

COMPARING DESIRED FERTILITY AND PERCEPTIONS OF MOTHERHOOD IN GERMANY AND FRANCE

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ABSTRACT: *There are marked differences between France and Germany in terms of fertility levels, which may be traced back to differences in family policy frameworks and to a diversity of normative expectations as to the role of women and mothers. The influence on desired fertility in both countries exerted by these structural and cultural differences is examined using data from the German and French Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS) of 2005, with western and eastern Germany analysed separately. The results show that attitudinal differences between western Germany and France are less pronounced than those between western and eastern Germany. When it comes to childless persons, cultural factors exert a significant influence on desired fertility. Affirmation of the traditional housewife role has a positive effect on desired fertility in both countries, while there are indications that a negative attitude towards working mothers has a negative effect in western Germany. Structural factors such as labour force participation of both partners also exert a negative influence on desired fertility among western German mothers, but only when their children are young.*

1 INTRODUCTION

France has had a higher birthrate than Germany for decades, and whilst the total fertility rate of France has fluctuated between 1.9 and 2.0 children per woman since 2000, the corresponding figure for Germany is 1.3–1.4 (Eurostat 2010).

One decisive factor explaining this is said to be the higher preponderance of working mothers in France (see for instance Köppen 2006; Bertram et al. 2005; Onnen-Isemann 2007). Conditions enabling reconciliation of work and family life are indeed much more favourable in France than in Germany, especially western Germany. Family policy in Germany has worked towards improving reconciliation in recent years, holding up France (among other countries) as a particular role model. Nevertheless, there have been repeated objections that

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structural opportunities in France are more favourable, and that the normative expectations there as to the role played by women, and by mothers in particular, are not comparable with those found in Germany (Fagnani 2002). Accordingly, it is not only the structural framework which makes it easier for French mothers with small children to work, but also the normative one, as working mothers are more readily accepted in French society. In short, they do not encounter a conflict between the goals of ‘work or family’ at a normative level like most German women do (see Section 2.3).

The differences between Germany and France may therefore be described in two ways: in the structural context and in the societal climate. A large number of studies have described the influence exerted by the structural framework (see for instance Becker 2000; Fagnani 2002; Reuter 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Schultheis 1998). By contrast, the influence exerted by attitudes and values typifying the overall societal climate is still relatively under-researched; one exception being the qualitative study of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR) in Rostock and the *Institut national d'études démographiques* (INED) in France (e.g. Salles et al. 2010).

This paper will therefore discuss the effects of different attitudes towards working mothers on the decision to enter into parenthood, taking into account opportunities to reconcile work and family life in the two countries (see also Ruckdeschel 2009). As such, we first compare the welfare state and family policy contexts in both countries, and then explore the differences in the cultural models, thus deriving the hypotheses for this paper. Since there are still considerable differences between the territories of former West and East Germany, particularly with regard to the questions under consideration, the two regions will be dealt with separately. After an overview of the data and the sample, the results of differences in attitude and different labour force participation models of both partners will be described. These will then be examined in a multivariate model to demonstrate influence on desired fertility.

2 COMPARING THE STRUCTURAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

2.1 Welfare State Contexts

Opting for a first child (and also for another child) can be understood as the result of a decision-making process.² This is influenced by individual preferences and psychosocial dispositions on the one hand, and external contexts on the other. Being the focus of this paper, these contexts include

² There is also the possibility of unplanned births, which is not considered here.

cultural, economic and socio-structural opportunities and restrictions, and also the welfare state with its specific family policies.

According to the classical welfare state typology, which distinguishes between liberal, social democratic and conservative–corporatist regime types, both France and Germany can be attributed to the conservative–corporatist regime type (Esping-Andersen 1990; see below also Reuter 2002). Three criteria are central to Esping-Andersen’s classification: the degree of decommodification, i.e. the degree to which the welfare state reduces the commodification of work by means of social rights, the structuring of social inequality determined by the welfare state, and the relationship between market, state and family in the production of social services. Compared with the liberal and the social democratic regime types, the welfare state intervenes at a medium level in France and Germany. In the conservative–corporatist regime type social security is largely obtained via gainful employment, and is hence dependent on the market as well as on status. Nevertheless, the family plays a major role in providing social security, given that subsidiarity applies as a matter of principle. The perception of the family in welfare states of this type has a traditional orientation and the model of the male breadwinner is supported. The inclusion of France within this group is disputed, however, because of its support for working mothers, which stands in opposition to the ideal of the classical conservative welfare state. In gender studies, Esping-Andersen’s typology was often criticised because it disregarded the relationship between the gender and the family, and an expansion of the model was called for.

In response, Esping-Andersen included the degree of defamilialisation which describes the dependence of individuals on the family (Esping-Andersen 1999). In the end though, he upheld the considerable affinity between France and Germany, even after expanding his model. Several attempts have been made to systematically include the gender dimension³, but even so it remains difficult to assign France to any category. Veil speaks of the “French exception” (2002, 86), and Ostner (1995, 10) classifies France as a moderate breadwinner model, i.e. a kind of mixed model, using three indicators, namely the number of working mothers, the extent of independent or derived female social security, and the degree and nature of public childcare. By contrast, Germany is clearly ranked by Ostner, in analogy to Esping-Andersen, into the strong breadwinner model, which prompts women to accept family-related interruptions in employment and derives social security for women via their partners (Ostner 1995, 10). Hence, women in Germany are regarded as mothers in terms of the welfare state, whereas women in France are regarded both as mothers and as working members of the family. In neither country are women

³ For an additional overview see also Salles et al. 2010.

treated as individuals with safeguards to their own livelihoods, however, as they are in the social democratic regime type (Ostner 1995, 10).

It should be mentioned that the welfare state shapes the lives of people in other respects too. In this context the role of labour market regulations should be looked at. In France there are minimum wages (SMIC) – in contrast to Germany where women, especially mothers who are re-entering the labour market, often work part time and in so-called ‘mini-jobs’. Mini-jobs are part of the low-wage economy and provide no independent social security, which can make it difficult for women to enter the mainstream labour market. This often prevents mothers from re-entering the labour market at all, and if they have no choice they often get stuck in the low-wage sector. “The mini-job sector promoted by government... is proving to be a ‘trap’ for women in terms of their career development” (Expert Commission... 2011, 7). There are other aspects such as gender quotas in public domains and supervisory boards, which show that gender equality is seen as cross-sectional task in French policy. In Germany gender equality is more closely related to family policy and of minor importance in labour market policy or in social policy, and still largely based on traditional role models (Luci 2011).

2.2 Family Policy

What applies to the welfare state can equally be applied to family policy. French family policy is orientated in line with the ideal of the dual-earner family (Veil 2003; Reuter 2002, 2003b). Therefore, one of the most important measures to prevent family poverty in France is supporting dual-earner families where both partners work full time, whereas German family policy mainly provides cash support in this respect. This is also reflected in other measures, which shall be mentioned briefly.

We concentrate on four classical instruments of family policy: child benefits, parental leave benefits, financial support for childcare and fiscal advantages. In France families receive child benefit independent of income (*allocations familiales*) if they have at least two dependent children. By contrast, in Germany child allowance (*Kindergeld*) is higher and starts with the first child. Parental leave in France is also dependent on the parity of the child⁴ as well as on previous employment activity; again, payment is independent of income (*complément du libre choix d'activité*). In Germany, on the other hand, parental leave is the same length for each child, i.e. three years maximum. As for cash benefits, they were paid for 24 months (*Erziehungsgeld*) until 2006, but this changed in 2007. Leave is currently paid for 12 months, with a

⁴ For the first child it is six months, for the second three years.

substitution of 67 per cent of the net income before birth⁵, with an additional two months granted if the other partner takes them (*Elterngeld*). The rest of the three years of parental leave is not paid. It is now considered an instrument to encourage the involvement of fathers in the raising of their children, which does not exist in France (Luci 2011). In both countries families get a certain amount of financial support for childcare when both parents work.⁶ A fourth instrument is fiscal advantages. In France, tax advantages are calculated based on the number of children (*quotient familial*). This means that a mother's additional wage does not affect the tax benefit for the main earner too much, and is therefore unlikely to discourage women from being employed again. A different situation exists in Germany, where the tax system clearly favours single-earner constellations – with couples without children having the greatest advantages (*Ehegattensplitting*); the result is that women are reluctant to re-enter the labour market as this does not necessarily improve the financial situation of the family. In summarising the different measures, we can conclude that financial benefits are not as generous in France as in Germany. There are different tax incentives to re-enter the labour market and we find different career prospects for returning women, which leads to an earlier and more frequent return of French women to the labour market, especially after the birth of the first child.

Another factor that facilitates return to the labour market for French women is external childcare infrastructure. The corresponding bundle of measures covers a relatively large range of care services for children of all age groups, including a comprehensive range of all-day schools. At the same time, however, the possibility to care for small children on one's own also exists, with financial support from the state and a job guarantee up to three years after birth. This opens up the option for the mother to leave work to take care of small children and the possibility to continue in employment with small children, as the woman always contributes to the family income to some degree (Letablier 2007). Only *mothers* are mentioned here, as the primary caregiving responsibility of women for children remains as undisputed in France as in Germany (see for instance Salles 2009; Letablier 2007; Fagnani 2006). In the end, these arrangements in social policy do not lead to equality of men and women but, to put it polemically, constitute “a kind of contract between the state and mothers, taking the weight off fathers' shoulders” (BMFSFJ 2006; author's own translation).

⁵ The range varies from a minimum of €300 for women who were not employed to a maximum of €1800.

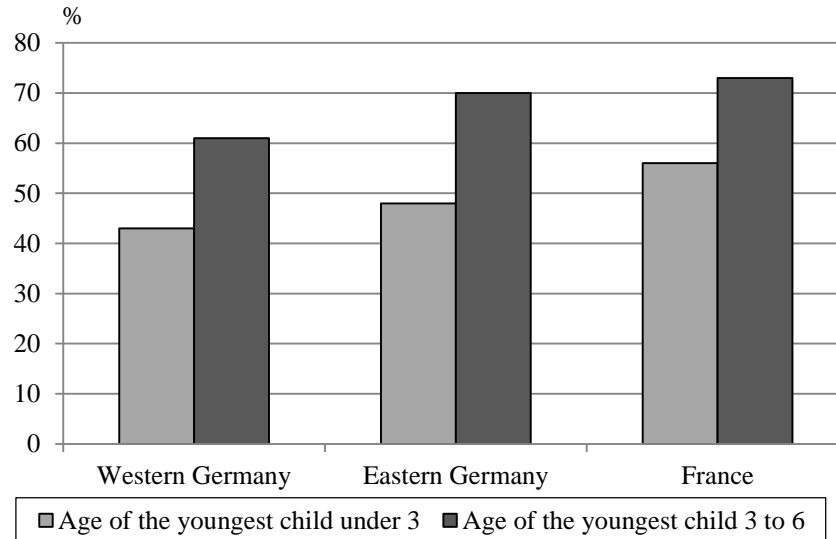
⁶ There are special regulations for non-active single parents and couples with one earner, which we will not describe in detail here.

As already indicated, the ideal pursued until recently in western Germany was that of the male breadwinner, with a non-working wife and mother who stays at home to bring up the children while they are small. Accordingly, this model was primarily promoted by the above-mentioned job guarantee of three years and an equally long period of parental leave, partly with financial support. In addition, very limited possibilities for care of children under three years of age and the restriction of many nursery school places to half-day provision made it difficult to offer alternatives in most cases. The family policy impetus has changed in recent years and mothers' career breaks are going to be shortened in Germany as well. This is to be achieved by increasing parental benefits while limiting them to the first year of the child's life, and by expansion of care facilities for small children (see above). Since reunification, the same family policy regulations have applied in the former GDR in formal terms as in western Germany. However, the model of working mothers was promoted by the state in the GDR even more strongly than in France, in the sense that there was no option to choose between various models of reconciliation. As an inheritance from this era, childcare infrastructure in eastern Germany is better than in western Germany (see for instance Kreyenfeld and Geisler 2006). To sum up, France and Germany differ in terms of the family policy's basic perceptions of motherhood, which favours working mothers in France and non-working mothers in Germany, childcare being a matter for the state in France, while it is a private matter in Germany (Letablier and Jönsson 2005). This active role of the state in France is not only accepted but actually supported by French people, who evaluate family policy less by the amount of financial support and more by the possibilities available to reconcile work and family life (Fagnani 2001).

The differences are revealed clearly in the number of mothers in employment. While the female employment rate of 66 per cent in Germany in 2010 was higher than in France at 60 per cent (Eurostat 2011; age 15–64), we find quite different numbers if we look only at mothers. Especially in comparison to western Germany, French women work much more frequently when they have young children (see Fig. I). As parental leave is sometimes counted as employment, it also makes sense to compare the share of actively working mothers.⁷ According to OECD figures (2007), 47 per cent of all

⁷ Definition of "in active gainful employment": "Those on temporary leave in the week under report are included among those in gainful employment according to the concept of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), but not among those 'active' in gainful employment observed here. Those on temporary leave include all persons in gainful employment who did not work in the week under report (including because of maternity leave, parental leave, illness, spa, (special) leave, old-age part-time work, work release, strike, poor weather or short-time working) and were away from their workplaces for less than three months, for instance because of maternity protection" (Statistisches Bundesamt 2010).

mothers in France with at least one child under the age of three were actively working in 2006, but this figure was only 32 per cent in Germany. Another difference is that German mothers, especially those in western Germany, mostly work part time. In 2009 nearly 75 per cent of all economically active mothers in western Germany with at least one child under the age of three worked part time, whereas in eastern Germany this figure was 49 per cent (Rübenach and Keller 2011, 321). Comparable figures for France are hard to find, mainly because international data do not distinguish between eastern and western Germany. So we have to come back to Germany as a whole to compare Germany and France. While 45 per cent of all German women aged 25–54 with one child were working part time in 2000, this number was as low as 24 per cent for French women. For mothers of two or more children the numbers were 60 per cent for Germany and 32 per cent for France (OECD 2002). At the same time, however, working mothers in France do not reach the same levels as is found in Scandinavian countries, which once more makes clear the special situation of France, with a high share of dual-earner couples and at the same time a relatively large share of traditional housewife/male-breadwinner relationships (Reuter 2003a; Hornung 2008, 37). Finally, these data reveal once again the major differences within Germany, i.e. that mothers' employment rates in eastern Germany are much higher than those in western Germany. This divergent situation is accordingly mirrored in the take-up of formal and informal childcare. Whilst in 2006 roughly one-half of all children under the age of two in France were exclusively cared for by their parents, this figure was 62 per cent in Germany (Plantenga and Remery 2009), and major East-West differences are observed here as well: whereas approximately 60 per cent of all children under the age of three were taken care of by their parents in western Germany in 2005, this was only approximately 30 per cent in eastern Germany (Ette and Ruckdeschel 2007, 64).



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2008); OECD (2007); author's own presentation.

Note: Definition of working mothers: dependent or independent employment within the week under report, regardless of extent.

Figure I

Share of working mothers, by age of the youngest child in eastern and western Germany and France, 2007

2.3 Cultural Models

The different models upon which family policies are based are also reflected in societal attitudes regarding motherhood and gainful employment. The problem of reconciliation exists in France at the practical⁸ but not at the normative level, as there is simply no debate in France as to whether or not a mother should work (Hornung 2008, 43). The roles of mother and worker are at least equally strongly emphasised in France (Hornung 2008, 46); indeed, research suggests that many women allot a higher status to their professional role than to their being a mother (Fagnani 1992). Gainful employment and family are therefore not regarded as mutually exclusive, something which Schultheis regarded as being caused by the fact that gainful employment is not “highly stylised and idealised to become a predominant norm in the hierarchy

⁸ There are still too few *crèche* places, and these are unevenly spread in regional and social terms (see for instance Salles 2009; Blanpain 2009; Fagnani 2006).

of values, but is lived out in peaceful – albeit seemingly paradoxical – co-existence with the allegedly irreconcilable but nonetheless much-appreciated values of motherhood and a family career” (1998, 215, author’s own translation). In addition, it is widely believed in France that society has a collective responsibility for children, and that one goal of the childcare system is to provide equal chances for all children to develop and thrive – something that cannot be achieved by the parents alone.

A different situation is seen in western Germany, where childcare is seen mainly as the mother’s task (Letablier and Jönsson 2005, 49), and external childcare is even perceived as being possibly damaging to the development of the child (Fagnani 2001). German parents tend to be sceptical about external childcare. Therefore motherhood and gainful employment were long considered to be incompatible. Mantl (2006) speaks of the “housewife mother” who foregoes gainful employment of her own for the benefit of her child, since the mother used to be (and often still is) regarded as inalienable in terms of the well-being of the child. Working women are therefore frequently put under moral pressure because of alleged negative consequences of their gainful employment for family and children (Schäffgen and Spellerberg 1998, 75). Herwartz-Emden (1995, 33) speaks of the mother being required to forfeit a life of her own, above all during the first years of the child’s life, something that is morally excessive. Dienel (2003) also finds a strong model of sacrifice of one’s own interests among German mothers. The consequence is that women who are highly career-oriented should be concerned not about living up to society’s – and frequently also their own – expectations with regard to traditional perceptions of motherhood. The birth of the first child is therefore frequently understood as a final biographical decision against a career and full professional commitment (Dienel 2003, 122). Indeed, the “transition to the maternal role is one that poses an alternative to a career, a 180 degree turn away from the way in which life has previously been lived” (Krüger 2006, 205, author’s own translation). Childlessness is therefore regarded as a way out of this dilemma (Onnen-Isemann 2003; 2007, 168): there is (and has long been) only one decision, namely child or career (Mantl 2006).

The situation is different in eastern Germany, where in the former GDR there was also only one option, but here it was ‘child *and* career’, which was in line with the official model of the dual-earner marriage provided with state childcare, and was implemented in practice with virtually no alternative (Pfau-Effinger 2005, 5). Hence, this ‘reconciliation model’ took on absolute cultural dominance, and alternative models were culturally marginalised (Pfau-Effinger 2005, 5). Added to this was a positive practical experience of the model, which ultimately led to widespread appreciation of this reconciliation strategy among the populace, and to a broad acceptance of working mothers (Pfau-Effinger and Geissler 2002), something which is still reflected in the attitudes of eastern

Germans today. Despite the narrowing gap in the family policy context, the differences in the models of combining motherhood and gainful employment in both parts of the country largely remain (Kreyenfeld and Geissler 2006). For this reason, it still appears to be appropriate to analyse the two parts of the country separately 20 years after reunification.

The focus of the statements to date has been on women and mothers and their problems with reconciliation of family and work, which indeed constitutes a largely 'female' field of problems, and is accordingly also a focus of research. Nonetheless, the reconciliation models and portrayals of women always imply a certain perception of men and fathers. It is undisputed in the typology of welfare states that in conservative welfare states, i.e. ultimately both Germany and France, men take on the role of the breadwinner. Regardless of the employment status of the woman, it is presumed that the man works. One may observe a change of attitude on the part of fathers towards more gender-balanced roles and the desire to take a more active role as a father, and this is also expressed in their greater involvement in childcare. However, the traditional role models prove to be relatively stable in practice in all other areas, such as housework (see Hofäcker 2006, 134). Rost and Oberndorfer (2002, 14) refer to this phenomenon – in the case of Germany – as a “verbal openness coupled with a widespread inflexibility of behaviour”, a finding which Hofäcker (2006) extends to Europe as a whole. Here, the change has not been completely implemented at attitudinal level either; Hofäcker (2006) quotes studies from the late 1990s according to which one-fifth of German fathers had never considered taking parental leave (Vaskovics and Rost 1999, 64), and almost two-thirds of French men thought that the woman should take maternity leave as a matter of principle (Fagnani 1999, 74).

The finding of a gradual change in the traditional perception of men at attitudinal level – but of widespread 'resistance' at the level of action – applies initially to both parts of Germany and also to France. The difference, however, lies in the breadwinning responsibility that, with a female partner who also works, no longer places the burden on the man alone, whilst with the model of the non-working 'wife and mother', the man's gainful employment is decisive for the long-term security of the family (Tölke 2005, 115). A working partner can therefore be perceived as relieving the burden, something which favours realising desired fertility, but may also amplify insecurity as to the perceived role of the father, possibly because of a lack of suitable role models within society (Tölke 2005, 101). In this respect, the different models of the role of the woman and mother in the three regions affect both women and men equally, albeit only indirectly in some cases.

3 HYPOTHESES

Because of the life-long bond which it establishes, opting for a(nother) child is so full of consequences that in many cases an individual cost-benefit analysis may be assumed to take place.⁹ Here, structural and cultural contexts, which may be both favourable and restrictive, help to decide on the anticipated costs of desired fertility, and hence on desired fertility itself. Only the reconciliation costs will be studied below, and these become particularly apparent if parenthood is not to be devoted to family activities, which applies above all if both parents wish to remain in work, given that third-party childcare then becomes unavoidable. This problem of reconciliation must be solved both at the practical and at the normative level, something which can be achieved with various arrangements differing in price (Huinink 2002, 55). Women continue to bear the main burden of reconciliation, certainly as regards practical arrangements, but also in terms of the normative dimension, which is why the evaluations in this paper are restricted to them. Of course, men are also concerned where, in cases of traditional role sharing, they bear a greater responsibility for maintaining the family than if there is an egalitarian division of tasks, which is again equally moderated by structural contexts. They do not face the normative reconciliation problem, however, in the same way as women, although the demands placed on the role of the father have also increased. As an indicator for structural factors we chose the employment situation of the couple, which is seen as an outcome of the range of available public childcare and is one decisive cost factor in the reconciliation of work and family. This leads to the first hypothesis regarding the influence of structural contexts on women's desired fertility:

H1 *The relatively well-equipped childcare infrastructure in France and eastern Germany leads to a situation in which dual-earner constellations do not exert a negative influence on women's desired fertility. By contrast, such an infrastructure is largely missing in western Germany, so that the reconciliation costs there lead to a negative effect.*

As mentioned above, the problem of reconciliation also exists at the normative level. In societies where the spheres of household and children are mainly allocated to the woman, there is little acceptance of an externalisation of services attributed to the family sphere, and justifying such a move requires considerable effort – which can also be counted as reconciliation costs. Since both western Germany, and to a lesser degree France (see above), may be considered examples of the conservative welfare state type and therefore support the model of non-working housewives and mothers in institutional

⁹ There is also the possibility of an unplanned birth.

terms, Hypothesis 2 regarding the influence of cultural contexts reads as follows:

H2 *A positive attitude towards being a housewife has a positive effect on women's desired fertility.*

As has already been stated, another family model co-exists in France, i.e. that of the dual-earner family, which persists in eastern Germany despite political upheaval. A positive fundamental stance towards working mothers reduces the normative costs of parenthood for women, since it grants them greater freedom of choice with regard to their life planning. This leads to Hypothesis 3:

H3 *The more positive evaluation of working mothers in France and eastern Germany reduces the reconciliation costs at the normative level, and therefore has a positive influence on desired fertility in contrast to western Germany where the influence is correspondingly negative.*

4 DATA AND OPERATIONALISATION

4.1 Data

The empirical evaluations are based on data from the German and French Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS), which were both implemented in 2005 in the context of the international Generations and Gender Programme.¹⁰ The German GGS comprises a representative sample of 10,017 German-speaking persons living in private households aged between 18 and 79 (see Ruckdeschel et al. 2006). In France, 10,056 representative individuals, also aged 18–79, were interviewed (see Régnier-Loilier 2006). For both countries we use version 3.0, a revised and cleaned sample of the original data by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI). The GGS is regarded as a successor to the Family and Fertility Surveys (FFS), and contains biographical questions on developments in both partnership and fertility, as well as questions concerning attitude (for example, concerning gender roles). Furthermore, comprehensive information is collected on inter-generational relationships. The GGS is structured as a panel, i.e. second and third waves are collected at three-year intervals. This allows prospective questions to be posed, for instance about desired fertility, which can be examined with both of the other waves.

¹⁰ The German GGS was carried out by the Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (BiB); the French GGS was implemented by the Institut national d'études démographiques (INED).

4.2 The Sample

This paper studies the influence of cultural and structural contexts on desired fertility in Germany and France. Desired fertility has been selected instead of a measure of actual fertility outcomes because the first wave of the GGS is a cross-sectional survey, which is why it is not possible to link the number of children already born with individual attitudes, as might be possible with panel data. Attitudes and values vary over time and therefore cannot necessarily be linked causally with a past decision to have a child. We also restrict the future perspective by looking at (further) desired fertility in the next three years. The assumption being that this timeframe is more concrete and realistic than desire in an indefinite future (van Peer 2002). The possible answers “yes, certainly” and “yes, probably” have been combined to “yes”, and the responses “certainly not” and “probably not” have been combined to “no”. In order to obtain precisely defined groups for the analysis, only those individuals who clearly expressed their desired fertility have been considered; the group of undecided persons has been excluded, being too small to analyse separately (see Table 1). The small number of undecided may be explained by the restricted time horizon of reproductive intentions in the next three years, which constitutes a foreseeable time span in which most individuals are able to make concrete plans.

The studied population has further been restricted to those individuals for whom the question of desired fertility is relevant, which is why lesbian and pregnant women have been excluded from the analyses. We studied both the desire of childless women to have a first child and the desire of mothers with one child to have a second. Different age limits have been selected for these two groups because the empirically calculated probability of desired fertility with childless women reduces rapidly from the age of 35 and is virtually zero from 40 onwards (Pötzsch and Sommer 2009, 381). Because of this very small number of cases, the 40+ age group has been ruled out of the analyses of childless persons, whilst they have been retained for mothers who already have one child. Furthermore, only respondents with a partner have been considered, since desired fertility does not usually take on concrete shape until a partnership is formed (see for instance Dorbritz and Ruckdeschel 2007, 67; Helfferich et al. 2004, 26), and the analyses should be focused on the influence of contexts and not on general obstacles such as lacking a partner. Here too, distinction has been made between childless persons and mothers. Childless women in non-residential partnership have been included. However, among mothers, only women who lived together with a partner have been included: parents living apart are so rare in both countries that no generalisable conclusions can be drawn, and at the same time their inclusion might distort the results.

These restrictions yield a final sample of 352 childless respondents for Germany (273 west, 79 east) and 565 childless respondents for France. For mothers with one child, 361 respondents emerge for Germany (265 western, 96 eastern) and 278 respondents for France, their desire for an additional child fluctuating between 18 per cent among eastern German women with one child and 56 per cent with French women with one child (see Table 1). These considerable differences are a result of there being fewer one-child families in France, in favour of families with more children, the differences becoming particularly pronounced when it comes to families with at least three children.¹¹ Accordingly, mothers with one child in France like to have at least a second child much more frequently.

Table 1
Final sample size by groups and countries

	Desired fertility in the next three years	Western Germany		Eastern Germany		France	
Childless	Yes	111	41%	36	46%	308	55%
	No	162	59%	43	54%	257	45%
	Don't know, no answer	29	–	10	–	19	–
Parents with one child	Yes	91	34%	17	18%	157	56%
	No	174	66%	79	82%	121	44%
	Don't know, no answer	30	–	5	–	7	–

Source: GGS 2005, Germany and France, author's own calculations.

4.3 Control Variables

In order to verify the dependence of desired fertility on further influencing sociodemographic factors, additional characteristics have been included in the analysis both at individual level (age and education) and at the couple level (institutionalisation of the relationship) (see Appendix for descriptive statistics on the variables). Age correlates closely with the realisation of desired fertility, i.e. as age increases the actual number of children also increases and the number of additionally desired ones falls. As we concentrate on fertility intentions for the next three years, the effect of age is not linear but rather a

¹¹ The share of households with one child under the age of 15 among all households with children was 28 per cent in Germany and 22 per cent in France in 2007; the share of households with three or more children, by contrast, was 24 per cent in Germany and 32 per cent in France (OECD 2010).

reverse 'U shape', because younger people want to wait until they have finished their education and have entered the labour market, while at the same time age imposes a biological ceiling on desired fertility. This combines with individual ideas concerning the ideal age for family formation, i.e. even if all the prerequisites are met to achieve desired fertility but a person feels too old, the desire is no longer realised (Helffferich et al. 2004, 28; Rost 2003, 19). We therefore include age as a categorical variable. In both samples – for childless women and for mothers – one recognises some characteristic differences in the age distribution between the regions studied. For instance, the share of childless women over 35 is lower in France than in Germany. Education is interpreted in the sense of the household economic approach by Gary S. Becker (1993), i.e. higher education is linked to greater opportunity costs for women if motherhood entails leaving work for a long time. Operationalising the educational variables on the basis of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) led to major problems of comparability, since university qualifications are more common in France than in Germany.¹² Especially in the younger age groups, the share of university graduates in France among childless women is about 50 per cent, and among mothers it still exceeds 40 per cent – which is two to three times more than both German regions. Evaluation has been carried out for separate datasets, though the analyses nonetheless include education (on a bivariate basis), with the characteristics high (university degree) and low (up to and including secondary schooling) after models with three characteristics did not lead to any major changes in the results. Finally, the degree of institutionalisation of a partnership also correlates with desired fertility, i.e. marriage and the probability of the desire for a (further) child are strongly correlated (Schoen et al. 1999, 795). At the individual level, marriage is in some cases still seen as confirming the stability of a relationship, which in turn is considered a prerequisite for a decision as far-reaching as the achievement of desired fertility. At the same time, there are also practical interests in marrying, since, depending on the legal framework, a woman who intends to stop working (fully or partially) for taking up childcare still has the best financial security when married. Here as well, the three regions show characteristic differences between the samples: the link between parenthood and marriage is still much closer in western Germany than in the former GDR (including all of Berlin) and also closer than in France. Fifty-seven per cent of all children in eastern Germany were born out of wedlock in 2007, this figure being 52 per cent in France (Eurostat 2010), but only 26 per cent in western Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt 2009). In the samples, correspondingly, many more childless women in western Germany were

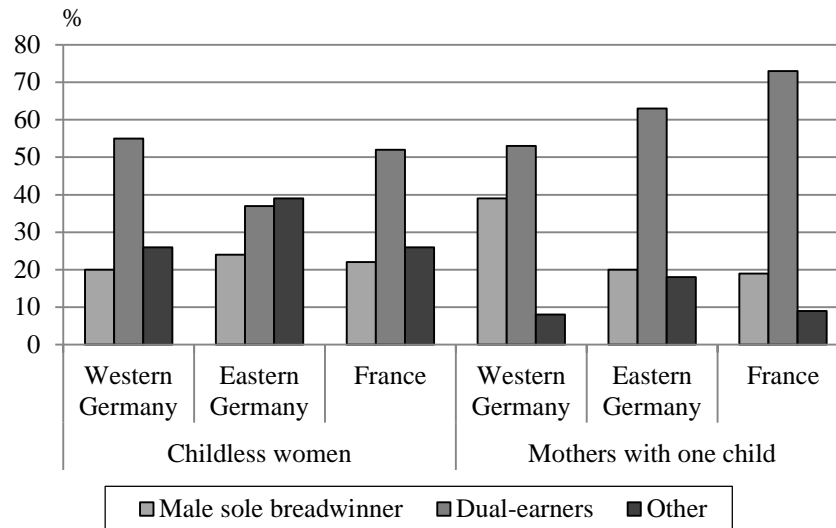
¹² For instance, 42 per cent of French 30 to 34 year-olds but only 27 per cent of Germans in this group had a tertiary qualification in 2007 (ISCED 5-6) (EACEA 2009, 245).

already married than in the other two regions, and this difference was even more pronounced among mothers with one child. Finally, for mothers with one child, the age of that child is a very important factor when it comes to fertility decisions.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Descriptive Results

The influence of structural contexts is measured indirectly, via its outcome in the extent of gainful employment at the couple level (see Fig. II). As would be expected, among childless persons the differences are not particularly pronounced. In roughly half these couples in western Germany and France both partners are in at least part-time employment. The share of “others”, which includes the unemployed and those in training and not working, is around 26 per cent for western Germany and France, which is also due to the young age structure of the sample, i.e. a relatively large number of respondents and/or their partners are still in training. What is more, this category has unemployment rates of six per cent of all respondents in western Germany, eight per cent in France and as much as 15 per cent in eastern Germany, this explaining why the proportion of “others” is extremely high in eastern Germany. Major differences do not emerge until we look at mothers with one child. The prevalence of a more traditional perception of motherhood in western Germany leads to a much larger share of male sole breadwinners here than in eastern Germany or in France. Nonetheless, in all three regions dual-earner couples are the majority. In the former GDR, the “other” constellation again has a relatively large share of women (18 per cent) in which the respondent is unemployed.



Source: GGS 2005, Germany and France; data weighted with the respective national weight; author's own calculations. Basis: childless, aged 18–39, in partnership; parents with one child, aged 18–45, living with partner.

Notes: Definition of Male sole breadwinner – man in full or part-time work, woman not in work, including in training and unemployed; Dual earners – both at least working part time; Other – all other combinations and possibilities, for instance only woman working, both in training, etc.

Figure II

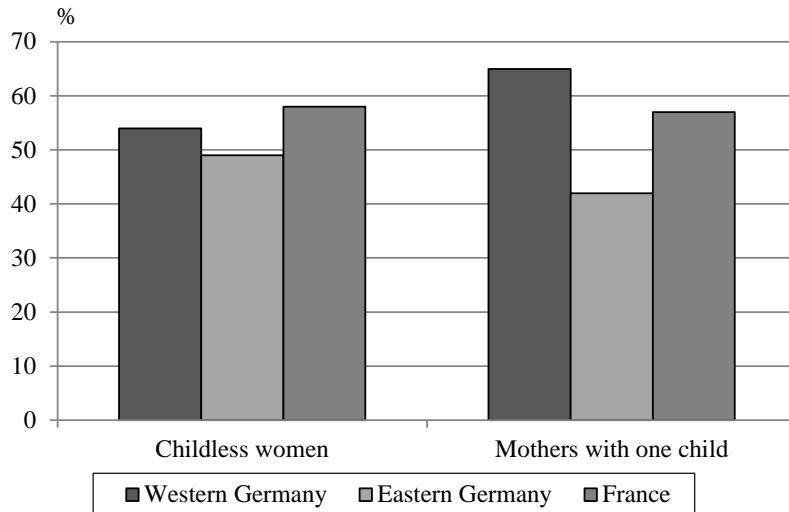
Childless couples and parents with one child by labour force participation of both partners

The cultural dimension – the sense of the attitude towards mothers – is shown via two variables. First, the general appreciation of non-working women and mothers is recorded by the statement “Looking after the household and children is just as fulfilling as paid work”. The agreement rates fluctuate between 42–65 per cent. They are lowest among childless persons and among mothers with one child in eastern Germany, where fewer than half of respondents agree. In France and western Germany, by contrast, agreement rates are much higher, at about 60 per cent in both groups, with the exception of western German mothers of whom nearly two-thirds agreed. Western Germany also showed larger differences between childless persons and

mothers.¹³ By contrast, in France there are virtually no differences between childless persons and mothers when evaluating this statement. The second indicator of the cultural dimension is constituted by the statement “A pre-school child will suffer if his/her mother works”.¹⁴ Here, agreement rates are in general lower. The former GDR is noticeable insofar as, in relative terms, only extremely small numbers of respondents there agree with this statement. Because of widespread experience with very early childcare, eastern Germans formed an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards it that continues to prevail long after unification. Pfau-Effinger and Geissler (2002) refer to this as the “*longue durée*” (long duration) of the family model that has already been presented. France and western Germany, by contrast, are somewhat more similar to each other, although the influence of working mothers on the well-being of the child is considered most negatively in western Germany, which in turn indicates a slightly different model for the reconciliation of motherhood and gainful employment.

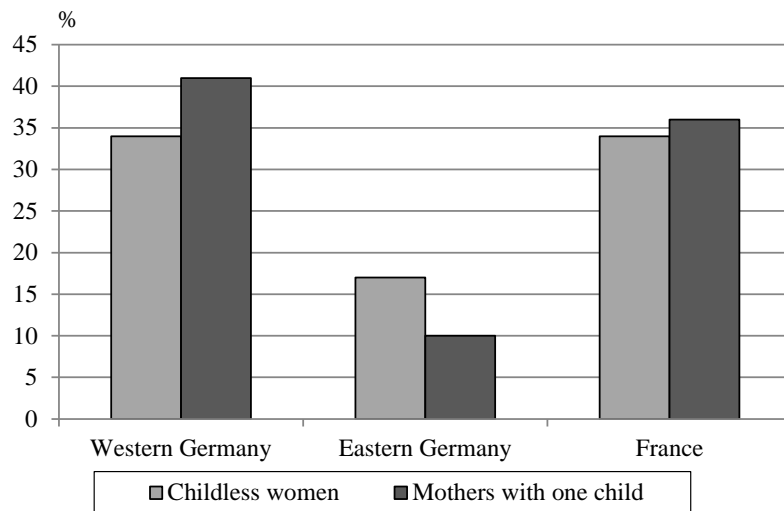
¹³ It is difficult to validate the results using data of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP, www.issp.org), since the questions were asked differently. In the ISSP 2002, the statement targeted unpaid work only: “Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for money”, the aspect of motherhood thus being left out altogether, so that agreement rates are bound to be much lower.

¹⁴ Validation is difficult in this case too. In the ISSP 2002 the question was ‘weaker’: “A child who does not yet go to school will probably suffer if his/her mother works”. The agreement rates in western Germany and France are similar to those in the GGS, while they are higher in eastern Germany. A different response scale was used in the Eurobarometer 2006; there is no “neither agree–nor disagree” category, so that here too the results are not comparable.



Source: GGS 2005, Germany and France; data weighted with respective national weight; author's own calculations. Basis: childless, aged 18–39, in partnership; parents with one child, aged 18–45, living with partner; question text of the German questionnaire.

Figure III
 Agreement with the statement “Looking after the household and children is just as fulfilling as paid work”



Source: See Figure III above.

Figure IV
 Agreement with the statement “A pre-school child will suffer if his/her mother works”

5.2 *Multivariate Results*

In methodological terms a logistic regression analysis suggests itself to the problem at hand, since the answer to the question of (further) desired fertility is conceived as a binary variable (see above). Eastern Germany had to be excluded from the multivariate analyses because of the small number of cases, so that the results below only refer to western Germany and France. We did not opt to include eastern Germany as a control variable since the results of the explanatory variables differed too strongly between western and eastern Germany (see above). This big difference in combination with a very small sample means that including eastern Germany would distort the results for western Germany without really yielding any valid results for eastern Germany.

5.2.1 Childless Persons

Before investigating verification of the hypothesis in greater detail, the influence exerted by the control variables is discussed. Particularly in France, age is a relevant influential factor for desired fertility. In comparison to the <25 reference group, chances of desired fertility within three years for women in the next two older age groups are significantly higher (see Table 2). This does not mean that desired fertility in general increases, but that plans to achieve it take on more concrete forms. Average age at birth of first child is similar in France and in Germany (see above), but many more German women remain childless throughout their lives, and the majority of French people have at least two children (see above). The consequence is that particularly in the 30+ age group, family formations must be frequent and, initially, the desire to have a child in the foreseeable future is correspondingly pronounced. In contrast to France, the highest age group in western Germany has negative results. So while women in Germany seem to feel too old for children relatively early on¹⁵, the age norms with regard to a maximum age for children appear to be much broader in France. Education has no influence on the present selection of explanatory and control variables. As to the living arrangement, it can first and foremost be observed that women who live with a partner have a higher tendency towards desired fertility than women who are not (yet) cohabiting. What is more, despite the much looser link between marriage and parenthood in France, marriage exerts a significant positive influence on desired fertility among women in both countries. This does not mean that being married is the explanation for the fertility desire but that the opposite is true, i.e. because of

¹⁵ Another model, not presented here, shows that the 35+ age group is particularly relevant.

their intention to have a child within the next three years these women get married. Since it is overwhelmingly women who take on care for a child, and may leave work in both countries, the financial and legal security offered by marriage is particularly significant for them in opting for a child.

Table 2
Logistic regression models of the influence of structural and cultural variables on the desired fertility of childless women, odds ratios

	Western Germany		France	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Age (ref. aged under 24)				
25 to 29	0.952	0.950	3.221***	3.269***
30 to 34	0.639	0.614	5.576***	5.561***
35 to 40	0.116**	0.124**	2.052	2.158 ⁺
Education high (ref. low)	1.645	1.504	1.072	1.092
Living arrangement (ref. non-cohabiting partner)				
Non-marital union	4.007***	4.855***	2.351***	2.322***
Marriage	8.179***	9.419***	6.259***	6.215***
Earning combination (ref. male breadwinner)				
Dual-earner	0.705	0.656	1.869*	1.859*
Other	0.619	0.690	0.633	0.640
Household and children as fulfilling as gainful employment (ref. no)	–	2.288**	–	1.616*
Pre-school child suffers under gainful employment of the mother (ref. no)	–	0.484*	–	1.016
Constant	0.213***	0.432	0.330***	0.246***
N	204	204	552	552
R ²	0.256	0.299	0.344	0.354

Source: GGS 2005, Germany and France; unweighted data; author's own calculations.

Notes: Basis: childless women, age 18–39, in partnership; *** < 0.000; ** < 0.01; * < 0.05.

The work combination at couple level was selected as an indicator of structural contexts. Hypothesis H1 supposes there to be a positive link between care infrastructure and desired fertility in the sense that a dual-earner constellation favours desired fertility among women in France, whilst preventing it in western Germany. The results for childless persons only weakly support this hypothesis, given that there is no such effect for Germany, and only at a slight level of significance in France. If one adds the attitude variables of the cultural dimension, the influence of the control variables and of gainful

employment remain. Both for German and French women a positive attitude towards housework and bringing up children have a significant positive effect on desired fertility, which was also phrased as an expectation in H2. Among western German women, the conviction that pre-school children will suffer if their mothers are in gainful employment exerts an additional negative influence on desired fertility, as is presumed in H3. We checked for multicollinearity in this context with the two attitude variables, and they proved to be uncorrelated in France and only weakly correlated in western Germany (Pearson's coeff. 0.13**). This means the two topics of being a housewife and the well-being of a pre-school child are indeed seen as relatively independent by the respondents.

5.2.2 Mothers with One Child

Before carrying out the analysis itself we checked for multicollinearity again. Once more we found nothing for France. For western Germany it was still at an acceptable level for the attitude variables (Pearson's coeff. 0.24***), but it was quite high for the correlation between age of the first child and earning combination (using χ^2 test), which proved to be relevant for the model. A common solution to multicollinearity is to remove one of the correlated variables. However, it is not possible to omit any of the variables if we wish to examine the hypotheses of this paper. We therefore show the results for Germany with employment arrangement separately first, and then together with age of the first child since the sample is too small for an interaction term. Creating a new variable out of the two poses the problem of multiplying the baselines for the reference category¹⁶ for which the sample is again too small.

For both countries we find mainly an age effect. The older the woman, the lower the chances of wanting a second child in the next three years. Strong negative effects are shown in the age group from 35+ among French and German women (see Table 3). This applies to the age of the first child as well, i.e. the older the first child, the lower the chance of positive fertility intentions for the next three years. Indeed, both variables are not uncorrelated but the bias is negligible and results remain stable if either is omitted. In Germany a high level of education leads to a significant increase in the probability of further desired fertility within the next three years, which Huinink (1995, 2002) attributes to the existence of both a family-orientated and a family-distant group within the upper educational group. Childlessness increases with

¹⁶ If the two items had three categories each, we would have eight baselines and one reference category instead of the previous four (two for each variable). Because of the small sample size this would distort the model severely. An aggregation of categories would to some extent be arbitrary and results would depend strongly on the choice of the new categories.

education level, but the propensity to have a second child is particularly pronounced in more highly educated groups once family formation has taken place (Huinink 1995, 353). We do not find any such effect for France. With regard to the influence of gainful employment at couple level, it was anticipated in H1 that among German women gainful employment of both partners, in comparison to the male sole breadwinner model, would exert a significant negative influence on desired fertility. However, and as mentioned above, this effect is strongly biased with the age of the first child. When including age of first child in the model, the significance for the employment effect disappears. In such a case of multicollinearity it is difficult to determine the extent to which each variable has an influence on the dependent variable. What we can say is that the age of the child in combination with the employment situation seems to be relevant. This means that women with young children who are in a male breadwinner constellation have a higher probability of wanting a second child. We must be careful with our interpretation here not to end in tautologies. It is not because of their employment constellation that women wanted a second child but that they most probably anticipated reconciliation problems which is why they are in this constellation. The ability of the man to feed the family therefore does not become relevant to the decision until after the formation of a family if mothers leave work altogether. As has already been stated, and is also the case in France, the main burden of reconciliation is borne by women and not by men, which explains why the better reconciliation conditions experienced by French women do not show any significant negative effects, but neither do they show any positive ones either, as formulated in H1. The attitude variables do not provide any relevant explanatory contribution for mothers with one child, so all hypotheses in this respect have to be rejected. This corresponds with results of Billari et al. (2009), who were able to show that in Bulgaria societal norms above all else influence the transition to parenthood, whilst cost-benefit considerations, i.e. structural contexts, exerted a stronger influence in the transition to the second child.

Table 3
*Logistic regression models of the influence of structural and cultural variables
on the desired fertility of mothers with one child; odds ratios*

	Western Germany			France	
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Age (ref. aged under 30)					
30 to 34	1.026	1.217	1.226	0.767	0.808
35 to 39	0.140***	0.186**	0.189**	0.326	0.349*
40 to 45	0.012***	0.022**	0.023**	0.077***	0.081***
Education high (ref. low)	3.597**	3.419**	3.594**	1.389	1.503
Living arrangement marriage (ref. non-marital union)	0.792	0.882	0.940	1.157	1.086
Earning combination (ref. male breadwinner)					
Dual earner	0.462*	0.863	0.918	0.768	0.922
Other	0.350	0.527	0.535	0.799	0.889
Age of the first child (ref. 0–3)					
4 to 10	–	0.211***	0.203***	0.255***	0.225***
11 and older	–	0.211**	0.210*	0.083***	0.066***
Household as fulfilling as gainful employment (ref. no)	–	–	1.436	–	1.320
Pre-school child suffers under gainful employment of the mother (ref. no)	–	–	0.879	–	1.690
Constant	2.059	2.204	1.663	6.809***	4.348**
N	232	232	232	266	266
R ²	0.454	0.512	0.515	0.481	0.490

Source: GGS 2005, Germany and France; unweighted data; author's own calculations.

Notes: Basis: women with one child, age 18–45, living together with partner; *** < 0.000; ** < 0.01; * < 0.05

5.3 Summary

The influence of cultural and structural contexts on (further) desired fertility of women in Germany and France was tested in a logistic regression model. The hypotheses presumed that structural contexts such as the availability of childcare and, correspondingly, the possibility for mothers to work, would play a role in desired fertility. It was also presumed that cultural differences, above all societal acceptance of working mothers, would also play a role. We

presented hypotheses separately for western and eastern Germany and France. However, because of the case numbers it was only possible to verify the hypotheses for western Germany and France. Furthermore, we only had a few indicators, which can only be seen as proxies for the dimensions to be tested.

The influence exerted by structural contexts was operationalised via its outcome, labour force participation of both partners at couple level. It was presumed here that better childcare infrastructure available for small children coupled with more generous opening times would not exert any negative influence on desired fertility in France. Conversely, it was presumed that the very lack of such infrastructure would exert a negative influence on desired fertility in western Germany. This hypothesis was to apply above all for those concerned, i.e. mothers who already have one child. In fact, the earning situation among mothers had the anticipated effect but only at a small and unstable level of statistical significance, i.e. in western Germany women with one child desire a second child significantly less often if both partners are in work, especially when their child is younger than three. This was evaluated as indicating poor possibilities of reconciling work and family life. By contrast, the same labour force participation model did not exert any significant influence in France. This was interpreted as meaning that French women are relieved of a burden by the structural context, so that the dual-earner constellation does not exert a significant negative effect, but also that male partners do not contribute much and women's burdens are still not reduced enough to allow for a significant positive effect.

At the cultural level, only childless women showed significant effects. The influence of the general appreciation of housework and motherhood was initially examined, which proved significantly positive both among both French and German women. This can be traced to the simple fact that women who appreciate parenthood also want children more. Furthermore, both countries have welfare state contexts which legally and financially support parents to leave work to take care of small children. Hence, it was also possible to confirm the second hypothesis for women.

Finally, the attitude towards working mothers and its influence on desired fertility was tested. The results point in the direction specified by Hypothesis 3, that a critical attitude towards working mothers acts as an obstacle to desired fertility among childless women in western Germany, but that this is no longer the case among women who already have one child. This indicates, as previously stated by Dienel (2003) and Onnen-Isemann (2003, 2007), that the decision to have children for western German women appears to be a fundamental one, i.e. opting for a first child means setting it as an absolute first priority and frequently signifies foregoing continuous gainful employment. With the second child (at the latest), the attitude towards gainful employment

no longer exerts a significant influence because at this point the question of a rapid return to work and its consequences no longer arises.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Questions are often raised as to whether Germany could learn from France about how to shape its family policy. The similar regime type makes this idea all the more desirable, given that it is much simpler to change individual welfare state factors rather than the entire system. In fact, an attempt has been made in German family policy in recent years towards quick re-integration of mothers into the labour market. Since 2007, parental benefit has only been paid for one year (maximum of 14 months) and at the same time the daycare infrastructure for small children has been expanded.

However, the differences in the structural contexts are also an expression of differences in cultural development. For instance, there are two distinct and contradictory models in France at the normative level, namely the working mother and the child-caring housewife, both of which are equally accepted by society. The consequence is that women do not have to justify their decision towards one or the other model, and children are thus a natural option in life, regardless of the respective labour force participation of both partners. In Germany, by contrast, the model of the good mother who gives up work for her children to completely devote herself to their welfare is still dominant at the cultural level. This model was supported at a structural level for a long period of time, and it is only in recent years that the corresponding frameworks have slowly started to change (Mantl 2006). Hence, the model still has a strong impact on behaviour and women who want children *and* a career face not only practical difficulties but also challenges at the normative level. The option of doing both at once is incompatible with the ideal of the good mother, a dilemma which is frequently only solved by postponing desired fertility or through childlessness. It will take time to change attitudes and to make working mothers more broadly accepted. When realigning family policies, the still relatively large share of women and mothers who have a negative attitude towards early external care of children should therefore not be forgotten. German family policy can in fact learn from the French model and reorientate itself: it should facilitate the realisation of desired fertility by women working full time, and increase acceptance of women and mothers who find the meaning of their lives in the family *and* in the home. Since the non-working mother is widely accepted and the working mother is regarded critically, a possible way forward could be to emphasise the positive benefits of external childcare to children, such as creating equal conditions for all children to thrive, rather than focusing the debate on the working mother.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1
Description of the sample, percentages
(possible gaps to 100% are missing values)

		Western Germany	Eastern Germany	France
Childless Women				
Age	Aged under 24	42.1	57.0	52.9
	Aged 25 to 29	28.2	25.3	28.1
	Aged 30 to 39	17.2	5.1	12.0
Living arrangement	Living apart together	43.6	44.3	50.8
	Non-marital co-habitation. PACS ¹⁷	33.0	43.0	36.5
	Marriage	23.1	7.6	12.7
Education	Low	60.1	63.3	49.9
	High	22.0	12.7	50.1
N		273	79	565
Women with one child				
Age	Aged under 30	25.3	24.0	30.2
	Aged 30 to 34	24.2	26.0	23.5
	Aged 35 to 39	24.9	27.1	27.7
	Aged 40 to 44	25.7	22.9	18.6
Living arrangement	Non-marital co-habitation. PACS	10.6	26.0	44.9
	Marriage	89.4	74.0	55.1
Education	Low	76.0	74.2	58.6
	High	24.0	25.8	41.4
Age of the first child	Aged 0 to 3	41.9	32.3	51.4
	Aged 4 to 10	28.7	18.8	27.7
	Aged 11 and older	24.5	41.7	17.6
N		265	96	285

Source: GGS 2005, Germany and France; unweighted data; author's own calculations.

Notes: Basis: childless women; aged 18–39, in partnership; women with one child, aged 18–45, living with partner.

¹⁷ *Pacte civil de solidarité*: civil partnership with joint estate, joint tax assessment and fiscally favourable inheritance regulations; similar to a registered partnership in Germany.