these two birth cohorts benefited from long-term improvements in educational participation, opportunities for occupational training and increasing levels of qualification in occupational structures. Third, women's school attendance, occupational training, and earnings

and career opportunities have continued to improve relative to men's despite adverse conditions in the overall environment.

Although the ultimate results of integration into the working world hardly differ between these cohorts and their predecessors, the detailed patterns of transition have changed dramatically and possibly permanently. Today, entering a stable occupational position adequate to one's level of qualification takes longer, and for a growing number of individuals, it means going through a second course of occupational training as well as intermittent phases of unemployment, work for which one is overqualified, or limited-term contracts. Even the "baby boom" of the 1964 cohort was by no means without negative consequences: The resulting increased competition for occupational training and jobs means more limited opportunities for at least some subgroups. There are, however, many indications that the extended phases of transition into adult life observed have more than just structural causes. Although lengthier educational phases and insecure career biographies do render decisions about permanent relationships and starting a family more difficult, they probably cannot entirely explain the observable overall lifetime patterns. Individual expectations regarding lifestyle and consumption standards and personal autonomy in planning one's life also play an important role.

Our findings also do not imply an absence of institutional problems or difficult personal situations, or in other words, of serious challenges

for social policy. The temporal “fraying” of occupational training into individual phases points to a decreasing efficacy of institutional coordination between the lengthened phase of general education and standard training, and a decreasing adequacy of occupational training and its subject matter to the demands of work. An increasing percentage of young men are being trained for occupations—such as industrial manufacturing—which already lack enough jobs for graduates and certainly offer no chances of lifelong employment. Moreover, an increasing percentage of young women are being trained in occupations with low chances of being hired after the apprenticeship has been concluded, for example, legal secretaries or doctors’ assistants. The still considerable power of occupational training—especially in its dual form (classroom instruction combined with on-the-job training)—to foster integration also has its drawbacks. It excludes, in some cases permanently, those who are unable to find an apprenticeship: in particular foreigners, emigrants of German descent primarily from the former Soviet Union, and others who attended *Hauptschule* (lower sec-

ondary school) and either did or did not complete it. Multiple educational degrees and further training create even more advantages for those who are already privileged by virtue of their relatively high levels of education. Furthermore, the increase in childlessness points to a lack of institutional support in providing childcare options for working women.

The findings presented remove any doubt that contemporary observers and social scientist gurus have dramatically and even grotesquely exaggerated the extent of the crisis and the trend changes on the educational and labor market for young people in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1980s and 1990s. Taking a more distanced view, a retrospective analysis of life-course developments and representative population data presents a picture of both continuity and change. At the same time, there is strong evidence that the stability observed is also an expression of institutional rigidity, which suggests both that essential adjustments still need to be made, and that they will be followed by more far-reaching changes in life-course patterns.

Returns to Skills: Vocational Training in Germany 1935–2000

The institutional setting of the German system of vocational training is supposed to offer young adults a smooth transition to the first job. However, many observers assume that the labor market outcome of vocationally trained youth deteriorated since the 1970s. In Pollmann-

Schult and Mayer (2004), we therefore investigate if, and to what extent, trajectories into the labor market have changed in the past decades. To this end, using worklife history data from the German Life History Study (GLHS), we focus on three major dimensions of transition outcomes for eight birth cohorts born between 1919 and 1971. We

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Pollmann-Schult, M., & Mayer, K. U. (2004). Returns to skills: Vocational training in Germany 1935–2000. *Yale Journal of Sociology*, 4, 73–98.

find that the educational background of vocationally trained people has become more heterogeneous in the past decades. The majority of youth entering vocational training after 1980 held an intermediate or upper secondary school-leaving certificate. Young people who completed upper secondary schooling increasingly take up a vocational training instead of going to college. Further, we observe a shift from apprenticeships in the low status craft sector to those in the commercial sector that comprises jobs of a higher status.

Our results regarding the transition outcomes contradict the widespread assumption of decreasing benefits from vocational training. It has been shown that the overall transition regime into the labor market of vocationally trained workers did not change substantially in terms of overeducation, occupational mismatch, and occupational prestige. However, there is empirical evidence for gender-specific trends after 1980. Labor market outcomes somewhat deteriorated for men and improved for women. Men who entered the labor market in the past two decades faced a significant higher risk of overeducation than previous cohorts, whereas women entering the labor market in the 1990s had better chances of securing a job that matches their qualification level. Moreover, since 1980 the risk of occupational mismatch dropped for female labor market entrants.

Although this is a truly remarkable story of the stability of institutional arrangements and their effects across a large span of time, we would be cautious in extrapolating this as a kind of ultra-stability into the future. In contrast, there are good reasons to assume that we deal here with a case of institutional and behavioral inertia and delayed adaptation. The expansion of secondary and higher education is still in a precarious disequilibrium with participation in vocational training, and the adding on of apprenticeships to longer periods of general education appears neither to be efficient in the usage of life time nor an optimal way of skill formation. In addition, the new cost-consciousness of firms has put some strains on their willingness to invest in training. The very recent reaction of the government to threaten with a levy for firms which do not train might well produce the opposite effect of what is intended. It might act as an incentive for firms to buy themselves out of training obligations. Moreover, the fact that the dual system of vocational training has practically broken down in East Germany due to the lack of training firms might trigger changes in the direction of less firm and more school-based provision of vocational skills. The jury on the viability of the German dual system of vocational training is still out.

Ethnic Differences in the Process of Recruiting Employees Holding a Vocational Degree in Germany

Social and economic integration of ethnic groups in Germany is after decades of neglect more and more to be found on the political agenda. How can integration into the German society be forced? One way obviously is to prepare foreign youth for the German labor market. Especially in school, foreign children are less successful, compared to German peers. As Figure 4 shows, one fifth of the foreign school leaver's population in 2002 do not hold a leaving certificate. Among Germans, only 8% leave school without a leaving certificate. About 60% of foreign school leavers do not reach upper intermediate level (*Realschule*). This comparatively bad performance in school has lasting consequences for the transition from school to training. With lower leaving certificates, it does not only take more time find an apprenticeship for all German and foreign school leavers, foreign school leavers are due to their lower average performance in

school also subject to statistical discrimination (see Seibert, in press). A further step to integration lies in the participation of foreign youth in the vocational training system because it provides good transition chances into the labor market. Thus, we ask whether a successfully completed apprenticeship could dispel, or at least weaken, the disadvantages of young foreigners vis-à-vis natives. Do young foreigners and Germans who have been trained reach the same labor market positions in respect to the quality level of their jobs as well as to the occupational match between job and training?

With occupational registry data from the *Employment Study* of the Federal Institute for Employment Research (IAB) in Nuremberg, we can show that young foreigners holding a vocational degree do indeed reach similar labor market positions as natives do—except for Turkish men (Seibert, in press; Konietzka & Seibert, 2003). They are less able to find appropriate jobs or enter the labor market in the occu-

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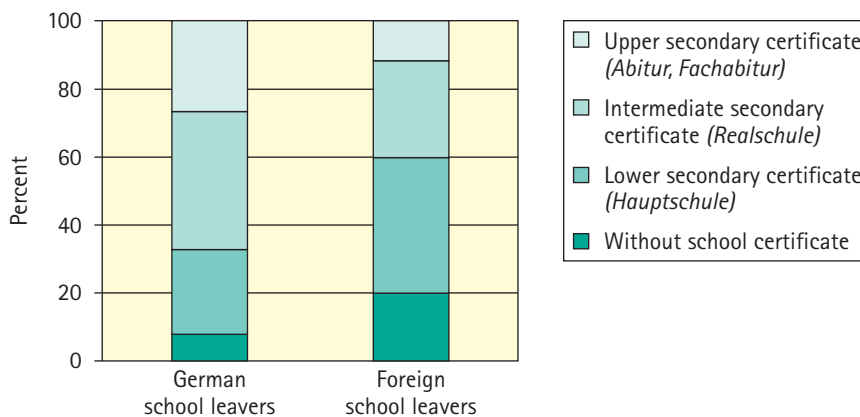


Figure 4. School leavers in 2002 by leaving certificate.

Source. Federal Statistical Office Germany.

pation trained for in comparison with Germans. These findings refer to ethnically differentiated recruitment patterns of the firms who hire graduates of apprenticeship programs. How can different recruitment patterns be shown empirically? Given that employers sort their applicants by qualification only there should be no advantages for any ethnic group. If ethnicity counts negatively—that is, if Turkish nationality is a negative selection criterion—the corresponding group should show weaker labor market outcomes, compared to other ethnic groups. This mechanism however can only be shown under weak labor-market conditions when the number of applicants significantly exceed, the number of vacancies. Given any sorting of applicants, the ethnic group(s) at the end of the queue will show a weaker labor market performance than all the other groups.

This hypothesis will be tested with the Employment Study again. In a logistic regression model, we ask whether foreigners and Germans reach skilled (vs. unskilled) positions when they enter the labor market after finishing their vocational training. We distinguish ethnic groups between Germans, Turks, the group of respondents from Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, or former Yugoslavia (the former recruitment countries), and the remaining countries. As a further independent variable we take the corresponding labor market condition into account. As an indicator for the labor market condition, we take the yearly unemployment rate of graduates of apprenticeship programs. Furthermore, we control for the size of the training firm, the occupation trained for, and if the occupation trained for was left at labor market entry. These three variables, however, will not be shown in

Table 1
Determinants of skilled position (vs. unskilled) at labor market entry
(only male blue-collar workers, logistic regression)

		Model 1 <i>Exp(B)</i>	Model 2 <i>Exp(B)</i>
Nationality	Germany (Reference)	1	1
	Turkey	0.44***	n.s.
	Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia	n.s.	n.s.
	Remaining countries	n.s.	n.s.
Labor market condition	Good (Reference)	1	1
	Weak	0.74***	0.75***
Interaction: Nationality × Labor market condition	Germany × weak (Reference)		1
	Turkey × weak		0.35**
	Italy, Greece etc. × weak		n.s.
	Remaining countries × weak		n.s.
Chi ²		3,694.13***	3,703.33***
Pseudo R ²		0.34	0.34
Degrees of freedom		11	14
<i>n</i>		19,353	19,353

Significance levels: *** < .001, ** < .01.

Source. Employment Study 1975–1995 (Federal Institute for Employment Research, Nuremberg).

the analyses as they are regarded as pure control variables.

Due to the data structure, only male blue-collar workers can be analyzed here. Table 1 shows the estimates of the logistic regression model. In Model 1, we only consider nationality and labor market conditions as independent variables. Here, only Turkish men show a significantly lower probability (0.44) of reaching a skilled position after finishing a vocational training. The labor market condition has a significant influence on finding skilled work too. Under weak conditions, the probability values are significantly lower (0.74), compared to times of good labor market conditions.

In Model 2, we introduce an interaction term between nationality and labor market condition. Thus, we analyze the different ethnic groups under good and weak labor market conditions. The results show that there are no significant nationality effects left, whereas the effects of

the labor market condition remain almost constant. The interaction effect shows, however, that Turks have a lower probability to find a skilled position only under weak labor market conditions. In good times, they do not differ from Germans in respect to their labor market positions. Overall, these analyses show the integrational capacity of the German apprenticeship system for foreigners: Labor market outcomes of foreign workers holding a vocational degree are very similar to German workers. On the other hand, the results also identify the limits: Integration through vocational training only works under good economic conditions. If vacancies run short, Turks seem to lose competition. Consequently, a successfully completed apprenticeship can only weaken, but not dispel disadvantages for Turks. The other ethnic groups seem to have overcome the obstacles after finishing a vocational training.

Education, Mismatch, and Mother's Employment— In Memory of Felix Büchel

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Büchel, F., & Mertens, A. (2004). Overeducation, undereducation, and the theory of career mobility. *Applied Economics*, 36, 803–816.

Educational Mismatch in the Labor Market

A major of Felix Büchel's research in the field of educational mismatch focused on the causes and consequences of overeducation. From an economic point of view, overeducation is considered as a waste of skills that has negative effects not only on the individual level but also is costly on the societal level. Overeducated workers earn substantially less than their similarly qualified peers who work in matched jobs. Furthermore, the underutilization of the qualifications gained in the educational system, which is largely publicly funded, can be seen as a waste of public resources. In a series of papers, Felix Büchel analyzed the decision making in the job-matching process in order to scrutinize the motivations of both employees and employers to accept and tolerate this form of apparently suboptimal job match. Büchel and Mertens (2004) test one of the most popular explanations for the existence of overeducation, namely, the career mobility theory. According to this theory, put forward by Sicherman and Galor (1990), a part of the returns to education is in the form of a higher probability to get promoted. Thus, it may be rational for employees to accept jobs for which they are overeducated in the early career phase if wage losses are compensated by better subsequent promotion prospects. Sicherman (1991) was able to confirm this theory for the US labor market, however, using methods which are vulnerable to criticism. Performing a retest for the German labor market by using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), Büchel and Mertens (2004) find that overeducated workers in Germany have markedly lower wage growth rates than matched workers. The plausibility of this result is supported by the finding that overeducated workers have less access to formal and informal on-the-job training. Büchel's and Mertens' findings cast serious doubt on whether the career mobility theory is able to explain overeducation in Germany.



Felix Büchel passed away on July 12, 2004, at the age of 47 after a long and debilitating illness at his home in Kleinmachnow. With his death, the German educational and labor market research lost one of its most profound and productive scholars. Felix Büchel received a degree in mathematics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and in Political Science at the Free University of Berlin. He obtained a doctoral degree in 1991 at the Technical University of Berlin in Economics on the topic of re-employment quality after continuous and so-called "perforated" long-term unemployment. In 1998, Felix Büchel achieved his Habilitation in Economics from the Technical University of Berlin, writing on overeducation in the labor market. Besides his position as a Senior Researcher at the Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development which he took up in 1998, Felix Büchel was an Honorary Professor at the Free University of Berlin, Institute of Sociology and an Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Economics at the Technical University of Berlin. Further, Felix Büchel held a Research Professorship at both the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) and the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW).

Further, Büchel (2002) analyzes the motivation of firms to employ workers whose formal qualifications exceed the job requirement level. Most of the previous research concluded that overeducated workers are less productive than their similarly qualified peers who work in appropriate jobs as a consequence of frustration. This finding raises the question of why firms hire overeducated workers. The results of Büchel (2002) reveal that overeducated workers are less productive only when compared with matched workers of the same skill level, but far more productive than their coworkers, who perform the same type of job but possess lower formal qualifications. Overeducated workers were found to be healthier, more strongly work- and career-minded, more likely to participate in on-the-job training, and had longer periods of tenure with the same firms than their less skilled coworkers. These findings are consistent with the established fact that overeducated workers receive wage premiums for their surplus schooling (Daly, Büchel, & Duncan 2000) and make the hiring of overeducated job seekers understandable.

Felix Büchel also dedicated extensive research to the effect of special restrictions on the risk of not finding a matched job. Access to suitable employment is often restricted by the fact that workers look for jobs in the regional labor market rather than the global one. In their paper, Büchel and van Ham (2003) analyze if regional labor market characteristics and the extent to which job searchers are restricted to the regional labor market explain the phenomenon of overeducation. The re-

sults of their analyses show that the size of the labor market is an important factor in avoiding overeducation: Looking for a job in a large labor market increases the probability of finding a suitable job. Access to a car for personal use and a longer commuting time reduce the risk of working in a job for which one is overeducated. Within this context, Felix Büchel also explored the question of whether the existing gender-specific differences in the magnitude of overeducation are caused by spatial constraints of married women. According to the theory of differential overeducation advanced by Frank (1978), the husband seeks the best possible job for himself in the broader labor market. In doing so, he also determines the local labor market in which both spouses will work. Once his decision has been made, the wife conducts her own individual search to find the best possible job for herself within that market. Since the number of job vacancies in the local market is much smaller than in the broader labor market, the wife may logically be expected to find only a poorer job match. In contradiction to findings for the USA, Büchel (2000) as well as Büchel and Battu (2003) shows that married women in Germany are more prone to over-education due to spatial restrictions than unmarried women and married or unmarried men. In a series of papers, Felix Büchel analyzed the individual dynamics of overeducation using worklife history data from the German Life History Study collected by the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin. The primary focus of interest was whether overeducation is a per-

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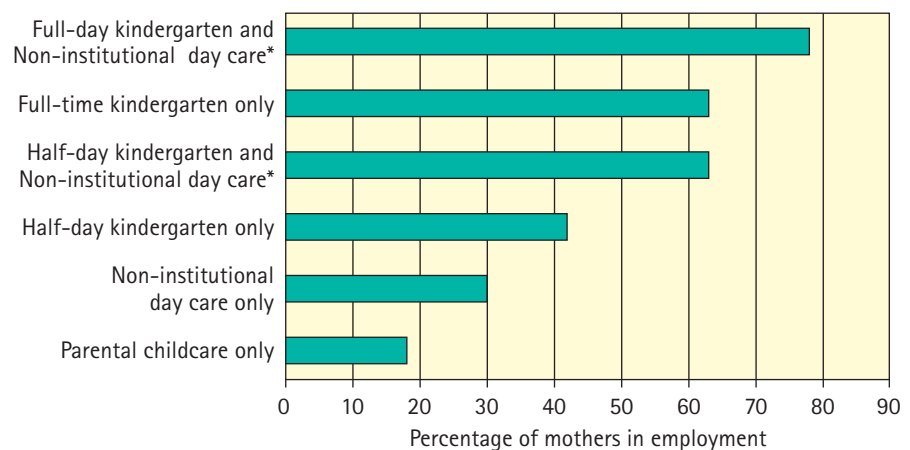
sistent or a temporary phenomenon for the affected workers. Pollmann-Schult and Büchel (2004) show that the chances of upward mobility to a higher skilled job and the risk of downward mobility to unemployment are to a great extent affected by the quality of the initial vocational training. Their results suggest that for workers who had completed initial vocational training of intermediate or high quality, overeducation is not a persistent labor market status. These workers have significantly better career prospects than their unskilled coworkers. In contrast, the career chances of overeducated workers with low-quality initial vocational training and unskilled workers are similar. Thus, for the former, overeducation proves to be a long-run phenomenon.

Female Labor Supply

In several papers and a report on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Felix Büchel analyzed the effects of the regional

position of day care on the employment behavior of mothers with preschool children. Büchel and Spieß (2002a) find a strong correlation between day-care arrangements of children and the labor market participation of their mothers (see Figure 5). Taking this finding as a starting point, Büchel and Spieß (2002b) analyze the effects of the regional provision of day care on the employment behavior of mothers with preschool children in Germany. According to this study, a better provision with day-care slots for pre-school children of three years and older on the district level increases the probability to work part time. A higher proportion of full-day day care among all day-care slots increases the probability of working part time as well as full time. From a policy perspective, these results are of great importance, as they show that a broader provision of full-day day care is needed to ease the possibility to combine work and the upbringing of children. These findings on the correlation between

Figure 5. Percentage of mothers in employment, by type of day-care arrangements of their children.



* Non-institutional day care = day care provided on a regular basis by family members, friends, or nannies.

institutional child care and mother's employment have substantially influenced the current political discussion on the compatibility of work and family. The positive effects of daycare provision have also been established in another context than in that of female labor supply. The study by Spieß, Büchel, and Wagner (2003) examines the relationship between Kindergarten attendance and children's school performance. The results indicate a significant effect of the Kindergarten attendance on the school performance of children in immigrant households, but not for children of German citizens. This result showed the importance of offering sufficient day-care facilities for immigrant children. Related to this line of research is the question to which extent the willingness to work is affected by the labor market situation and the local childcare provision. Van Ham and Büchel (2003) show that high regional unemployment discourages women from entering the labor market. Further, these findings indicate that women with young children are willing to work, but that those mothers who are discontented with the situation of the regional childcare provision are prone to refrain from job search. These findings indicate that high institutional and spatial barriers discourage mothers from entering employment.

Family Type and Poverty

Families of "atypical" constellations, such as families with three or more children or single parent families, face a disproportionate risk of being poor. As a major reason for this, Felix Büchel identified the restricted

access of mothers to the labor market caused by the higher requirements of mothers taking child-care responsibilities. Using data for East and West Germany for the 1990s, Büchel and Trappe (2001) find for West Germany that the income situation of large German families improved slightly over time and stayed stable for immigrant families. In contrast to these findings, the relative income position of large East German families deteriorated markedly over the years following unification. In both East and West German households, the mother's employment status has a strong impact on the household income position, while in large immigrant families, public transfers, such as child allowance, seem to play a more important role.

In a second study within the research field of family type and poverty, Büchel and Engelhardt (2003) focus on the income situation and labor market participation of single mothers. In West Germany, the relative income position of single mother households is much lower than for married parent families (see Figure 6).

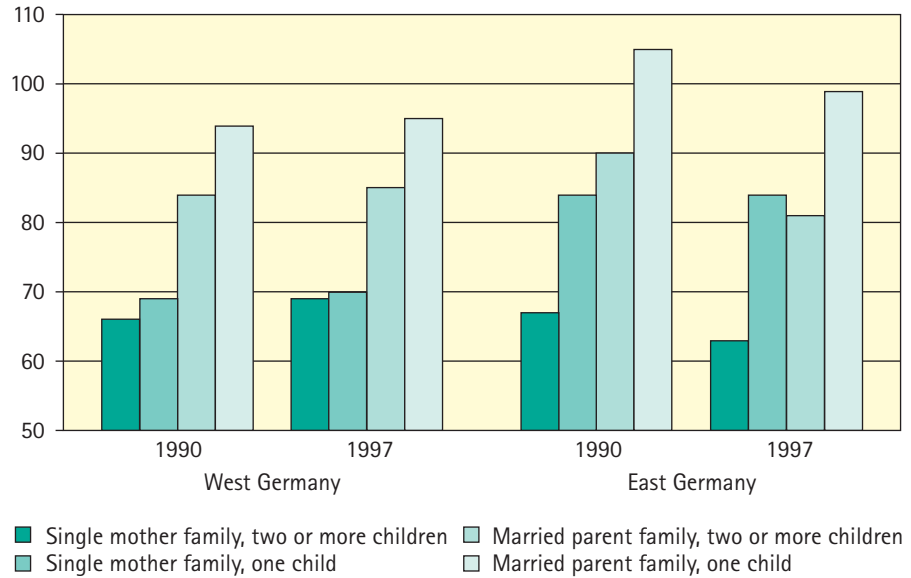
Between 1990 and 1997, there was little change in the income relation between single mothers and married parent family households. Similarly, in East Germany, single mother households are worse off than married parent families. East German single mother households with one child only, however, are much better off than comparable households in West Germany. On the other hand, the relative income position of East German single mother households with two or more children is the

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Figure 6. Median-related relative income position of households with dependent children, by household structure.



worst among all analysed socioeconomic groups: They are among the losers of the growing income distribution gap in East Germany after reunification.

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Economic Performance of Immigrants

Based on data from the UK and West Germany, Büchel and Frick (2004) analyze the economic performance of various ethnic groups in these two countries. Taking the indigenous population of each country as the reference category, this study finds that, as a whole, the non-indigenous population in the UK fares much better than the immigrant population in Germany. However, the range of economic performance across different ethnic groups in the UK is much larger than that in Germany. The German corporatist welfare system is characterized by much stronger redistribution effects than the liberal UK system. Consequently, the relatively low-perform-

ing immigrant population in Germany profits more from the redistribution system than immigrants with similar socioeconomic attributes in the UK.

Using a similar approach, the study by Büchel and Frick (in press) compares the economic performance of immigrants in Great Britain, West Germany, Denmark, Luxembourg, Ireland, Italy, Spain, and Austria to that of the respective indigenous population. Economic performance is measured in terms of the country-specific pre-government income position and change in the relative income position due to redistribution processes within the respective tax and social security systems. This work is based on the premise that countries may be categorized—similarly to the categorization concept of welfare regimes—according to the nature of their immigration policy. The basic premise of this study is that a successful and integrative immigration policy should result in a

nonsignificant differential between the economic performance of immigrants and that of the indigenous population. The results show, however, that this "ideal" is not attained in all of the analyzed countries, particularly in Germany and Denmark, where the economic performance of immigrants is much lower than that of the indigenous population. Substantial cross-country differences in the immigrant/native-born performance differential persist, even when controlling in detail for the social structure and level of integration of

immigrants. This suggests that not only do the conditions of entry to a country impact on immigrants' economic performance but also country-specific institutional aspects, such as restrictions on access to the labor market and parts of the social security system that are related to citizenship or immigrant status. The great extent of heterogeneity across EU member states should be taken into account when working toward the harmonization of national EU immigration policies.

Employment Relationships at Risk

A key concept in current debates on the changing nature of work is flexibility. Many European labor markets are highly regulated in comparison with, for example, the United States or Great Britain. In fact, one major difference between many West European and the Anglo-Saxon countries is high employment protection for those in work. The basic effect of employment protection is that firing is made very expensive, leading to employers refraining from hiring in times of low demand and uncertain expectations about the future business cycle. Those who follow the German debate on a possible reduction of employment protection know that it is a very difficult and emotional topic. It has been on the agenda in Germany since the 1980s. It was then that the Employment Promotion Act (1985) was passed. With that Act, policy makers tried to achieve two goals simultaneously. Without changing overall employment protection, the Act aimed to facilitate hiring by legalizing fixed-term contracts without a specific reason for a maximum period of 18 months (currently 24 months). While welcomed by some commentators, who saw fixed-term contracts as a means of reducing unemployment, others argued that fixed-term contracts would severely erode employment protection. For some, a fixed-term contract is seen as a very disadvantageous labor market situation for the individual, with low wages, bad conditions of employment, and poor prospects, a "trap." For others, a fixed-term contract is seen as a stepping stone to permanent employment, often facilitating the transition into employment from outside the labor market, a "bridge." The central aim of the project "Employment Relationships at Risk" is to investigate the implications of fixed-term contracts and other "nonstandard" employment relationships for the individuals concerned. The opposing perspectives "trap" or "bridge" frame many of our research questions.

So far we have examined a number of key issues in fixed-term employment. First, wages are seen as an important indicator of job quality and productivity. In the first part of the project, we examined the wage penalty associated with fixed-term contracts and how this develops over time (wage growth). Second, fixed-term contracts are often argued to play a key role in the transition from education to work. This is the focus of another part of the project. In a third part, we investigate in more depth whether the consequences of fixed-term contracts vary for men

and women. In the fourth part, we widen the focus to compare fixed-term contracts in a number of other European countries.

The project has a number of strengths. Firstly, we use high-quality longitudinal data for our analysis. This allows us to follow individuals over time and analyze subsequent labor market transitions and wage growth. This is crucial, given that temporary contracts are by nature of short duration. Secondly, this data allows us to apply a number of sophisticated models, such as fixed-effects models, quantile regression,

and propensity score matching to investigate our research questions. Thirdly, while the primary focus is on Germany, we also investigate fixed-term contracts and their consequences in other countries. To what extent do the consequences of fixed-term contracts depend on national institutional configurations? The German example is especially interesting as it is an intermediate case between countries with high employment protection and high rates of fixed-term jobs like Spain, France, Italy, and countries with low employment protection and low fixed-term employment like the UK or the USA. In the latter countries, employment protection is very low and fixed-term contracts consequently do not have the same significance as in high employment protection countries. We compare the characteristics and consequences of fixed-term employment across a number of different countries. Finally, the project is interdisciplinary in nature, combining insights and methods from both sociology and economics.

A Wage Penalty for Fixed-Term Contracts in Germany?

Taking wages as a key indicator of job quality, in this part of the project Antje Mertens and Frances McGinnity investigated wages and wage growth of fixed-term workers in Germany, comparing them to their permanent counterparts. If wages were indeed lower, the introduction and growth of fixed-term contracts could lead to rising wage inequality and polarization of the workforce into those with low-paid insecure jobs and those with secure and well-paid jobs. Is this the case?

In our first paper, we examined the wages of fixed-term employees in East and West Germany using German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) data from the late 1990s. Previous research using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression has found that fixed-term workers earn significantly less than their permanent counterparts. Compared to simple OLS estimates, using a fixed-effects model reduces wage differentials between permanent and fixed-term workers. This suggests that fixed-term workers differ in unobservable ways from permanent workers. Moreover, on average fixed-term employees are found to experience significantly higher wage growth than workers on permanent contracts, indicating that at least some of the fixed-term workers are able to "catch up" (McGinnity & Mertens, in press; Mertens & McGinnity, 2004).

Much recent discussion of fixed-term contracts tends to ignore the considerable variation in the quality of these jobs and wages associated with them (e.g., Booth et al., 2002). In a second paper, we developed the concept of a "two-tier" labor market for fixed-term contracts in Germany and tested this concept using quantile regression. In the standard OLS (or mean) approach regression, coefficients are assumed to be constant across the whole conditional wage distribution. Our two-tier theory suggests, however, that this need not be the case. Indeed, fixed-term workers at different ends of the wage distribution may not face the same risk of receiving lower wages than their permanent counterparts. Therefore, we estimate quantile re-

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Figure 7. Percentages of fixed-term workers found in the different quartiles of the wage distribution.

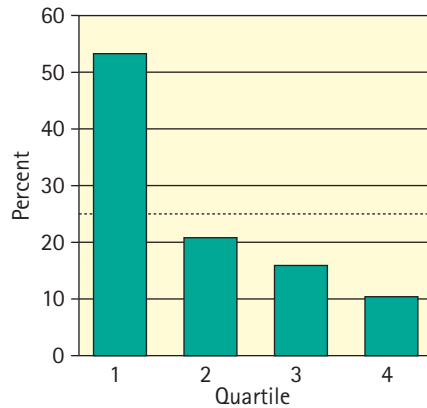
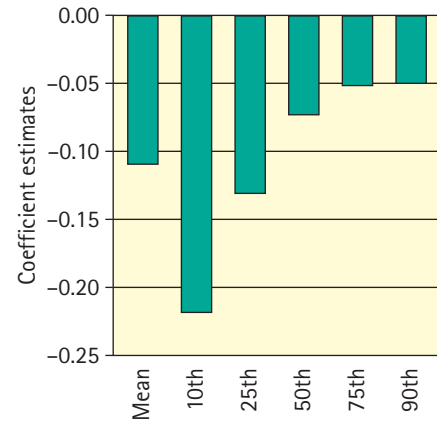


Figure 8. Wage differences between fixed-term and permanent workers with tenure of less than two years: comparing OLS results (mean) and quantiles.



Note. Quartile 1 refers to the lowest quartile and quartile 4 to the highest quartile of the wage level distribution. The dotted line at 25% represents the proportion of fixed-term workers we would expect in each quartile. Source. Own calculations based on pooled waves 1995–2000 of the GSOEP sample A.

Note. Coefficients on the dummy for fixed-term contract workers with tenure of less than two years in OLS (mean) and quantile wage regressions. Control group: workers with permanent contract and tenure of less than two years. Source. Own calculations based on pooled waves 1995–2000 of the GSOEP sample A.

gression models, as introduced by Koenker and Basset (1978), that fit quantiles to a linear function of covariates. Supplementing the usual estimation of conditional mean functions with conditional median and other conditional quantile functions allows us to look at the complete conditional wage distribution. In fact, "potentially different solutions to distinct quantiles may be interpreted as differences in the response of the dependent variable to changes in the regressors at various points in the conditional distribution of the dependent variable" (Buchinsky, 1998).

Once again using data from the GSOEP, we found that OLS regression misses important aspects of the wage structure of fixed-term workers (Mertens & McGinnity, in press). First, Figure 7 shows that fixed-term contracts are clustered in the lowest quartile of the wage distribution. Second, and most importantly we

were able to show that while those with high-wage fixed-term contracts earn only slightly less than permanent counterparts, those with low-wage temporary jobs earn much less (see Figure 8). The wage penalty for fixed-term contracts is clearly not the same for all workers, but those with low wages are doubly disadvantaged: They have a short-term employment contract and very low wages. But are these findings confined to Germany? We will continue working on this project from a comparative perspective.

A Bad Start? Temporary Contracts and the Transition From Education to Work

In this part of the project, we examine the role of temporary contracts in the transition from education to work. Fixed-term contracts are seen as particularly relevant in this transition (OECD, 1998), they are also concentrated among young people

in Germany. Some commentators argue that fixed-term contracts should have an integrative function in the transition from school to work, providing a "bridge" to the labor market. A contrasting perspective is that they hinder successful integration into the labor market by leading to a repeating cycle of temporary jobs and unemployment. We choose Germany, characterized by a regulated labor market and a "coordinated" education-to-work transition, to investigate this issue. We consider who gets a fixed-term contract at the beginning of work-

ing life in Germany and how this affects their subsequent labor market career using life history data. Our initial findings are summarized in McGinnity and Mertens (2004). One key finding is that fixed-term contracts are found among those for whom the school-to-work transition is not so coordinated, and includes *both* high-skilled and low-skilled labor market entrants. Looking at the majority of job starters in Germany, that is, those with vocational training in Figures 9 and 10, we see that unemployment and nonparticipation rates of those who

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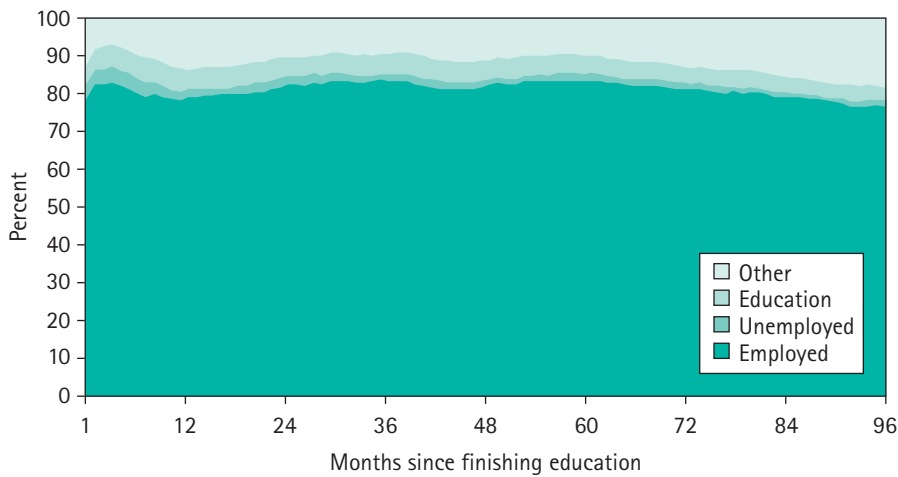


Figure 9. Time budgets for vocationally trained workers, first job permanent.

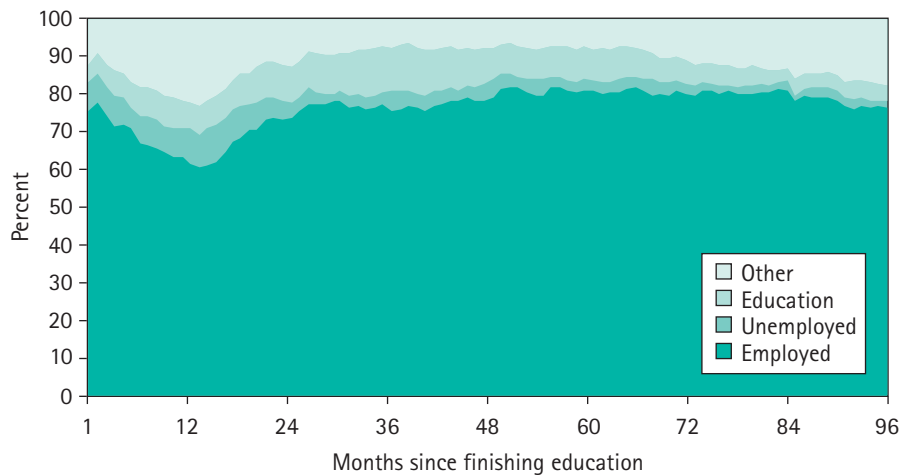


Figure 10. Time budgets for vocationally trained workers, first job fixed-term.

start in a permanent job and those who start in fixed-term employment converge after about two to three years.

Following this introductory work, McGinnity, Mertens, and Gundert have recently investigated subsequent employment chances in more depth using multinomial logistic regressions. One of our key findings here is that after several years formerly fixed-term job starters are no more likely to become unemployed than other labor market entrants. Beginning working life with a fixed-term contract does not clearly signal a "bad start" in Germany.

Fixed-Term Contracts Over the Life Course: A Gender Perspective

Stefanie Gundert's dissertation project is an empirical examination of the role of fixed-term contracts in different points in the life course of men and women in Germany. Focusing separately on labor market entrants, mothers, and older workers, her project will address the question of whether fixed-term contracts serve to integrate women into the labor market or whether they reinforce gender inequalities in occupational chances.

Early results for young labor market entrants suggest that women are not generally disadvantaged compared to men with regard to the risk of beginning working life with a fixed-term contract. On the contrary, whereas in previous studies no particular gender differences concerning temporary employment have been detected, there is evidence of a higher incidence of fixed-term contracts among *male* workers in their first jobs. However, a closer exami-

nation of the educational background reveals important differences between young workers who completed apprenticeships in the dual system of vocational training, and university graduates. An interesting story emerges:

Previous work has shown how workers with a vocational training in Germany are less likely to get a fixed-term contract (McGinnity & Mertens, 2004), but this turns out to be a gender-specific effect. Women benefit from doing an apprenticeship in two ways. First, female workers leaving the dual system are less likely to be hired on a fixed-term contract than men. Second, apprenticeships seem to function as general "safeguards" against temporary employment for women as the probability of getting a fixed-term contract is higher among unskilled women as well as female university graduates. By contrast, for men, vocational training *per se* does not protect against temporary contracts. Only male apprentices who are retained by their employer after their apprenticeship have a higher chance of being offered permanent employment: Men who change employer after their apprenticeship training do not have a lower risk of getting fixed-term jobs than those with no qualifications or a university degree. Further research needs to focus on the subsequent employment of this educational group in order to find out whether the concentration of fixed-term contracts among men has lasting negative consequences in early working life. This finding of gender differences in the protective function of apprentices is important as the majority of young workers in

Germany have been trained in the dual system.

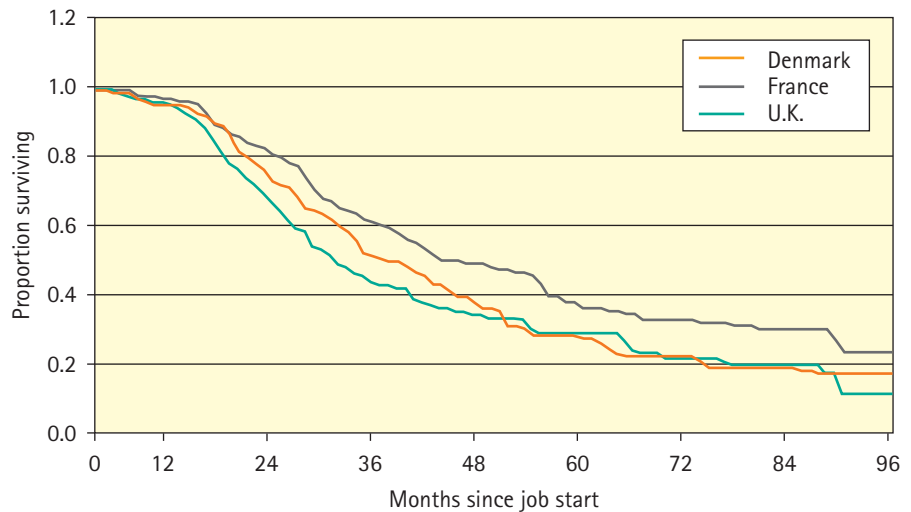
However, the picture looks different for university graduates. Among high-skilled labor market entrants women's risk of getting a fixed-term contract is higher than that of men. The gender difference is partly a result of the higher incidence of education-related fixed-term working periods among women, for example, among prospective doctors, teachers, or lawyers. Nevertheless, highly educated women who work in other occupational fields are also more likely to get a fixed-term contract than men. Overall, the results indicate an ambivalent situation for young women: Whereas for the majority (those with vocational training) the chances of finding permanent employment are good, for highly educated women getting a permanent job seems to be more difficult.

Comparative Perspective

As pointed out above, fixed-term contracts are not equally significant in different countries. Their significance primarily depends on the degree of employment protection and hence the relative flexibility of the labor markets in which they are found. Adopting an institutionalist framework, three countries with different forms of welfare and market flexibility are looked at in a comparative perspective: Denmark, France, and the UK. In her work "Bridge or trap?: To what extent do temporary workers make more transitions to unemployment than to the standard employment contract," Vanessa Gash presents a comparative analysis of the labor market transitions of

temporary workers. The primary expectation of the analysis is that temporary workers will make different labor market transitions as a result of the different institutional configurations in the different countries. Using seven waves of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) survey, spanning a period from 1995 to 2001, the transitions to and from flexibilized labor are investigated using event history analysis techniques. The research reveals that temporary contract workers make considerable transitions to permanent contract employment, suggesting that temporary employment is more likely to be a bridge than a trap. Moreover, the hypothesis of national divergence is supported, as can be seen in Figure 11 which presents the proportion of temporary contract workers who *do not* make transitions to permanent contract employment by country. In other work in her doctoral thesis, Vanessa Gash examined the quality of atypical employment, in an effort to determine whether support for the generation of temporary and part-time jobs is an effective policy for labor market renewal, or whether it leads to labor market segmentation. This issue is investigated through analyses of the quality of atypical employment, including working conditions, wages, exposure to unemployment and/or labor market drop out as well as the extent to which atypical employment leads to the standard employment contract, termed its "bridging function." The overall conclusion is that strong and consistent variation in the quality of atypical work (relative to standard contract employment) combined

Figure 11. Temporary workers' transitions to permanent employment, by country, using waves 2–8 of the European Community Household Panel (1995–2001).



with evidence of a weak bridging function is taken as an indicator of labor market marginalization for these workers.

In current work, we compare Germany with France and Spain, two countries which also introduced fixed-term contracts in the 1980s. Vanessa Gash and Frances McGinnity seek to challenge the notion that the consequences of fixed-term contracts are similar across European countries in their comparison of France and Germany. Using propensity score matching with panel models, employees are matched on the probability of getting a fixed-term contract. Fixed-term workers are then compared with permanent workers on a number of key outcomes—wages, wage instability, subsequent employment, and unemployment.

Finally, Antje Mertens, Frances McGinnity and Vanessa Gash compare the wage penalty for temporary work in Germany and in Spain. Like in Germany, temporary work was introduced in Spain in the mid-1980s, though since then rates of temporary employment have soared, and temporary employment there has been the source of much political and research attention. In general, the results of Spanish research have highlighted the negative consequences of temporary employment to a much greater extent than in Germany. In the first German-Spanish comparison of temporary employment, we compare the wage penalty associated with these contracts and link these results to policy and labor market differences.

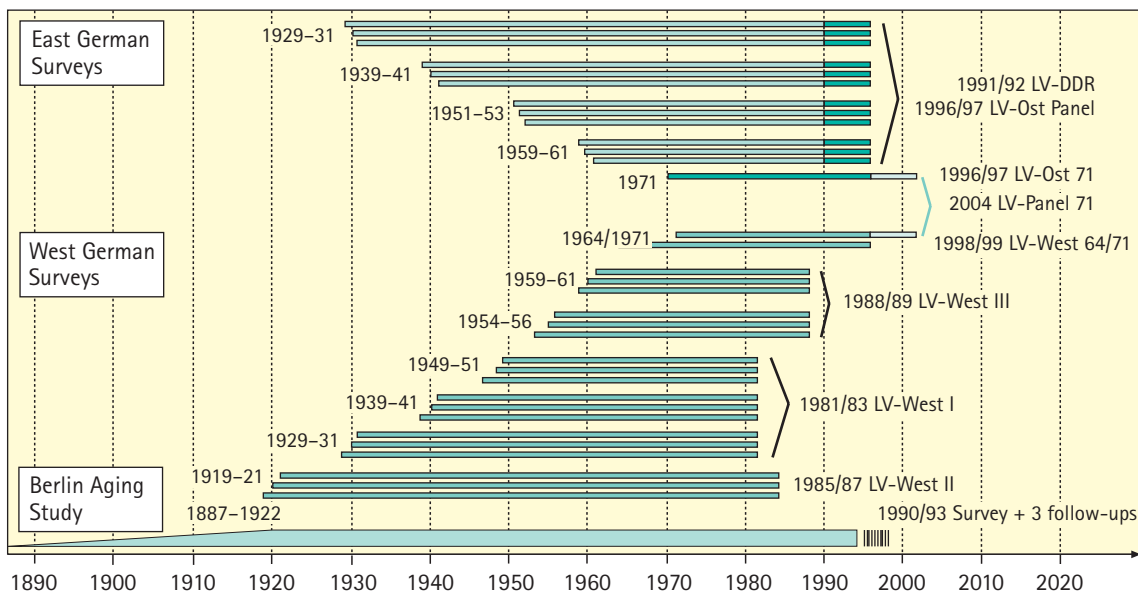
Reinterviewing With "TrueTales"—A New Survey Instrument

One of the important aims of collecting data of the East and West German birth cohort 1971 was to find out how the differences between the life courses of the young East and West Germans can be understood as consequences of earlier life conditions. The first interviews of the 1971 cohort took place in 1996 and 1998, when the East Germans were aged 25 and West Germans were aged 27, respectively. Thus, analyses of labor market entry were restricted to persons who served an apprenticeship. Analyzing labor market entry of academics does not make sense until age 30. In view of the difficulties of getting a job after completing an apprenticeship at the beginning of the East German transformation, this short observation window is similarly problematic. Also in West Germany, labor market entry lagged as a result of extending schooling, increasing waiting time before and between training and multiple training. Furthermore, analyses of family formation were limited to persons who married and had children very early. Since the East German process of family formation was not yet complete at the time of the first survey, it would be impossible to make a conclusive comparison of the East and West German marital and fertility data. We, therefore, decided to reinterview the East and West German respondents of the 1971 cohort in 2004 and 2005 (see Figure 12).

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Figure 12. The German Life History Study: Retrospective surveys and birth cohorts



Source. German Life History Study, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin.

The main focus of this retrospective life-course panel is to investigate how early careers were embedded in the contexts of regional mobility and family formation. Because of the problems faced in creating continuous and consistent event histories from discontinuous panel waves, we also included a methodological experiment in the project. Building on experiences in previous studies and findings about memory effects in the German History Study (GLHS), we designed and evaluated "TrueTales," a new computer-assisted interview instrument that enables us to connect retrospective life-course panel waves and to moderate memory problems. It maintains the principles of modularization, filter schemed CATI, and single case edition, but improves them by personalizing cues and probes wherever possible, by making parallel and sequential recall pathways between life domains accessible and by permitting controlled flexibility in dealing with individual biographies and recall strategies.

Connecting Retrospective Life-Course Panel Waves

"TrueTales" deals with the connecting problem by using personalized cues in order to interface the reference period with the past. A module starts with a general lead-in ("Let's now turn to employment ..."). After that, "TrueTales" draws on a database with the reports from the last interview and generates a personalized cue ("In our last interview, we recorded that in June 1998, you were employed as <civil servant, police officer, on patrol>. Until when did you do that [in the same posi-

tion and at the same place]?"). In the brackets, the answer to the open question of their professional activity at the time of the last interview is retrieved by the system and incorporated into a standard text. If a respondent has difficulties reconstructing the end date for the job, the interviewer can display—on their own initiative—the episodes reported in the previous modules, and flexibly on demand generate a personalized parallel or sequential probe ("I recorded here that you moved to Munich in 9/2000, did your job end before that? Or after? Or at the same time?"). This way, respondents can explore the interconnections of their biographical context in order to achieve the correct date.

If a respondent disagrees with the incorporated activity, we assume that respondents report actual episodes more valid than recalled episodes. We accept the activity reported at the last interview to be a fact and put the date finishing the activity to the date of the last interview. Then we ask simply "Did you have any other jobs?"

Consequent Modularization

Modularization means that the interview is divided into modules each assessing all episodes within a given life domain with their start and end dates and other detailed variables. Within each module, the interview starts with the first episode of its kind and then progresses in forward chronological order until the present. This procedure helps interviewers and respondents not to lose orientation in the complexity of the task. Consequent modularization is

necessary because we cannot assume that the life course is a continuous sequence of schooling, training, working, and other activities. Further training often takes place on the job, work during the day is coupled with moonlighting, respondents can work during maternity leave, etc. Therefore—in contrast to the former survey—we ask about training, further training, working, and moonlighting together in one module and survey maternity leave separately for every child when asked about the children. Another extension is that at the end of an episode loop we do not ask "What happened next?" but rather "Did you have any other ...?" If one simply progressed through a life asking questions like "And what happened next?", one would be inviting respondents to leave out peripheral episodes and inconsequential minor transitions. With that kind of procedure we prompt for episodes likely to be forgotten.

Data Check and Revision

Modularization has the disadvantage that recall is lifted out of its

biographical context. Only top-down recall pathways are made accessible. There is little possibility to use parallel across-domain pathways or sequential order of events. Another disadvantage is that gaps or inconsistencies between modules are not easily apparent to interviewers or respondents. Furthermore, retrospective reports rely on the respondents' selective and reconstructive autobiographical memory. This can lead to events being forgotten, incorrectly remembered, or misdated, which threatens data completeness, consistency, and validity.

In order to collect complete and consistent life history data in "True-Tales," we add to *data assessment*, where questions are asked and the responses are recorded, a procedure of *data visualization and revision*, where responses are checked for inconsistencies. These inconsistencies are communicated to, and resolved in, collaboration with the respondent. The data revision starts with the revision screen (see Figure 13) that has three functions:

(a) All reported episodes are displayed in a central episode list and

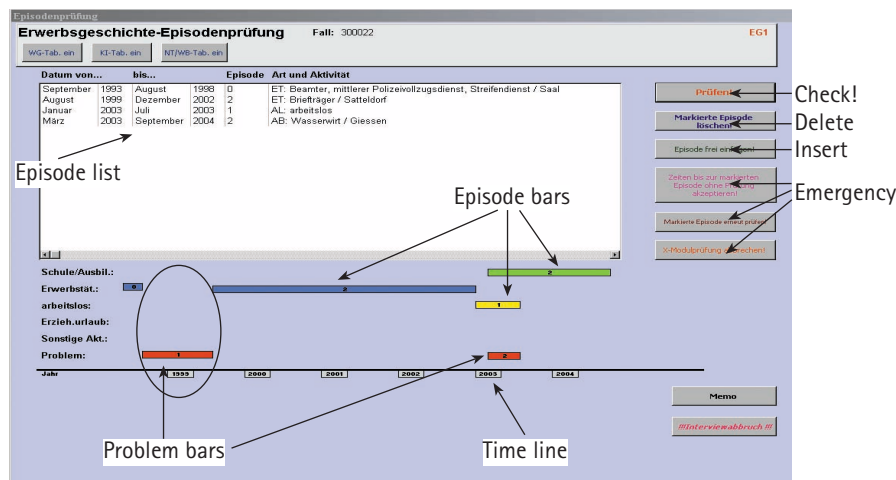


Figure 13. Start of the data revision section.

visualized in their temporal extension and biographical context as colored "episode bars" against a time line. Time periods for which no information is available yet about the respondent's state and overlaps between states or for which starting or ending time is missing are highlighted by red "problem bars."

(b) Interviewers can start a filtered revision routine by activating the "check!" button. A scripted text appears for the interviewer to read out to the respondent—in this case, a time period. It describes the inconsistency by drawing on respondents' free text answers to earlier questions about activity type, place of activity, and dates. For example, for a gap, it reads "As I have recorded here, there's a gap. I have recorded here that you were working as <police officer/Saal> until <August 1998> and from <August 1999> were working as <postman/Sattel-dorf>. There's a gap; did I record the dates correctly and did you do something else in-between?"

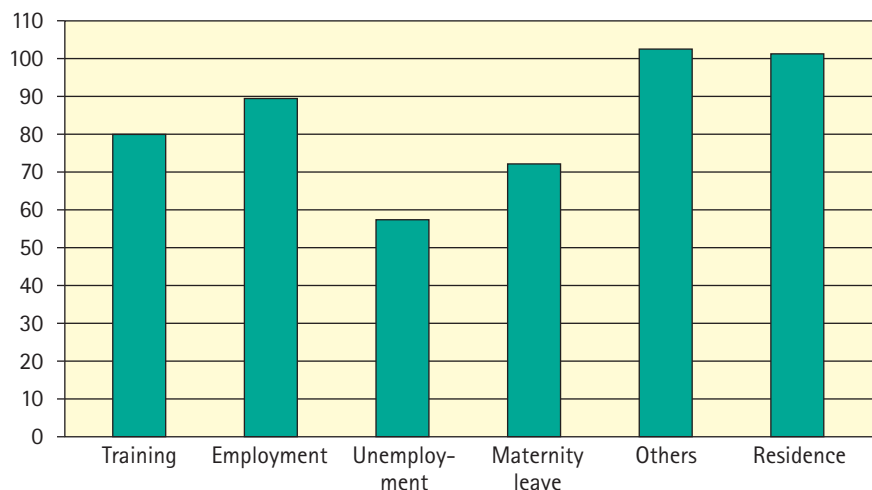
(c) Interviewers can ask about and resolve inconsistencies flexibly. A

number of buttons permit them to delete and insert episodes or change start and end dates by clicking them in the episode list.

In order to employ "TrueTales" opportunities for collaborative interviewing, interviewers need a thorough understanding of the study's concepts, goals and data philosophy, and the cognitive and communicative processes of response generation in standardized retrospective interviews. This necessitates a small staff with little turnover, intense and continuous training, and high levels of motivation. Hence, for the first time in the history of the GLHS, we have not contracted the fieldwork with an external research firm, but rather established our own telephone interview laboratory.

To evaluate "TrueTales," we conducted an experimental field study in which 300 respondents were interviewed with the new instrument and 300 with the standard technique. Figure 14 shows the relative proportion of episodes reported with the old in comparison to the new instrument. With the new instrument,

Figure 14. Proportion of episodes reported with the old in relation to the new instrument (100%).



more episodes were reported than with the old instrument. Forty percent more unemployment episodes and 25% more maternity leave episodes can be traced back to the fact, that we collected unemployment and maternity leave in the new instrument in separate modules. Twenty percent more training and 10% more employment episodes can be traced back to the modified question on the end of a loop ("Did you have any other ...?"). Also to add a data visualization and

revision is advantageous because interviewers clicked the "Check!"-button in the new instrument more than 400 times to modify reported starting or ending times and the "Delete"- or the "Insert"-button each nearly 40 times to delete or insert an episode. This indicates that the respondents could recall their biographies more accurately. Interviewers also reported higher levels of satisfaction and lower levels of effort for "TrueTales."

The Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course 2004



Left to right: (front row) Holger Seibert, Vanessa Gash, Laura Romeu, Stefanie Gundert; (middle row) Anke Höhne, Hachiro Iwai, Steffen Hillmert, Antje Mertens, Vered Kraus; (back row) Britta Matthes, Heike Trappe, Bogdan Mach, Karl Ulrich Mayer; not pictured: Alessandra Rusconi, Maike Reimer, Gero Lenhardt, Frances McGinnity, Erika M. Hoerning.

Transformation Processes in Poland and East Germany

Generation of Historic Hope and Everyday Risk: Social Trajectories of Eighteen-Year-Olds From the Year 1989 in East Germany and Poland

For sociology, it is life-course trajectory that gives meaning to even most dramatic individual status changes—it links and integrates different statuses across a time span. It stems from a continuous interplay of society and personality; of social constraints imposed by institutions, and free choices made by individuals. Radical social changes alter the mix of the two, and produce new trajectories. The best sociological way of interpreting all-encompassing, across-the-board changes is, therefore, to investigate the life-course trajectories that these changes bring about—and especially to investigate the role, that the resources, born out of the change, play in life-course transitions, taking place under new emerging systems. The most recent and most provocative examples of truly radical social changes are to be found in the post-1989 transformations of East and Central Europe—irrespective of whether it has taken ten years, ten months, ten weeks, or ten days for them to develop and alter everything in respective countries. The story line sketched above summarizes the basic reasoning behind our embarking on the comparative German-Polish project we have entitled “Generation of Historic Hope and Everyday Risk: Social Trajectories of Eighteen-Year-Olds from the Year 1989 in East Germany and Poland.”

(Comparative research project of the Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course and the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.)

Key Reference

Mach, B. W. (2003). *Generation of historic hope and everyday risk* [in Polish], Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.

German Uniqueness?

There has been a parallel, yet closely related, motivation for our project. Because of a direct transfer of West German institutions to what used to be the German Democratic Republic, the East German transformation toward market and democracy has generally been depicted as a unique sociopolitical phenomenon. But if radical social changes are best reflected in the development of individual life course, this general claim to uniqueness can not be convincingly substantiated without comparing life-courses trajectories observed in East Germany after 1989 with post-1989 trajectories unfolding in other countries, transforming their politics and economies under differ-

ent institutional conditions. Our comparative project focuses, thus, on post-1989 life course of young people in East Germany and Poland—two countries experiencing transformation under sharply contrasted institutional and macroeconomic conditions. The project elaborates on the discussion of East German uniqueness and interprets different institutional transformation pathways by reflecting on life-course outcomes brought about by them.

As East Germany is not only a single case in the analysis of transformation toward market and democracy, but also a part of the new Federal Republic, we include in our project West Germany (the old Federal

Republic) as well. In this way, we intend to capture the internal German East-West distinction. Without taking this distinction into account, any comparison of Germany to other countries cannot be conceptualized properly.

Litmus Test of Transformation

Historic transformations toward market and democracy in East and Central Europe have impinged on the life course of all age cohorts. But history-making events are most likely to affect persons in their late adolescence and early adulthood. The project has built on this conceptual framework and interprets the post-state-socialist transformation of East Germany and Poland from a special angle of the life course of people born in 1971—those boys and girls who were 18 years old in the year 1989 and began their transition to legal adulthood in tandem with historic changes started in that year in both countries. The main tenet of the project is that these individuals' life-course trajectories represent the most powerful lens for interpretative focusing on the East German and the Polish transformation as transformation processes "hit" the 1971 cohort while they were entering the most vulnerable formative phase of their lives—when people have to make important choices and decisions with long-term, sometimes irreversible, consequences. Facing everyday risks and uncertainties built into the transformation, they were at the same time a model generation with a historic hope for freedom, integrity, and prosperity—which the transformation was expected to bring.

Data Analyzed in the Project

The project uses three nationally representative retrospective life history data sets on persons born in 1971 in East Germany, West Germany, and Poland. The highly comparable data cover full education, job, and unemployment trajectories as well as life-course accounts of other domains of life and a wide range of cross-sectional objective and subjective indicators, relating to the date of interview. In East Germany 610 interviews were collected between May 1996 and January 1998—in West Germany 1,435 interviews between May 1998 and January 1999. In Poland 755 interviews were secured between November 2000 and January 2001. The response rates were 50% in East Germany, 66% in West Germany, and 64% in Poland. All data sets have been translated into spell-oriented files, easy to handle in empirical life-course analyses. As the national data were collected in different years, and cover people of different ages at the time of interview, most of the analyses done in the project do not reach, unfortunately, behind May of 1996—the time the first interviews were done in East Germany. Our respondents were around 25 years old at that time. In 2004, a panel study of the 1971 German cohorts was conducted by a group consisting of Britta Matthes, Maike Reimer, and Michaela Kreyenfeld. With new German data, it will be possible to extend our analyses up the end of the year 2000—the date of the Polish study. The respondents were almost 30 years old at that time.

"Poland ten years,
Hungary ten
months, East Ger-
many ten weeks,
Czechoslovakia ten
days"
*written on a wall in
Prague in the Fall
1989*

East Germany and Poland:

Basic Institutional Profiles

East Germany and Poland stand for two different paths of institutional development over a long period of time. This applies to the pre-state socialist legacies, the nature and functioning of state socialism implemented after the Second World War, the mode of abandoning state socialism in the late 1980s, and later processes of adopting capitalism and making it work. In Table 2 we refrain from presenting the West German profile as we think of it as depicting (at least till 1996) profound institutional continuity and stability fundamentally different to the transformations unfolding in East Germany and Poland.

Sample of Results

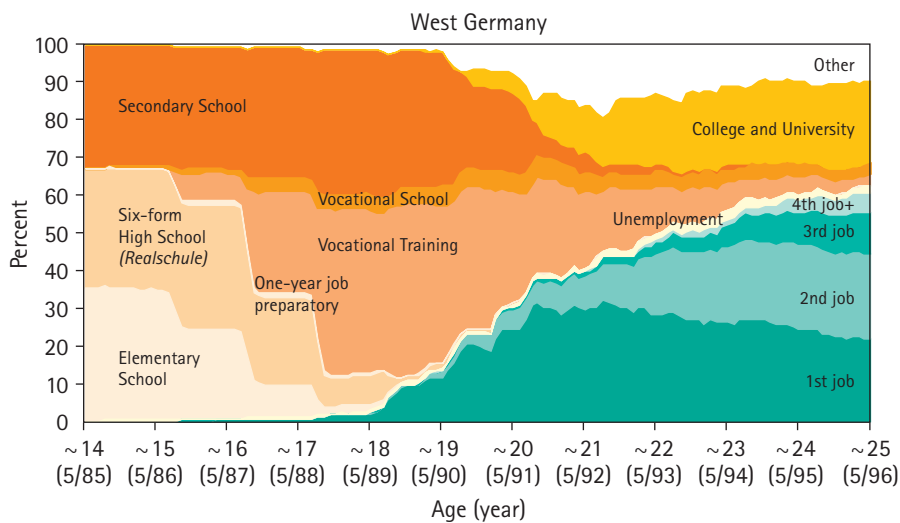
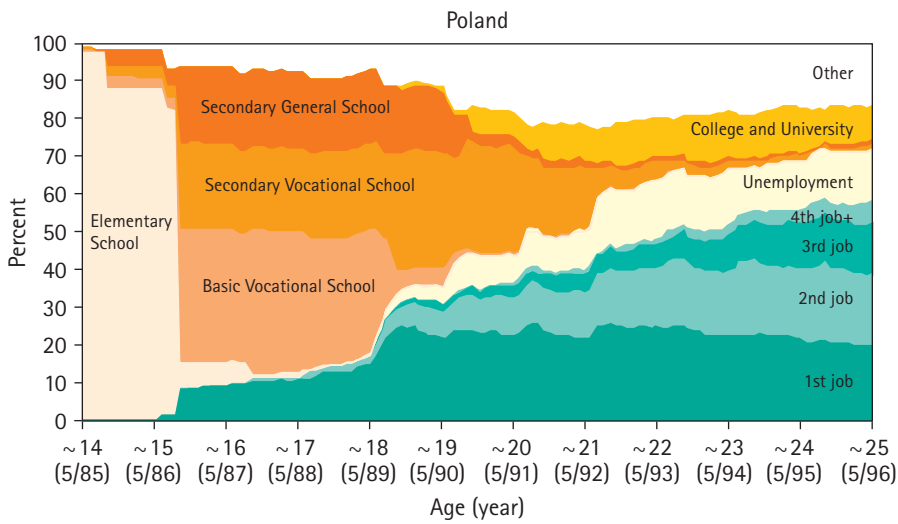
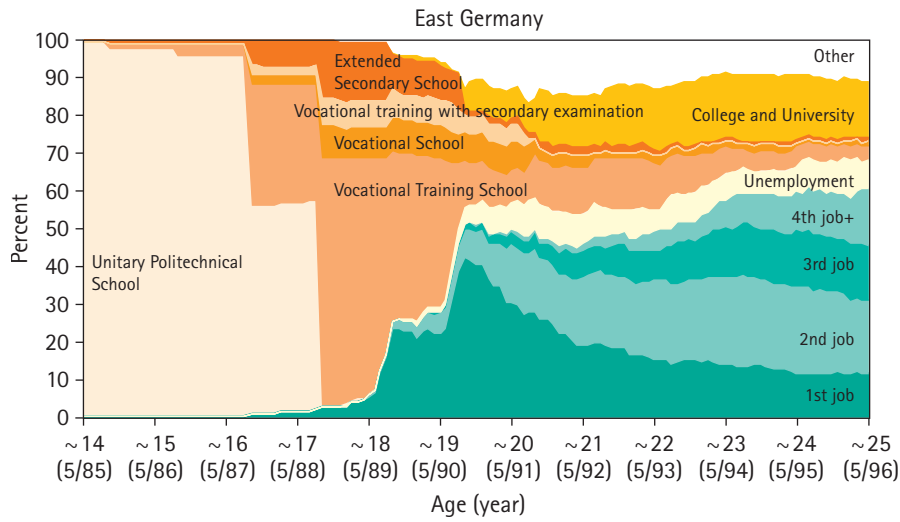
Figures 15–17 aggregate the development of individual life-course trajectories in East Germany, West Germany, and Poland over 11 years—from May 1985 till May 1996. There are tremendous differences in the way these trajectories have developed in the three different institutional contexts.

With respect to early education attained in the 1980s, a clear distinction can be seen between unitary systems of East Germany and Poland and a diversified system of West Germany. In contrast, post-secondary education, the 1971 cohort was attaining only after 1989, differentiates East and West Germany (with the West German lead) from Poland, where less college and university participation has been seen over all transformation years.

Table 2
Characteristics of the transformation paths in East Germany and Poland

	East Germany	Poland
Society of origin		
Political regime	"Frozen post-totalitarianism"	"Mature post-totalitarianism"
State control over economy	Strong, no market reforms	Inconsistent market reforms, strengthening the power of dominant industries
Labor market and school-to-work link	Firm-centered, elaborate system of vocational on-the-job training	Industry-centered, school-based vocational training
Society of destination	West German institutional order	Not predetermined, endogenously evolving
Rules and conditions of the transformation process	Externally imposed	Internally negotiated
	Implemented by West German political and economic elites under conditions of financial transfer from the West	Implemented by local political leaders under conditions of a shortage of locally existing elites, resources, and institutional practices
	Marked by a fast pace of economic restructuring and no need for macroeconomic stabilization	Marked by a slow pace of economic restructuring and macroeconomic stabilization by "shock therapy"

Figures 15–17. Distribution of education and employment in historical time.



Although in May 1996, at the time we close our observation window, employment rates were almost the same in East Germany (61%), West Germany (61%), and Poland (58%), the internal composition of the group of employed persons with respect to the stage they were in the development of their job career varied very much between East Germany and Poland. While only 12% of East Germans were still in their first job at that time, the respective percentage in Poland was nearly twice as high (21%)—and close to the West German level (22%). Percentage of those born in 1971 who were already in their at least fourth job in 1996 was 15% in East Germany, while it was only 5% in Poland (it was 5% in West Germany as well).

Not only the May 1996 snapshot illustrates that transformation-induced changes in job mobility and occupational structure were much more radical in East Germany than in Poland. Starting with the 1990s, the percentage of those still in the first job in East Germany was dramatically declining over first transformation years and moderately declining over subsequent years—it was 43% in September 1990, 19% in September 1992, and 12% in May 1996. In Poland, the respective percentages were 25%, 26%, and 21%. The percentages of those still in the first job were, thus, in Poland unusually stable over all transformation years—young Poles did not experience anything like an instant, forced, and dramatic job mobility induced in East Germany by a radical dismantling of the old state-socialist industrial structure. In this special

respect, Poland was rather like West Germany than East Germany. While the project does not find other similarities between Poland and West Germany, the differences found between East Germany and Poland are abundant and in most cases some similarities among both parts of Germany are visible. Unemployment became a distinctly painful experience of Polish youth under transformation and was, over the whole period studied, significantly higher in Poland than in East Germany (especially after 1991). Even if the East German level was much higher than the West German one (which was very low then), the East German-Polish difference is still remarkable—usually the Polish level is twice the East German one. Already in September 1990, the unemployment was 10% in Poland and 5% in East Germany. In September next year, there was a leveling of both rates (10% in Poland and 8% in Germany), but after the following year, respective rates were 16% and 7% and a similar distance between them could be observed since then. Needless to say, unemployment allowances in Poland were both in absolute and relative terms much lower than in East Germany. Extensive and prolonged stays within the educational system (especially at the college and university level) are characteristic of strategies young Germans (both East and West) use in coping with labor market risks. Both general availability of education at this level and highly institutionalized education-occupation links make a longer staying within the educational system a rational choice to many. When we

close our observation window in May 1996, 22% of West Germans, 16% of East Germans, and only 9% of Poles were attending a college or a university—and the range of respective differences was attained already in 1993 and maintained since then.

Some strategies of coping with labor market situation by young Poles are reflected in a systematically higher Polish proportion of "other" activities (the most upper parts of Figures) in the development of the life course. While in the case of women, most "other" activities are centered around taking care of children and the home, in the case of men, they also stand for a range of nonstandard possible illegal or "gray zone" work situations, occasional working trips abroad, and other sub-self-employment (or rather self-assistance) activities. Although our project has not been designed to deal in a systematic way with this type of "taking care of one's own life," some evidence pointing in the suggested direction can be found in Polish answers to open questions about successes and failures in personal and occupational life which were asked in the project of both Poles and East Germans and are available in our data sets.

We cannot be certain about the extent of "sub-self-employment"—we can, however, precisely document the extent of self-employment in Germany and Poland. Had we differentiated in figures like Figures 15–17 the group of employed, not according to the number of the job persons were in but according to whether they were or were not self-employed, we would have found

that the percentage of self-employed outside agriculture was consistently higher in Poland than in either part of Germany. In September 1992, it was 3.8% in Poland, 1.1% in East Germany, and 0.5% in West Germany. In May 1996, respective percentages were 7.2%, 1.8%, and 2.1%. Taking self-employed farmers into account would increase the percentages to a much greater extent in Poland than in either part of Germany. No doubt that in the 1971 cohort self-employment has been in Poland a more significant element of individual coping strategies than it is in Germany.

Internal Differentiation Within the Three Institutional Contexts

Patterned differences among East Germany, West Germany, and Poland do not imply that these three institutional contexts are homogenous with respect to life-course trajectories they produce. Below we present one extreme example from Poland. Our observation window reaches this time to November 2000—the date the first Polish interviews were done.

Gender and place of residence are the two most important factors differentiating life-course trajectories of young Poles. The two Figures (18–19) present a cumulative distribution of "the state individuals were in" for every month between November 1989 and November 2000, there being five possible states: "work," "work and schooling," "schooling," "unemployment," and "other." Figure 18 presents a distribution for men living in large cities, Figure 19 for women living in rural areas. There is a huge gap between

these two segments of the 1971 cohort in terms of the volume of work and education available to them throughout the transformation years. If we focus on the moment of the study (November 2000) we conclude that only 2% of men in large cities were unemployed, while 92% of them had work (some combining work with schooling). Women in rural areas live, however, in a very different world: Throughout the transformation period, their employment rate has rarely surpassed 50%, it has been very atypical for them to combine work and schooling, and

their unemployment rate has rarely fallen below 20% since the early 1990s. In November 2000, only 54% of them were working, 17% were unemployed, and 28% were out of the labor force.

Reaching the Limits of the Data Sets
In the project we try to study the role which new individual resources—brought about or altered in their meaning by the transformation—might have on structuring life-course transitions. The long list of such resources include being self-employed, experience of unemploy-

Figure 18. Social trajectories of men living in large cities, November 1989–November 2000.

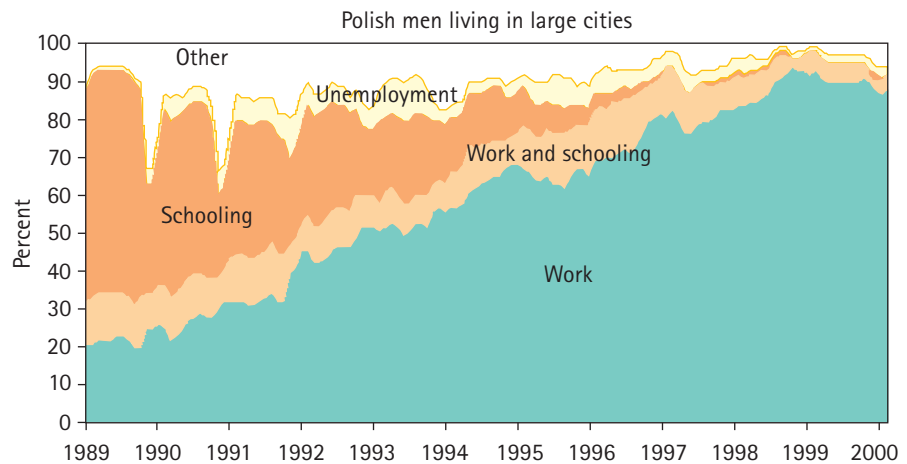
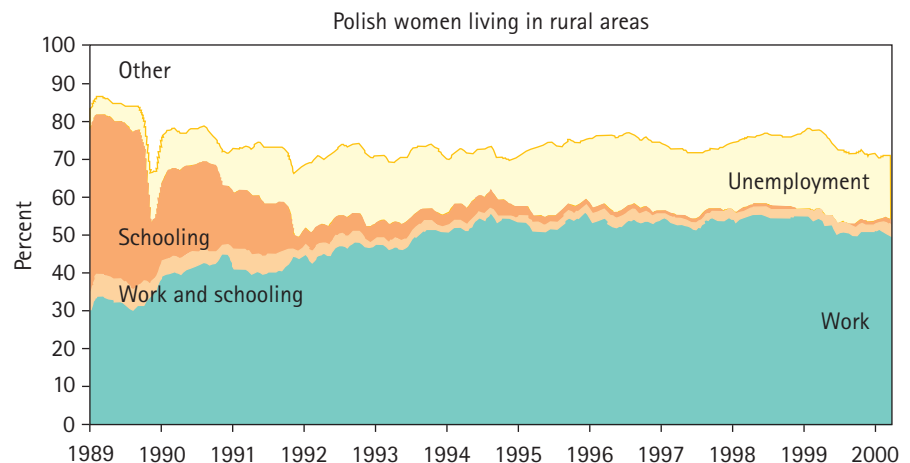


Figure 19. Social trajectories of women living in rural areas, November 1989–November 2000.



ment, working in state versus private sector, having a fixed-term work contract, being over- or under-qualified, working for a foreign firm, and having achievement-related personality traits. One interesting question is if personality facilitates making transitions and achieving goals. Some would argue that under conditions of structural rupture, personality is what counts most. As psychological measures in our project refer to the interview time only, we are unable to be sure about causal effects personality might have. In Poland, we have found, for example, that occupation-centered control beliefs are significantly related to job income, even if one controls for gender, education, prestige of the job, and hours worked. But is it control beliefs which affect income or is it the other way round? Can the finding of no such an effect in either part of Germany be interpreted as an evidence of no causal link between personality and income in Germany? Panel studies of German cohorts undertaken in 2004 will enable answering some of such questions.

Gender Stratification After Reunification in East and West Germany

The German reunification provides the unique opportunity to study the consequences of accelerated social change for gender stratification in both parts of the country. Following reunification, large institutional transfers from the West to the East and substantial financial support occurred and resulted in a comparably rapid and thorough transformation

Toward Basic Conclusion

There are fundamental differences between life-course trajectories of young Poles and East Germans. East German trajectories display more job changes, less unemployment, and more prolonged stays in the educational system. Polish trajectories are characterized by significantly higher levels of self-employment, unemployment, and out-of-the-labor-force activities. The differences found clearly attest to the more radical character of East German occupational restructuring, to the more institutionally regulated East German school-to-work transition, and to the more individualistically oriented coping and adjustment strategies on the part of young Poles. Life courses of young East Germans and Poles reflect two clearly distinct transformation paths, conditioned by differing national institutional contexts and material resources. In most comparisons, East-West German differences in the development of the life are less visible than differences between East Germany and Poland.

of society in East Germany. Basically, this transformation process has left no life domain untouched and has had deep consequences for social stratification in general and gender stratification in particular. The quasi-experimental situation in Germany allows for a detailed investigation of how differences and similarities across institutional contexts and economic conditions shape gender stratification and inequality.

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Aggregate developments across major dimensions of work (labor market attachment, working hours, gender wage gap, employment sector and occupational sex segregation, gender division of unpaid work) suggest that over the course of the 1990s the two parts of the country partially converged toward a dual-earner/female part-time carer arrangement, in which men are employed full-time and their partners hold part-time jobs and retain the majority of caregiving responsibilities. This resulted from a gradual strengthening of women's labor market attachment in the West and, in the East, some voluntary reduction in women's labor supply, compounded by severe demand-side constraints that hit women especially hard (Rosenfeld, Trappe, & Gornick, 2004).

However, this macrolevel account of social change is very general and abstains from continuing differences in the gender division of labor in East and West Germany. Such a cross-sectional approach is unable to reveal the mechanisms that contribute to economic gender inequality. Therefore, a closer look at a birth cohort which came of age when the Wall came down proves to be insightful.

Economic Gender Inequality Between Women and Men Born in 1971

Young women in both parts of Germany have partially surpassed young men in their level of vocational training and higher education, but they continued to achieve different types of occupational credentials. Furthermore, women, and to a larger extent even men, received their training and entered employment in

highly gender-typed occupational fields. However, only women's employment opportunities were differentially affected by the gender type of their occupational preparation. East German women benefited from training for female-typical occupations because of lower unemployment risks and more favorable employment prospects in these fields. In contrast, West German women capitalized on training in integrated or male-dominated occupations for their subsequent employment prospects.

Over the course of their early work histories (largely before family formation), West German women accumulated the same level of employment experience, even in full-time work, as men, whereas women in East Germany acquired considerably less employment experience than men. This was largely due to East German women's higher and longer unemployment (Figure 20). Fifty-six percent of young women and 51% of men were unemployed at least once between 1990 and 1996 in East Germany, but women's unemployment lasted on average twice as long than men's! The barriers for women to reenter employment were noticeably higher than for men even if structural characteristics of prior employment and personal characteristics were taken into account. Obviously, under conditions of an ongoing economic crisis and contraction, gender was a salient selection criterion for employers. So it does not come to a great surprise that more young women than men from East Germany opted for commuting or moving to the West to seek employment.

In both parts of Germany, young full-time employed women earned less than men, with a greater discrepancy in the West than in the East owing to the greater earnings compression in the East. The gender wage gap was partially due to occupational sex segregation because occupations dominated by women were least well paid.

Overall, in both parts of Germany young women were disadvantaged in the labor market, compared to

men. However, economic gender inequality takes on different expressions in East and West Germany and is clearly shaped by economic conditions. In the West, women's disadvantage showed mainly with respect to their employment rewards, whereas in the East gender inequality was more pronounced and blatant, and employment opportunities, particularly for women, were highly constrained by the unfavorable labor-market situation (Trappe, 2004).

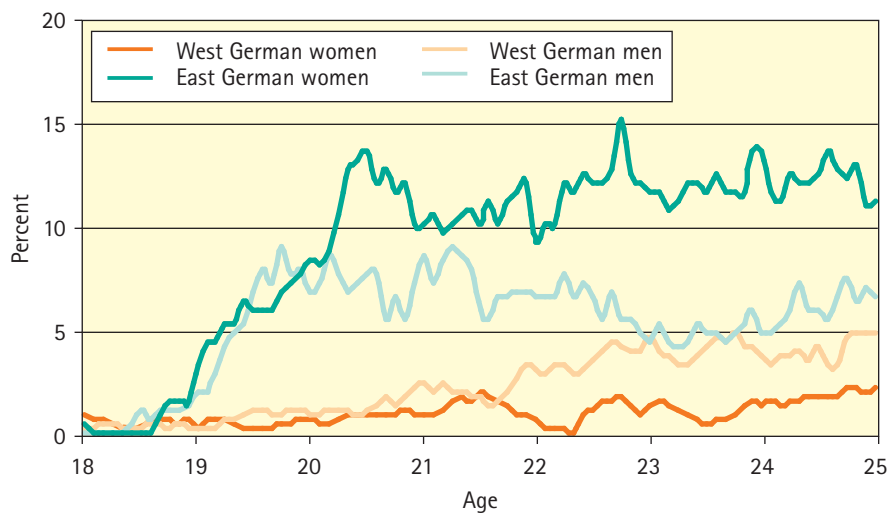


Figure 20. Unemployment over the early life course in East and West Germany—birth cohort 1971.

Further Projects

Gero Lenhardt

Higher Education in Germany and the United States

Key Reference

Lenhardt, G. (in press). *Hochschulen in Deutschland und den USA*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus.

The comparative study of higher education in Germany and the USA is completed. It focuses on normative concepts of the individual and the social order, which are manifest in the institutional structure of higher education in both countries. Starting point is the educational reform debate in Germany, in which the American universities are claimed to be the model. The reformers attribute three characteristics to American higher education.

First: More Restrictive Admission

German reformers claim that admission to higher education is more restrictive in the USA, whereas in more liberal Germany a deplorable number of untalented students would stifle the progress of their more talented comrades. Therefore, they demand a more restrictive selection of students. Yet, as the national student ratios indicate, access to higher education in the USA is less restrictive than in Germany. The selectivity of the German educational system is unparalleled in the Western world, as PISA demonstrates.

Second: More Inequality

The American system of higher education, German reformers claim, is more unequal and therefore more productive than its German counterpart. A closer look reveals the following. American higher education includes almost all tertiary education, and its institutions agree on one educational goal: They want to support the development of inde-

pendent citizens, whose personal autonomy includes technical competencies. Their principle homogeneity is manifest in the wide passages from community colleges to PhD programs of research universities. Moreover, the categorization of higher education institutions finds less attention and is less strict than in Germany. German higher education categories are legally institutionalized, and are a matter of serious social conflicts over the demarcation of social estates. German tertiary education differentiates not only between institutions with and without (or limited) academic freedom but also between theoretical and other programs. The apprenticeship system, where the majority of the young people are enrolled, provides above all in-plant training. It can be demanding, yet often it offers only the chance of blind imitation or the experience of unskilled labor for a low compensation. In short, German tertiary education seems more unequal than its American counterpart. Whether the German universities are more equal or unequal than American research universities is an open question.

Third: Market Mechanism and Productivity

German educational reformers maintain that American higher education institutions are more productive because of their market-like structure. Comparative studies do not exist, not even serious definitions of productivity. Yet, there are far more

than 1,000 studies on "How College Affects Students," which shed light on the functioning of higher education. As Pascarella and Terenzini show in their careful summary of 20 years of research, competition between colleges produces only distributional effects. The average college-specific achievement scores of the graduates differ, but the only variable which explains these differences is the college-specific average qualification of their freshmen. Colleges with higher prestige attract better prepared students, but do not have a higher net impact on their education. In college everyday life, this effect is known as "Matthew Effect": "Wer hat, dem wird gegeben."

Americans believe in the potential of the individuals to improve their education and in their moral obligation to do so. This conviction is rooted in Protestantism and stands at the center of the American Dream. It includes the liberal concept of the open society, whose development is determined by the citizens. This perspective results in a general enthusiasm for education which is unparalleled in Germany. German higher education reformers share neither this anthropological optimism nor do they subscribe to the liberal concept of the open society. They rather believe in inborn talents and objective manpower requirements, which both are perceived as insurmountable obstacles to higher education expansion.

This orientation has consequences also for reforms of educational management structures. In Germany, educational management is expected to more precisely allocate given in-

born talents in predetermined quotas to the various categories of higher education according to assumed objective manpower needs. The market-like structure of American higher education management, by contrast, is expected to support the development of an individual and collective definition and understanding of higher education. This is the major function of the separation of higher educational institutions and the state, of the close communication between higher education institutions and the civil society, and of the selection of higher education institutions by students and vice versa. Originally, religious orientations were at stake, today secularized cultural orientations.

Thus, the imagery of American higher education institutions, which is dominating in the German political debate, is distorted. It is a projection of German educational idiosyncrasies, which are alien to American culture. The German belief that nature equips the individuals by birth with unequal talents, educational possibilities, and life chances, looks like a secularized version of the feudal absolutist conviction that God had equipped them by birth with unequal dignity and rank in the order of social estates. As the analysis shows, German higher education emancipates itself from these pre-democratic normative orientations. With democracy becoming more effective in both countries, higher education in Germany and the USA increasingly take on a similar content and form.

Professions as Frames in Times of Biographical Upheaval: Bourgeois and Non-Bourgeois Intelligentsia in the GDR and After 1990

The socialist intelligentsia, or the educated class, appeared with the foundation of the GDR in 1949 and was dissolved along with the state in 1990. The original intention was for the ranks of the intelligentsia to be open to social groups hitherto unconcerned with education (workers and peasantry). But since the children of this first generation of graduates demanded the same level of education as their parents, GDR society shifted increasingly toward stratum-specific differentiation and a reproduction of societal structures. Hoerning looks at case studies of the "socialist intelligentsia" that examined the role of the profession in biographical (re)orientation. The professional and life histories (narratives) of 31 women and men born between 1929 and 1938 (the generation that rebuilt Germany after the Second World War) and between 1950 and 1960 (the children of the "heros") were recorded on repeated occasions, allowing us to describe the social character of the educated class (the new socialist intelligentsia) and the professional cultures of the former GDR as well as the life courses of both bourgeois and non-bourgeois members of the intelligentsia. It was then possible to

observe the reorientation process retrospectively by examining the transition to "new" social, cultural, and political structures, and obtaining information about how retrospective assessments change over the course of time and life. The study shows that success (or failure) in coping with the transformation process is not only a function of the individual biographical capital but is highly dependent on the historical development of the institutions (professions) to which individuals belong. The institutional and biographical transfer to/integration into the "new" Federal Republic is being explored in case studies on a number of professional groups: medical, law, media, and science professionals, university professors, managers in industry and science, and the clergy. A special chapter will be devoted to the professional careers of women in the nomenklatura-cadre/administrative class. In 2003/2004, the case studies of journalists/journalism in the Western states and in the GDR were worked out. These case studies will be discussed within the framework of current theoretical debates on professions in a book in progress: "Intelligenz, Experten, Professionen."

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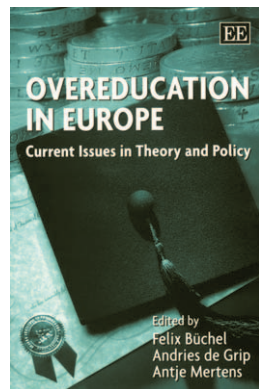
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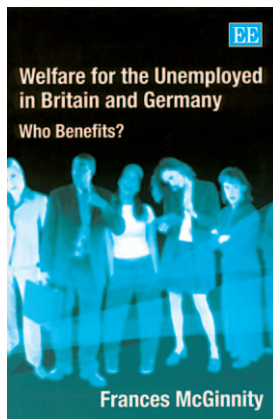
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