Chapter 4
Delaying Parenthood in East and West Germany: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Onset of Childbirth and the Vocabulary of Motives of Women of the Birth Cohort of 1971

Karl Ulrich Mayer and Eva Schulze

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, our goal is to help explain the delay in family formation among women who were born in 1971, and who live in East and West Germany. By family formation, we mean the process which leads to first births via non-marital unions and/or marriages. Delays in first births are seen as one cause of very low fertility and the increase in permanently childless couples. In particular, we want to examine whether East and West German women of the first post-transition generation still differ in regard to the age of onset of childbirth, and how they subjectively account for delays.

Our data come from the German Life History Study (Mayer 2008), in particular from two nationally representative retrospective surveys, including a panel follow-up, and from narrative interviews with respondents from the same samples. The primary material which we will use here consists of three parts: (i) the quantitative data from the retrospective surveys and the panel, (ii) biographical interviews, and (iii) the corresponding cases of the same persons reconstructed from the quantitative surveys. In addition, as a description we will show results from Kaplan-Meier estimations and Cox regressions for the whole of the East and West German 1971 cohort samples, and compare them to cohorts born between 1930 and 1960 or 1964.

Median ages at first marriage and first birth have been rising in West Germany for more than three decades, and have been increasing in East Germany since 1991. According to period data, the overall median age at marital first birth in the

K. U. Mayer (✉)
Leibniz Gemeinschaft, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: mayer@leibniz-gemeinschaft.de

E. Schulze
Berlin Institute for Social Research (BIS), Berlin, Germany
e-mail: e.schulze@bis-berlin.de

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whole of Germany reached its lowest point in 1970, at age 24, and has since risen beyond age 29. By 2006, period fertility had converged in East and West Germany (Dorbritz 2008; Tivig and Hetze 2007: 18). This unprecedented delay in the onset of family formation (and thus in the conclusion of the transition to adulthood) has been attributed to educational expansion and the implicit lengthening of time in education and training (Blossfeld and Huinink 1991; Huinink and Mayer 1995; Kreyenfeld 2006), uncertainties in the labor market (Bernardi et al. 2008; Kurz 2008), a decline in collectivist and material values, and a rise in individualistic values (Lesthaege and Surkyn 1988). In addition, some observers have pointed to a shift towards more hedonistic and consumption-oriented values and lifestyles, and have noted that increasing education and labor market integration among women have led to conflicts related to women's greater career investments (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000), the lack of adequate child care, and the rise in non-marital unions (Meyer and Schulze 1992). For East Germany, three additional causes must be considered: (a) the influence of the specific conditions of GDR early parenting, (b) the traumatic disruptions of unification, and (c) the behavioral models and institutional conditions experienced by West German women. They combine with and add to the above causes.

Among the central issues in this unresolved debate are the juxtaposition of (a) distal versus proximate causes, and (b) values versus rational choice calculations. In this context, "proximate causes" refer to the conditions related to situations and decisions in the immediate context of first birth, while "distal causes" refer to the indirect effects of earlier conditions on childbearing, such as education, careers, and finding a partner. Another important issue in this debate is (c) the question of whether the delay in family formation is more attributable to women's life circumstances and preferences, or is more attributable to those of men. In this chapter, we limit ourselves to looking at the role of partners and spouses from the perspective of women. In another study, we examine the same issues from the perspective of men (Mayer and Schulze 2009, Chap. 5).

The comparison between East and West Germany should allow us to open a special window in regard to several of these issues. Although family policy incentives for marriage and first births were curtailed in East Germany after reunification, child care facilities continued to be much better in East Germany than in West Germany (Trappe 2006). East German women still spend fewer years in schools, continue to have higher rates of labor force participation, and tend to see combining work and motherhood as less problematic than West German women (Statistisches Bundesamt 2006: 523). East German women had been more accustomed to handling economic scarcity and cramped housing conditions, but were exposed to a sudden increase in consumption options after 1989. From the 1970s through to reunification, East German women had a "culture" of early births with or without marriage, and a very low rate of childlessness. This was not least supported by generous family policies (Huinink and Kreyenfeld 2006; Bernardi and Keim 2007; Sørensen and Trappe 1995). Although problems of unemployment also affected West German women, and they too had difficulties securing good jobs after completing their education, these problems were exacerbated for East

German women after reunification (Diewald 2006; Trappe 2004). The East–West comparison allows us, among other things, to study the impact of education on the onset of parenthood within two German sub-societies characterized by different scales and structures of social inequality. East Germany was and is a more homogeneous society with fewer class barriers, while West Germany has a pronounced class structure based on its educational and training systems. As a consequence, we may expect to find smaller educational differentials with regard to the onset of family formation among East Germans than among West Germans. It is unclear whether (and to what extent) the limited role of educational differentials has been maintained since reunification.

This study focuses on East and West German women born in 1971. They are special and representative in a broader sense. The West German women of this cohort made greater advances in attaining higher education and vocational or professional training. Toward the end of the 1980s, they had considerable difficulties in finding apprenticeships, but found it easier to enter the labor market after their apprenticeships (Hillmert and Mayer 2004; Mayer 2004: 204–209). The East German women of the 1971 cohort had mostly completed their vocational training when the economic restructuring started in 1990. They were faced with the risk of job loss and interruptions in their careers, and thus had high rates of participation in retraining and occupational reorientation programs (Trappe 2004; Matthes 2002, 2004). This East German cohort, together with the 1970 cohort, was the first to start the massive delay in age at first birth (Dorbritz 2008: 564; Scheel 2007: 30).

In terms of methods, we use retrospective survey as well as panel data to establish the main explananda, i.e., the age of entering unions and of first birth. We use the quantitative data for singular cases to reconstruct the educational, family, and work trajectories. We use qualitative data from narrative interviews to identify the subjective vocabulary employed when discussing motives for delaying family formation. In presenting and interpreting the material from our narrative interviews, we focus on five general causes or mechanisms that may contribute to the delay in family formation for women: (a) the consequences of lengthening the education and training period, (b) labor market and economic insecurity, (c) value orientations regarding marriage and parenting, (d) problems of compatibility between employment and raising children, and (e) conditions pertaining to a partner or spouse. We also focus on some specific conditions related to education and social class that may enhance or diminish the likelihood of earlier or later entry into parenthood. These are primarily related to the length of time spent investing in education, training, and a career, and the assets the partners bring to a union, which in turn determine their class position.

The chapter is organized in the following sections. In Sect. 4.2 we offer a brief summary of competing theories of the timing of first parenthood. In Sect. 4.3 we provide contextual information on East and West Germany for the women of this cohort. In Sect. 4.4 we describe our data sources and discuss the advantages of combining quantitative and qualitative data and the respective methods of analysis. In Sect. 4.5 we present, as quantitative background, a description of Kaplan–Meier estimates for cohorts born between 1929 and 1971 for three aspects of family

formation, non-marital unions, marriages, and first births; as well as Cox regressions for the effects of education on family formation. In Sects. 4.6 and 4.7 we present four case studies each of West German women and East German women. In Sect. 4.8 we summarize the results and offer a preliminary assessment of our experiences with mixed methods.

4.2 Theory

In this section we provide a brief review of extant theories on the timing of family formation and the potential effects of social class and education. Our primary goals in this discussion are to guide the selection of topics in our empirical material, and to reflect on our choice of method.

Theories explaining the timing of family formation can be roughly sorted into five categories: (a) life course contingencies and biographical experience, (b) value commitments, (c) rational choice cost–benefit calculations, and (d) institutionally constrained opportunities (Huinink and Konietzka 2007). While these approaches focus primarily on the respondent's characteristics, an additional mode of explanation focuses (e) on the characteristics of the partner or couple.

Theories informed by a life course perspective see the timing of family formation as an outcome contingent on prior lifetime commitments in several life domains. Blossfeld and Huinink (1991) posit an "institutional effect", according to which family formation and parenting are, given fertility control, ruled out as behavioral options while people are in school and training due to an assumed lack of income and time resources. Accordingly, the increasing time spent in education and training (Brückner and Mayer 2005; Jacob 2004) should lead to a delay in the onset of family formation (see also Huinink and Mayer 1995; Kreyenfeld 2006). To this set of potentially delaying life course contingencies we also have to add the transitional phase of career entry leading to a permanent contract. Thus the life course contingency theory would predict delays in the onset of family formation associated with extended durations until the end of the first phase of career entry.

Biographical uncertainties form the second set of explanatory conditions. The experience or expectation of unemployment, instability of jobs and earnings, and residential mobility should lead to delays in entry into marriage and parenthood (Bernardi et al. 2008; Kurz 2008).[1] Entry into marriage and parenthood entails long-lasting commitments which are avoided or delayed, especially if employment and career prospects are unclear. Among our cohort, biographical uncertainties would have been especially acute for the East Germans, although their subjective experiences might have been modified—either enhanced or mitigated—by the fact

[1] An earlier version of a theory connecting biographical turbulence to a decline in fertility was put forth by Birg, Flöthmann and Rester (1991).

that, for East Germans this was more a collective than an individual fate (Huinink and Kreyenfeld 2006).

Changes in value orientations are a third assumed cause of the delay in marriage and parenthood; specifically, the shift towards more individualistic, hedonistic, and consumption-oriented values and lifestyles. Life as a single- or a double-income childless couple allows for much higher levels of consumption than life as parents with one partner earning little or nothing (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000). Value orientations are either assumed to be stable and formed prior to the transition to adulthood, or they are assumed to be dependent on age and life course circumstances. For example, a hedonistic lifestyle might deliver diminishing returns, and thus value orientations in regard to marriage and parenting might change over time. Peer group influences may change over time as friends start to get married or have children. Value orientations, both as permanent and as variable dispositions, differ between East and West Germans. For example, West German women, much more so than East German women, believe that mothers should stay at home while the children are very small (Statistisches Bundesamt 2006: 523).

The fourth set of potential conditions relate to rational decisions based on the situational costs versus the benefits of having children (Becker 1981; Huinink and Konietzka 2007). These costs are higher for highly educated and trained women due to their opportunity costs in career advancement and income loss when they choose to have a family.

Furthermore, institutionally determined opportunities and constraints set the parameters for individual and joint decisions. These apply above all to the provision of childcare and other conditions that tend to foster or hinder the combination of full-time employment and having children. The GDR provided public full-day facilities for toddlers through to school-age children. Although these facilities lost partial support after unification in East Germany, they have continued to function on a much higher level than in West Germany (Büchel and Spieß 2002; Trappe 2004; Huinink and Kreyenfeld 2006).

Finally, whatever the dispositions and characteristics of women may be, family formation also depends on the orientations and life circumstances of men as partners and spouses, and the manner in which men's and women's resources and dispositions are negotiated within those partnerships (Dinklage 2005; Helffrich and Essbach 2004; Kreyenfeld 2006; Kurz 2005; Schmitt 2005).

Huinink and Mayer proposed a theory regarding historical changes and the current relationship between social inequality and family formation:

> The families of origin and the socio-economic backgrounds of husband and wife, as well as the social status of the husband, were important and very visible in the first two [historical] phases of this process. In the first phase, the families of origin tended to be the major actors, at least for the main inheritors. In the second phase, the status of the husband and the parental resources of the wife dominated the family formation process. The question then arises: how does social stratification enter into family formation in its most recent phase?… first, the pattern of family formation for women (timing and events) are regulated to a large extent by women's educational participation, educational inequality, and prospects in the labor market; second, for men, their placement and career in the occupational class structure remains pervasive (Huinink and Mayer 1995: 169).

Huinink and Mayer argued that, in recent periods, traditional norms regarding gender roles and parenthood have mostly lost their regulative force in individual life planning. Direct parental influences on mate selection tend to become marginal and social pressures in regard to the timing and number of children born have diminished markedly in comparison with earlier historical periods. New normative models of parenting become effective, and children are treated more and more like "luxury goods," with the quality of children becoming much more salient than the quantity. The development of "child-centered" families gives rise to self-centered parents or non-parents. The norm of "responsible" parenthood provides many arguments for not having children, or for delaying parenthood. In the "egalitarian" mode of family formation, both men and women have more individualistic attitudes toward partnership and family, depending on their current and anticipated life course conditions and plans.

Under these circumstances, the expectation that fathers will take on the "male breadwinner" role is no longer taken for granted, and it becomes crucial for women to invest an extended period of their lives in education and preparation for a career, or at least a steady source of income. The meaning of women's education has shifted in the sense that women have become more interested in pursuing vocational and professional training than in getting a general education. Having gained equal or perhaps even more than equal access to general education, it is rational for women to take advantage of their investments by seeking skilled jobs with career prospects. Thus more women pursue education, training and a career and this has major consequences for the timing of marriage and childbearing.

As women come to see themselves less as part of a family as a collective actor maximizing the welfare of the family as a whole, a less extreme form of the division of labor within the household makes sense: "Women can pursue their own goals only insofar as they are achieving more equal power within the family… Thus it is in the interest of women to contribute not only a supplementary, but rather an autonomous and equal share of the household income" (Huinink and Mayer 1995: 173).

Because increasing numbers of women are participating in secondary and higher education, and are attaining correspondingly higher-status employment positions, women are now, for the first time, primarily stratified by their own status resources, and to a much lesser extent by the status resources of their parents or their husbands. Thus, women will be increasingly stratified in regard to (a) their educational and skill resources, and, as a consequence, in (b) the temporal transition to marriage and parenthood based on the amount of time spent in education and training, (c) their ideas and perceptions of norms regarding partnership and family, (d) the proportion of their lives they commit to employment, and (e) the economic resources they bring to the household budget.

How then would we expect parental social class and an individual's own education and class position to affect the timing of family formation? Coming from a higher social class may bring with it the experience of a childhood with siblings, and without the deprivation suffered by larger families of less advantaged status. Women who come from a higher social class are more likely to pursue higher

education. This should prolong the overall period spent in education and training among women coming from higher social classes. However, because material resources provide greater certainty about goals and their attainability, women who belong to higher classes may experience fewer delays before starting a career than women who come from the lower classes. For women of lower-class backgrounds, committing to a career is a prerequisite for achieving (upper) middle-class status. Thus, delaying marriage and childbirth might be part and parcel of the mobility process, while women of higher-class backgrounds can more easily afford to start a family with the material backing of her (and her partner's) parents.

Women have also changed their position in the marriage market. Whereas in the past, the market position of the husband (and his inherited wealth) determined his position in the marriage queue, for women, that position was largely determined by the relative rank and resources of her parents. In the "egalitarian" mode of family formation, the skills and earning power of women become an asset in the marriage market. Investments in education and career therefore should guide women and trigger a delay in the onset of family formation. We can therefore distinguish prototypically three class-specific strategies of family formation. First, women who have only basic levels of schooling, no training, and a low earning capacity are relatively unattractive on the marriage market, but they often see marriage and motherhood as their main avenue to gain status. That should either result in early marriage and first birth (at times, non-marital), or a delay due to the difficulty in finding an attractive partner. The second strategy is pursued by women with middle levels of schooling and training, e.g., *Realschule* and apprenticeship. They can enter the labor market relatively early, and do not typically have very strong career commitments. Thus, they should marry relatively early and may also have children relatively early. The third strategy of family formation is combining higher education and substantial career investments. This should result in significant delays in marriage. In these contexts, educational homogamy becomes the rule of the game (Blossfeld and Timm 2003) due to the following processes. First, with extended periods spent in education and training, the learning site becomes the favored meeting ground. Second, egalitarian mate selection implies that preference is given to partners who are alike in their orientations and attitudes, and similar in terms of the resources they bring to the union.

In West Germany, and to a lesser extent in East Germany, marriage and/or cohabitation precedes childbirth. Thus, finding the right partner who is able and willing to become a father is a necessary precondition of parenthood. Establishing a secure career is therefore a crucial step not only for women, but even more so for men. This might be problematic in the lower-class strategy, since potential partners might be well out of their education and training period, but still not anchored in a secure career. In the middle-level strategy, both women and men may have the best chances of having completed their training and entry into a career, and to be ready for family formation. The upper-middle-class strategy appears to be the most problematic. Given the length of German university studies, highly qualified women enter the labor market relatively late, and subsequently need some additional years to establish their careers. Since power relations within the partnership

or family are maintained either by the lower status of the woman or by an age differential (or both), highly qualified women might have particular difficulties in finding the right partner at the right time.

The effects of parental class background, one's education, as well as the individual's own class situation, operated very differently in the processes of family formation in West and East Germany, both during the division of Germany, as well as in the period immediately following reunification.

Both ideologically and in practice, class differences in the GDR were small. Due to the mass exodus of the self-employed and the upper-middle class, even most university graduates were of working-class origin. Class leveling was further advanced by very selective access to upper-secondary education, which favored those with working-class backgrounds and/or political loyalty. We therefore can expect more cross-class marriage and cohabitation in East Germany. This, in turn, widens considerably the pool of potential marriage partners in East Germany relative to West Germany, and should lead to earlier family formation and parenthood in East Germany.

4.3 The East and West German Contexts of Family Formation

Even though after reunification in 1990 both East and West German women were subject to institutional settings and policies that were technically identical, their respective contexts for family formation still differed in major ways. First, many potentially influential differences were fixed before 1989/1990. These differences are above all related to the kind of educational and vocational investments made by young women in the two parts of Germany, as well as to the social norms regarding women's full-time employment and the desirable ages for marriage and childbirth. The East German normative and actual regime of a very early start to family formation—based in part on generous family subsidies and access to housing (Huinink and Wagner 1995; Meyer and Schulze 1992; Kreyenfeld 2006; Scheel 2007; Sørensen and Trappe 1995)—not only set an example for the women of the 1971 cohort, but affected them at least to the extent that they lived in the GDR until about age 19. The age-specific birth rate of this cohort rose from 1986 to 1991, i.e., up to age 20, fell until age 23, and then rose again. The result is an age-specific birth rate with two peaks, one at age 20, and the other at around age 28 (Dorbritz 2008: 564; Scheel 2007: 30). But very different conditions also applied for the period after 1989–1990. On the positive side, East German facilities for early and all-day childcare were still vastly superior to those in West Germany. On the negative side, the disruptions of the privatization shock were felt particularly strongly by women, and especially by young women who had to find employment after vocational training. The Table 4.1 illustrates some of these differences.

Table 4.1 Educational attainment of women of the birth cohort 1971 in East and West Germany, in percent

	East Germany	West Germany
No leaving certificate	2.4	2.4
Hauptschule	3.8	26.9
Polytechnical School (*POS*)	70.7	2.6
Realschule/mittlere Reife	4.1	33.4
Vocational *Abitur*	3.2	6.3
General Abitur/EOS	16.7	27.1

EOS = Erweiterte Oberschule (selective upper secondary school)
Source Microcensus 2000–2005. We thank Markus Klein of the Mannheim Center for European Research (MZES) for these calculations

About a quarter of the West German women in this cohort left school at *Hauptschule* level, one-third with *Mittlere Reife,* and another third with vocational or general *Abitur. Hauptschule* is the lower secondary track, and implies 9 or 10 years of schooling. *Mittlere Reife* is the graduating certificate for the *Realschule* after 10 years of schooling, which is the intermediate secondary track. *Abitur* is the graduating certificate of the *Gymnasium* in West Germany after 13 years, or of the *EOS* (*Erweiterte Oberschule*) in East Germany after 12 years of schooling. Almost all East German women had at least a 10th-grade certificate of the Polytechnical Upper Secondary School, and only one-fifth completed the *Abitur*. Their lower rates of participation in upper secondary education meant that, on average, they finished their vocational training and entered the labor market earlier than West German women. At the beginning of the reunification period, about half of the East German women of the 1971 cohort were employed, two-fifths were still in training, 7 % were out of the labor force, and 7 % were unemployed. Among West German women of the same age, 45 % were still in training, one-tenth were still in school, 38 % were working, 5 % were out of the labor force, and 1 % were unemployed. Unemployment among East German women then rose quickly, to about 10 % through the ensuing years.

East German women of the 1971 cohort often could not enter their desired occupation, and had to, on average, spend more periods in full-time training than West German women, before finding a place in the labor market. East German women changed jobs more quickly, and had to change their occupation more frequently (Table 4.2; Mayer and Schulze 2009, Chap. 4).

These data show that the work trajectories of both East and West German women of our cohort were complex and often difficult, but they were considerably more challenging for East German women. The fact that women in East and West Germany had, on average, a second training period (here defined as full-time training of at least 6 months) could be a major condition for delaying motherhood, especially if we take into account the fact that second training courses are often undertaken after several years of employment. However, in regard to subjective perceptions of occupational opportunities, East and West German women are fairly similar.

Table 4.2 Labor market experiences of East and West German women of the birth cohort 1971

	East	West
Could not realize occupational goal, in percent	53.4	49.3
Mean number of training spells	1.96	1.80
Mean number of jobs	3.62	3.64
Mean duration in first job, in months	45.0	50.0
Mean duration in first occupation, in months	106.0	145.0
Ever unemployed, in percent	59.0	37.0
Mean duration unemployed, in months*	29.7	15.0
Perceived bad or very bad occupational opportunities, in percent		
in 1996–1998	16.7	17.7
in 2000	26.1	22.2
in 2005	22.5	28.3

Source German Life History Study (Mayer and Schulze 2009, Chaps. 2 and 3). Number of training spells, jobs, and occupational changes refers to the time up to age 34
*For those who have been unemployed at least once

If we follow the lives of our sample throughout the available observation period up to age 34, we find that between 5 and 10 % of the West German women were unemployed in any given month, compared with 10–15 % of the East German women, with unemployment rates increasing with age. West German women up to age 34 were twice as likely as East German women to be absent from the labor force (mostly for family reasons). This shows that East German women tried to hold on to full-time employment despite the severe situation on the labor market (Mayer and Schulze 2009, Chap. 3). However, we can also demonstrate that the likelihood of ever having been unemployed was, at 59 %, almost twice as high among East as among West German women; and that the total amount of time spent in unemployment was twice as long among East as among West German women.

From the data of our panel study (see Sect. 4.4), we can also provide an overview of family forms and family values (Table 4.3). In 2005, East German women were less likely to be married and more likely to be cohabiting, but were more likely to be mothers than West German women. An East German woman of this cohort was almost four times as likely to have grown up in a family in which her mother worked full-time until she was 16 years old. In regard to family norms, East German women were more likely to see marriage as an obsolete institution, and to believe that marriage is not necessary for raising children. Unmarried West German women were three times more likely than unmarried East German women to see children as the most important reason to marry. Among unmarried West German women, twice as many said they would like to marry, but had not yet found the right partner. Among those women who had not yet had a child at age 34, West German women were somewhat more likely to say that their partner did not want children and that children are a burden, while East German women were somewhat more likely to say that their job situation was too insecure. While most of the latter differences are not statistically significant, they are part of a consistent pattern.

Table 4.3 Family forms and family values—East and West German women of the 1971 cohort, in percent

	East	West
Ever married at age 34	57.4	74.7
Cohabiting at age 34	16.0	5.9
Mother at age 34	73.4	68.0
Mother always worked until age 16	81.9	24.5
Marriage is an obsolete institution, agree	19.1	12.4
Marriage is the best way to raise children	24.1	40.0
Would like to marry, but have not yet found the right partner*	16.6	31.5
Would only marry for the sake of children*	8.4	25.0
A toddler suffers when his mother is working	26.1	46.3
Best form of child care when mother is working		
Father	28.9	58.2
Day care	54.2	9.2
Partner does not want children**	3.7	2.9
Job situation too insecure**	3.3	3.9
Children are too much of a burden**	4.1	3.7

*Only unmarried respondents
**Women without children, mean value for 1–5 scale with 1 = full agreement, 5 = full disagreement

Norms and perceptions about child care also differ greatly between the two Germanies. While only 26 % of East German women agree with the statement, "a small child suffers when its mother is working", 46 % of West German women agree. When asked to name the best form of child care, if it is not provided by the mother, 54 % of East German women, but only 9 % of West German women picked day care, while 58 % of West German women selected the father.

4.4 Data and Methods

The quantitative data used in this study were collected as part of three different surveys of the German Life History Study (Mayer 2008).[2] All surveys of the German Life History Study concentrate on small ranges of birth cohorts in order to capture fine-grained period and cohort effects, and to focus on retrospective event histories in separate life domains, such as residence, family of origin, marital family (including partners and partner's characteristics), education, training, employment, and careers. Events and transitions were recorded forward in time

[2] The data of the German Life History Study (GLHS) is being distributed through the *Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung* (GESIS) in Cologne. Basic information and all methods of documentation can be downloaded from www.yale.edu/ciqle, as well as from the web page of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin.

and dated monthly. The 1996–1998 data on the East German cohort born 1971 (n = 610) was collected mostly by computer-assisted phone interviews (Matthes 2002; http://www.yale.edu/ciqle/GLHS/index.html). Sampling was based on a regionally stratified random sample drawn from the former GDR central population register. The response rate was 49.5 %. These data include a few cases in which East Germans of the initial sample had moved to West Germany. The East German 1971 cohort was chosen because its members had finished vocational training at the time that the Wall came down, and were thus the first cohort to enter the post-socialist labor market under the new "system." In 1998 and 1999, we collected data for the 1964 and 1971 birth cohorts in West Germany (n = 2,909), again by telephone interview, in cooperation with the Federal Institute for Labor Market Research (IAB) (Hillmert 2004). The response rate was 66.1 %. Both the 1964 and 1971 West German cohorts were of particular interest due to the economic downswing in the 1980s and 1990s, and the presumed effects of international competitive pressures.[3] The 1971 cohort part of that data set is being used in this chapter.[4]

In 2005, we re-interviewed 1,073 of the 1,805 men and women born in 1971 from both the 1996–1998 East German Study and the 1997–1998 West German Study (Matthes 2005) in our own telephone laboratory at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. Field time for the quantitative panel ran from early 2005 to the end of June 2005, and was truncated due to restricted funds.[5] Selectivity, therefore, is a consideration. However, as Table 4.8 shows, panel respondents and panel non-respondents differ only partially in regard to the extent they had ever married or had a first child at the point of the first wave. West German panel respondents have higher rates of marriage and higher rates of childbirth than non-respondents, while for East German men and women, both marriage and birth rates are almost identical for panel and non-panel respondents. Thus, our West German panel selection appears to have delayed family formation to a lesser degree than the non-respondents. It should be noted, moreover, that the estimates of vital demographic rates with the data from the German Life History Study are (given the small sample sizes) astonishingly robust in comparison to corresponding census figures (see Rohwer and Pötter 2003; Scheel 2007: 57–58).[6]

The quantitative data used here come from retrospective surveys, and are therefore subject to recall measurement error. In regard to event-based life history data, the recall error is only a minor fraction of the total survey error (Groves

[3] This interplay of cohort size, labor market conditions, and policy measures was the central focus of our monograph on the latter two cohorts (Hillmert and Mayer 2004).

[4] All the data of these surveys were collected in cooperation with the survey firm "Infas" (Bad Godesberg).

[5] The panel data for the East Germans again includes cases which had moved to West Germany.

[6] Scheel (2007: 58) computed the East German cumulative cohort fertility up to age 34 from the panel data of the German Life History Study (1.18) and the data from official statistics (1.20). The small parameter difference might be accounted for by the West migrants in our East German sample.

Table 4.4 Qualitative study birth cohort 1971—distribution of cases according to selection criteria

	East Germany		West Germany	
Education/training	Lower	Higher	Lower	Higher
Women	5(2)	3(2)	4(2)	4(2)
Men	6	1	4	3

Education/training: lower apprenticeship with *Mittlere Reife, POS* or *Abitur*; higher: University and *Fachhochschule*. Numbers in brackets refer to the cases selected for this chapter

1989), and depends to a high degree on both the instruments of data collection, and the time and money spent on editing the data. In the German Life History Study, we made huge investments in both of these aspects of data quality (Mayer 2008; Reimer 2005a, b). For example, the 2005 panel study was combined with a precursor methods study in which we developed and tested computer-assisted questionnaires informed by the psychology of autobiographical memory to minimize recall error (Reimer and Matthes 2006).

How did we select the cases for the qualitative study, and how did we select the cases from the available narrative interviews for inclusion in this chapter? Forming the basis for the qualitative sample were 1,073 realized interviews from the panel study. As a first step, we selected a roughly similar number of primary sampling units (PSUs) for West and East Germany. The rationale for selecting according to PSUs was a desire to reduce interviewer transaction cost. Within each region, we then selected north–south and urban–rural PSUs. Within each PSU, we then drew up a list of men and women with lower and higher levels of education and training, roughly similar to the respective population distributions. These addresses constituted the pool of potential respondents. The process of matching the respondent and the interviewer schedules then, finally, determined the actual qualitative sample. The qualitative sample is somewhat biased because we clearly missed cases of very low educational attainment (only *Hauptschule* in the West and fewer than 10 years of schooling in the East). Out of the 30 narrative interviews, there were 16 women interview subjects, and we selected eight cases, each according to the East/West and higher/lower education/training criteria. In addition, our selection reflects the differences in the overall distribution of women with and without children in East and West Germany. For West Germany, we selected three women with no children and one woman with a child, while for East Germany we selected two women with no children and two women with children.[7] Field time for the qualitative study took place mostly in 2005, with some additional interviews conducted in 2004 and 2006. All the names of the respondents in the qualitative case studies were changed, and local references were "blurred." We also excluded or slightly changed other information through which respondents could be too easily identified (Table 4.4).

[7] In our book (Mayer and Schulze 2009) we have documented all cases in detail. This allows us to compare the cases selected here for interpretation with the other half of the women.

In the present study, we are pursuing a modest mixed-methods strategy that combines quantitative and qualitative data. We do not, for example, run parallel analyses on the qualitative and quantitative data in order to test theoretical assumptions about "causes." Nor are we using the quantitative data to test hypotheses derived from the interpretation of the qualitative material, or, conversely, to probe into mechanisms suggested by the narrative evidence through a quantitative analysis. We also did not select our qualitative cases from particular cells produced by prior numerical evidence in causal models. All these are legitimate and potentially fruitful uses of mixed methods. Our aims are, however, more modest. We will use the full quantitative data to establish (a) the explananda for the present study, i.e., ages at union formation and at first birth for the 1971 cohort in comparison to earlier cohorts, and educational differentials in age at first birth; and (b) to document, as in Sect. 4.3, the contexts of family formation processes in the two Germanies. In regard to the selected cases, we are also using the quantitative materials from two surveys (c) for the factual reconstruction of the educational, training, residential, and family histories. This information provides the basis for the individual case descriptions in the text below. Finally, we are using the qualitative materials from the narrative interviews to probe the causes and mechanisms, i.e., the vocabulary of motives (Bernardi and Keim 2007; Bernardi et al. 2008) suggested by theories as outlined in Sect. 4.2.

Our analytic strategy in selecting, presenting, and interpreting the qualitative data was as follows. We first sorted the materials from the narrative interviews case by case according to major substantive areas, such as social background, childhood and schooling, training and transition to labor markets, careers, partnerships and family formation, as well as political orientations. For this chapter, we then concentrated on the material on partnerships and family formation, presenting to the greatest extent possible non-redundant quotes for each case. As a third step, for purposes of interpretation, we looked for the appearance or non-appearance of certain topics, such as the desire for children, perceptions of work-family balance, and the family orientations of partners. Finally, we assessed the consistency of the respective case interpretations of the two authors.

We are, in addition, looking for mechanisms and topics which are not the main focus of the theoretical debate. In this sense, this should be considered a descriptive analysis in the quantitative part, and an exploratory, hypothesis-generating exercise in the qualitative part.

We suggest that the various causes and mechanisms outlined in Sect. 4.2 ideally require different methods of data collection and data analysis. First, it should be noted that both quantified life histories and qualitative biographical self-accounts provide very rich data on the synchronic and diachronic contexts of individual lives. Thus, the "rich context" argument cannot be claimed only by the qualitative side of the theoretical debate. Therefore, we have to look for more subtle differences between the two approaches. Life course contingencies might trigger a delay in family formation without conscious deliberations on the part of the actors. For example, parents or young girls may not make a decision about their age-dependent fertility probabilities when they decide to enter *Gymnasium* at

age 10, but this step might lead to a sequence of activities and commitments in education, training, and professional work which can push the potential onset of family formation from the late teens to the early thirties.

Likewise, continuities and discontinuities of working lives are best captured in standardized event histories, but their subjective interpretation as biographical uncertainties involve perceptions and subjective assessments. Therefore, standardized reconstructions of life courses will most likely produce the best data for capturing life course contingencies and complex job trajectories, while biographical uncertainties will more likely reveal themselves in qualitative interviews.

Similarly, while institutional and context conditions can be derived from systematic comparisons between countries and sub-systems—such as East and West Germany before and after reunification—value commitments should manifest themselves more validly in subjective accounts. Moreover, the question of whether fixed value orientations, adaptive value orientations, or short-term rational choice calculations will prevail can best be determined on the basis of extensive qualitative materials. Data on the life courses of partners and spouses are not well covered, even in extensive life history studies like ours, and evidence of the partner's influences, beliefs, and intentions can be better retrieved from subjective accounts. Finally, before we actually attempt to formulate any explanation or draw any conclusions, it is crucial to establish the distribution of the phenomena under study. Therefore, we will use the data from our representative sample surveys to calculate the age-specific rates of cohabitation, marriage, and first birth. We will use the data on standardized life histories for reconstructing the individual temporal patterns of the education-training-career trajectories, and we will use the data from the qualitative interviews to attribute the degree of biographical uncertainty, the value commitments in regard to marriage and children, and the degree to which situation-bound rational choice deliberations prevail.

4.5 Entry into Unions and Onset of First Birth of East and West German Women Born 1919–1971

As a descriptive background, we first look at the ages of first cohabitation, first marriage, and first birth among West and East German women. The main purpose of this exercise is to locate our specific cohort in overall cohort development, and to establish our explananda for the 1971 population as a whole. For West Germany, the estimates describe the women born in 1929–1931, 1939–1941, 1949–1951, 1954–1956, 1959–1961, 1964, and 1971; and for East Germany, the estimates describe the women born in 1929–1931, 1939–1941, 1951–1953, 1959–1961, and 1971. As a short cut, we will denote the cohort groups in the following text by their midpoint years.

Entry into cohabitation and first marriage—West German women (Table 4.5). The (relatively few) women of the cohort born around 1930 who entered a

Table 4.5 Medians and quartiles of the age of women at their first union formation in West Germany

	Birth cohort	25 %	Median	75 %
First marriage	1929–1931	21.3	23.7	26.6
	1939–1941	20.4	22.2	25.0
	1949–1951	19.6	21.5	24.6
	1954–1956	20.7	23.3	30.3
	1959–1961	21.5	25.6	/
	1964	22.6	25.5	30.4
	1971	23.8	28.3	/
First cohabitation	1929–1931	24.2	26.4	/
	1939–1941	21.1	25.3	/
	1949–1951	21.1	24.7	/
	1954–1956	19.8	22.0	27.2
	1959–1961	19.3	22.3	/
	1964	20.4	23.0	27.2
	1971	21.1	23.8	28.6
First marriage or cohabitation	1929–1931	21.3	23.7	26.5
	1939–1941	20.4	22.1	24.8
	1949–1951	19.5	21.4	23.8
	1954–1956	19.7	21.5	24.8
	1959–1961	19.4	22.0	25.8
	1964	20.5	22.8	26.3
	1971	20.9	23.6	28.1

Source German life history study, Kaplan–Meier estimates. Slashes indicate that the respective parameters could not be observed at the time of the interview

non-marital union did so relatively late, by age 26, and later than those who married immediately. The age at entry into cohabitation then fell to age 22 for the 1955 cohort, and increased again up to almost age 24 for the 1971 cohort. Age at first marriage was 24 for the 1930 cohort of West German women, declined to almost age 21 for the 1950 cohort, and then rose again to a very high median age of 28 for the 1971 cohort. Overall stability is much higher if we take age at entry to any union—either cohabitation or marriage—as our criterion. Except for the 1930 and the 1971 cohorts, with median union entry ages of 23.7 and 23.6, respectively, all intervening cohorts entered their first union at around age 22.[8]

Entry into cohabitation and marriage—East German women (Table 4.6). East German women born between 1930 and 1960 entered their first cohabitation[9] at around age 22. The 1930 cohort had the highest age at 22.6, while the 1940 cohort had the lowest age at 20.9. The age at first cohabitation rose only moderately for

[8] Slashes denote that the respective parameters could not be observed at the time of the interview. These restrictions apply especially to the cohorts born around 1950 and 1960, who were observed up to age 27/28; and the cohorts born around 1955, who were observed up to about age 34/35 (for the survey designs, see also Mayer 2008).

[9] Cohabitation is defined here as sharing a household together for at least one month.

Table 4.6 Medians and quartiles of the age of women at their first union formation in East Germany

	Birth cohort	25 %	Median	75 %
First marriage	1929–1931	20.9	22.5	25.7
	1939–1941	20.0	21.4	23.8
	1951–1953	19.8	21.1	23.6
	1959–1961	20.0	21.5	24.3
	1971	24.5	32.8	/
First cohabitation	1929–1931	20.5	22.6	28.9
	1939–1941	19.2	20.9	24.4
	1951–1953	19.4	21.3	25.1
	1959–1961	19.3	21.1	24.8
	1971	19.8	21.8	26.1
First marriage or cohabitation	1929–1931	20.6	22.2	24.8
	1939–1941	19.8	21.3	23.5
	1951–1953	19.4	20.8	22.8
	1959–1961	19.3	20.8	22.6
	1971	19.8	21.7	25.5

Source German life history study, Kaplan–Meier estimates

the 1971 cohort, to 21.8. A quarter of the East German women of the latter cohort started to cohabit by 1991, at the height of the transition turbulence. In this respect, they did not behave differently from earlier generations. Half of that cohort was cohabiting by 1993, and only the third quarter passed through initial cohabitation by 1997 with a further delay of about 2 years (age 26.1). Thus, cohabitation behavior still followed conventional ages for most women of the 1971 cohort. Ages at first marriage among East German women trailed ages at first cohabitation very closely—with about half a year delay—until the cohort born in 1960. We observe a phenomenal increase for the East German 1971 cohort, when the median age at first marriage, 33, rose beyond that of West German women. If we are looking at ages at any union entry, we find a very remarkable degree of stability: all cohorts show median ages between 21 and 22, with a notable increase in the variance for the most recent cohort.

Transition to first birth—West German women (Table 4.7). The delay in childbearing among West German women was even more pronounced than the delay in marriage. Women born around 1930 were 26 years old when they had their first child. This age dropped to 24 for the 1940 cohort, and has since risen continuously, reaching age 31 for the 1971 cohort. Kreyenfeld (2006: 19) gives a corresponding estimate of 29.8 for the 1970–1973 cohorts based on microcensus data. To the extent that we are already able to observe their delay in childbearing, given data and time limitations, it is pervasive throughout the cohort, e.g., even the age at which 25 % of women pass the childbirth threshold has shifted upwards, corresponding to the shift in median age.

Transition to first birth—East German women (Table 4.7). Until reunification, age at first birth for East German women decreased, from a median age 23.5 for the

Table 4.7 Medians and quartiles for the age of women at the birth of their first child in West and East Germany

	Birth cohort	25 %	Median	75 %
West Germany	1929–1931	22.3	25.8	29.3
	1939–1941	21.6	23.8	27.9
	1949–1951	20.9	25.0	31.0
	1954–1956	22.8	27.0	34.6
	1959–1961	24.0	28.2	/
	1964	24.8	28.1	34.4
	1971	26.0	30.8	/
East Germany	1929–1931	21.2	23.5	26.3
	1939–1941	20.3	22.7	25.6
	1951–1953	20.3	22.3	24.8
	1959–1961	20.5	21.8	23.8
	1971	23.5	27.6	/

Source German life history study, Kaplan–Meier estimates

1930 cohort to 22 for the 1960 cohort. Not only did age at first birth decrease, the age range at first birth for East German women also tightened (the inter-quartile deviation shrank from 5 to 3 years). In 1989–1990, the period birth rate plunged dramatically, falling almost by half. At that time, there was much speculation about whether East German women would just delay childbearing, or whether they would stop having (or having more) children (Dorbritz 2008; Witte and Wagner 1995; Konietzka and Kreyenfeld 2004; Huinink and Kreyenfeld 2006). For our 1971 cohort, we (so far) observe two tendencies. There was a marked delay in childbearing in the aftermath of reunification. The age at first birth rose by almost 6 years, up to age 27.6. Kreyenfeld (2006: 19) gives a median estimate for the aggregate 1970–1973 cohort of age 27.1, based on microcensus data.

However, while the delay in marriage was highly consequential for childbearing in the West, a delay in marriage in the East did not imply that first childbirth was delayed to the same extent. This is partly due to the high incidence

Table 4.8 Percentages ever married and having a first child—East and West German women born 1971 at age 27 and at age 34

	Percentage ever married	Percentage parent
East Germany		
Survey 1996/97	28.5	38.8
Survey 1996/97—only panel respondents	29.3	36.4
Panel 2005	57.1	73.4
West Germany		
Survey 1998	45.4	33.8
Survey 1998—only panel respondents	52.2	38.8
Panel 2005	72.3	66.0

Source German life history study—Kaplan–Meier estimates; the estimates for the 2005 panel include the data for all respondents in the 1998 survey

of non-marital births in the East. In 1989, the proportion of single mothers to all mothers in the GDR was 33 %. During the time after reunification, this share grew rapidly, and reached 57 % in 2003, or 36 % points higher than the corresponding proportion of single mothers in the West (Konietzka and Kreyenfeld 2005: 33).

These cohort comparisons underscore the extraordinary position of the 1971 cohort in regard to delayed family formation. While age at first union entry remained constant in West Germany, and increased only moderately in East Germany, age at marriage rose in both parts of Germany, and dramatically so in the East. Thus, in both parts of Germany, delays in childbearing cannot be due to delays in union formation per se. As a consequence, at about age 27 (the time of our first interview), 45 % of the West German women had married, and 34 % had children; at about the same age, 29 % of the East German women were married and 39 % had a child. At about age 34, at the time of our second interview in 2005, 72 % of the West German women had married and 66 % of them had at least one child, while 57 % of the East German women had married and 73 % had at least one child (Table 4.8).

So why is it that women in both East and West Germany are delaying family formation for so long and why is it that East German women, despite all the disruption resulting from unification, still have children earlier? These are the extraordinary phenomena we want to understand.

A first clue can be found in the distribution of age at first birth according to education (Kreyenfeld 2006). In West Germany, the difference in median age at first birth between women with *Volksschule* certificates and women with higher levels of education rose by almost 10 years between the cohorts born around 1920 and the cohorts born around 1950. It then decreased slightly and stayed fairly stable, at a difference of about 8 years (Fig. 4.1). In contrast, in East Germany for

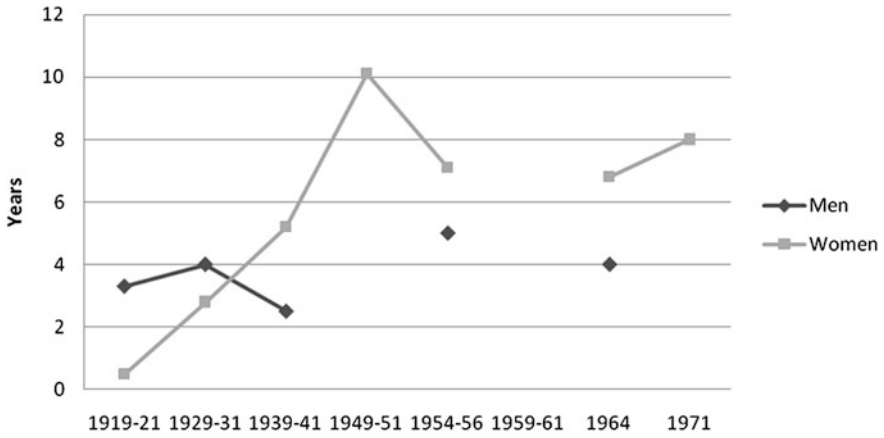

Fig. 4.1 Difference in median ages at the birth of the first child between the lowest and highest educational categories, West Germany. *Note* In some of the survey years median ages were not observed. For the 1949–1951 and 1959–1961 cohorts this is due to the upper age limit (ca. 28–30 years) of the study

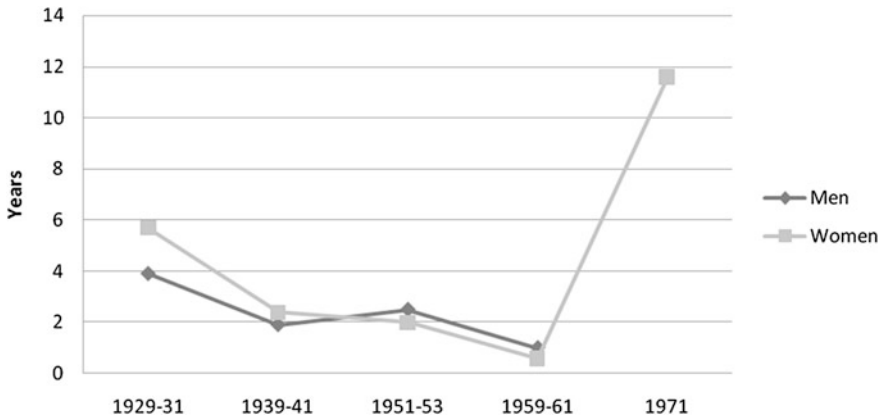

Fig. 4.2 Difference in median ages at the birth of the first child between the lowest and the highest educational categories, East Germany

the cohorts born between 1930 and 1960, the differences between women of low and high education in the median age at first birth decreased by about 6 years, and almost disappeared. It is only for the 1971 cohort that educational differences had a major impact on age at first birth. This difference shot up by almost 12 years for our most recent cohort (Fig. 4.2). Kreyenfeld (2006) showed that, starting with the 1962–1965 cohorts, and even more so among the 1966–1969 cohorts, the educational differential age at first birth in East Germany had already increased, i.e., those with *Abitur* had already started delaying motherhood before and immediately after reunification.

As Cox models (Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2) show, the changes in educational composition account for almost all of the cohort differences in age at first birth for West German women born between around 1940 and 1964, while only the youngest cohort experienced a further delay in childbearing not accounted for by increasing educational attainment. In contrast, none of the changes in age at first birth in East Germany can be explained by educational composition and its change over time.

4.6 Multiple Constraints, Ambivalence and Resignation: Why Women Delay or Abandon Family Formation in West Germany

In the theory section above, we elaborated major reasons why women might delay or abandon family formation: the lengthening and increasing complexity of education, training and career entry, the uncertainties of employment and occupational trajectories, prior value commitments, problems in combining family and work, and the life circumstances/preferences of spouses.

In this section, we present three cases of West German women who are still childless at age 34 in an effort to probe which of the above conditions are manifest and predominant in their articulated vocabulary of motives, and how, in their own view, these motives have changed over time. We will then present a case of earlier childbearing to assess whether and to what extent such delaying factors were absent. Frau Abach, Frau Dr. Grawitz, and Frau Poldinger are examples for the delay in having children due to prolonged periods of training, complex work trajectories, and partner difficulties, which resulted in a reduced or relinquished desire to have children. Frau Kretschmann is an example of a woman who has a lower level of training and who experienced relatively early marriage and childbearing, but who faced similar problems in combining work and family. Frau Abach and Frau Poldinger come from upper–middle-class families. Frau Dr. Grawitz comes from a middle–middle-class family, and Frau Kretschmann from a working-class family. Frau Grawitz and Frau Poldinger have secured upper–middle-class positions by means of their own professional status, but, at least for Frau Grawitz, it is unclear whether her household class position would match her social class of origin (given the class position of her partner). Frau Abach has been sliding downwards on the social scale, because given her own occupational status, she cannot maintain the social class position of her parents.

Moving in together was already too much for him.

Frau Abach: *Abitur*, qualified clerical employee, no career, no current partner, no children.

Frau Abach grew up as the youngest of three children in the South of Germany. Her father was an engineer in a large electric corporation. Her mother worked as a bank clerk, but was at home during her childhood. Her older sister trained as translator; her older brother studied geography and electrical engineering at university, but dropped out of both courses of study. He now works as an employee in a bank. Both siblings are married and have children. After the *Abitur* she had no clear idea of what she wanted to do. She trained for 3 years as a translator, and then switched to a two-year apprenticeship as a hat designer, after which she studied English at university, but quit after a year. At age 26, she moved out of the parental home into her own apartment. She worked as a clerk in the health sector from 1997 to 1999, as a receptionist from 1999 to 2000, and as managerial assistant and editor in the media sector from 2000 to 2002. She then moved to North Germany for a similar position from 2002 to 2003, followed by her current position as a paralegal, which she started upon returning to South Germany, and at which she currently earns 1,700 Euro net per month. Frau Abach has had several relationships, with two of them lasting 2 years, and the most recent one lasting 6 years. In her last relationship, she lived more than 600 km from her partner, but he did not want to move. Shortly after she moved to his city, they ended the relationship. She never cohabited with her partner(s). In her response to the standardized panel interview, she answered that she did not want to have children, but the narrative interview revealed a much more ambivalent attitude. In 1997, she rated her job opportunities as quite good, though less so in 2004. Marriage for her

is not important, except if she has children. But, at the same time, "having a good marriage or partnership" ranks very high among her life goals.[10]

> We saw each other and instantly fell for each other. And he said to his mother, who was also there, I would marry this girl on the spot. If he had only done it (laughing)! But then he became afraid. When it got more serious I told him, 'I will move to your city.' But when I got this job I did not want to leave and asked him to join me. But he did not.

Eventually she moved to the city where her boyfriend lived, but into her own apartment.

> Marriage is not so important for me. I did not ask him whether he wanted to marry me. Moving in together would have been the next step. But he didn't want to. That was already too much for him. My goodness, I thought. He dodged the issue and asked whether moving in together would really be good for us, whether we would not get on each other's nerves, and so on… as if it would have been the worst… No, my boyfriend did not want a family. That would have been a responsibility. He is a free spirit, he did not want to commit and he did not want to have children. That was a horrible idea to him… Although he is very good with children and all children love him, he was a hit with my nieces and nephews, but there is nothing I can do if he does not want to have children himself… At the moment I am quite, I am quite happy as it is now. It would be nice if a great man would come along, I would like that. But I am not actively searching either and where should I search? It should just happen again by itself.
>
> To have children is not my wish, and it is not the end of the world if I do not have children within the two next years. But I am sure I could handle it and I am sure I would enjoy being a mother. But if it does not happen, it does not happen. I have many single girlfriends who are also in no rush. So I am not alone in this… Maybe we women must make the decision for ourselves. But I do not want to be a single mom. It is easy to get pregnant, no problem, but I do not want to do it on my own. I want to have a wonderful family like I had myself. It should happen before I get to be 36. Otherwise the age gap will be too big. You probably do not see that well anymore what children need and how they tick. I see this already with my nephews. I have no clue what they are about. Embarrassing!

This long citation expresses Frau Abach's ambivalence well. She loved her boyfriend. She would have liked to have a child, and is confident she would have been a good mother, and would have enjoyed it. But her partner had to agree. Half resigned, she says that she does not need to have a child immediately. But, on the other hand, she does not want to be too old when she has children. Comparing herself with her peers, she concludes that it is not so bad, because her girlfriends have not rushed into parenthood either. And, in apparent resignation, she says, "If it does not happen, it does not happen;" i.e., finding a partner who wants to have a child and getting pregnant.

Thus, for Frau Abach, it is neither a strong commitment to career, nor a desire to spend her money and time on leisure or consumption, which keeps her from having children. The fact that she passed through a sequence of three periods of post-school qualification may have delayed the onset of family formation. It is also noteworthy that she left the parental home when she was 26 years old and always

[10] Response to attitude item in the quantitative study.

lived alone. Also, her move from South to North Germany and back may have delayed settling down. She is furthermore somewhat exceptional in not valuing either marriage or children very highly, while at the same time cherishing her own family and childhood as a high standard to be achieved. While all these aspects might have contributed to a delay, the most obvious reason seems to lie in her relationships. It was her former partner of 6 years who did not even want to cohabit, much less marry and have children. But the reluctance of her partners to commit themselves has a certain counterpart in Frau Abach's own reluctance to settle on a certain occupation and a certain job. Starting a family may also be made difficult given the lofty example provided by her own family.

How has education and social class affected the onset of childbearing in Frau Abach's case? The resources of the parental family allowed her to live at home for a longer time than usual, and to engage in three different episodes of vocational and professional training.

> As a woman in this society, you constantly face hurdles, if you are to advance in a profession.
>
> Dr. Grawitz: medical doctor in specialty training, lives with an unemployed partner.

Frau Dr. Grawitz was born and raised in (West) Berlin. Her mother was born in Czechoslovakia, studied languages, worked as a teacher, and now works as a clerical worker in public administration. Her father died when she was four, and was also a medical doctor. She has a younger brother who only finished *Mittlere Reife*, and completed an apprenticeship as an electronics worker in a big electric firm. He then worked for a big electronics company, but became unemployed when the firm closed down. He now does the same work as a temp. Dr. Grawitz studied medicine and is training to become a specialist in a hospital. She lived with her mother until age 31. Her partner of 9 years is qualified as a metal worker, but worked in a semiskilled job and is currently unemployed. They cohabit but keep two apartments, since he would otherwise lose his unemployment assistance. In early 2005, she told us that she wanted to have two children, and the first within 3 years. Some months later, in the biographical interview, she was more resigned, and only wanted one child. This ambivalence was actually already visible in the standardized interviews, in which she first said she wanted two children, but later fully agreed with the statement, "My occupational future is too uncertain to have children." She also agrees with the items, "Marriage as an institution is obsolete," and, "I do not need a piece of paper to have a stable relationship."

> First I want to finish my training. The hospital where I am working now is okay, but everything is bigger and more anonymous. But I have no choice, because I want to finish my training as quickly as possible. Also in regard to family planning, I am not getting any younger. I will be 35 then, and must decide what I want to do …I would not want to be 40 when I become a mother …either it is too late or you still have a chance …but under no circumstances do I want to interrupt my training now. …I do not have children yet, but it is still a possibility. But it is difficult. I think as a woman in this society who wants to have a career, you get only stones thrown into your path. I see this with my girlfriends and acquaintances, who are also professionals, who often can't return to their job the way they would have liked to. You really have to think hard about whether you can combine family

and a career …Originally I wanted to have two children. Now, I think one would be enough. That has changed and it's very sad. But that's just how it is, and it is not right. A friend of mine has a one-year-old daughter. For her it is a bit different because she is a civil servant and has a secure job and she can also work part time if she wants to. But even she is always running into difficulties with finding child care. I think this situation is impossible. It is no surprise that, as I heard on the radio, Berlin women on average do not even want one child. Clearly the basics are somehow wrong… I see my male colleagues, they all go up the ladder, almost none [of the upper hospital ranks] are women. The women just can't manage both… And the men rush ahead and you have no chance to catch up. Or the family suffers. Then I can forget a family… To open a private practice is too risky I would not want to go into debt for that. I want to become an anesthesiologist, and this is pretty difficult… Another possibility would be to go abroad where conditions for child care are better… especially in the Scandinavian countries, where hospitals offer child care. You could not dream of that here. This is totally utopian…I have given up on planning anything, because anyhow you do not know what will come. …Today it is really not possible anymore to make definite plans. I used to bet that at age 30 you knew that you had a permanent position in a hospital. Now I have just a two-year contract, and then everything is open again…You cannot plan anything. My last contract was for 3 years and that was not bad. I was lucky then. Others had only one-year contracts. In effect, you cannot make plans for the future. You cannot buy real estate, you cannot settle down in a city, that does not work. It is the same for many people, I am not the only one. I will just have to see…For me it was always clear, that I first want to pursue my occupational goals. But even when I was 20, I also wanted to have two children. This has changed. Now I do not think that the absolute way to live a happy life is to raise children. I see this differently now. But I would still somehow like to achieve that. It would be a great experience, even if it is only one child. It is important that you can convey your experiences to the next generation… I see how wonderful that can be among our friends.

My partner has a positive attitude towards children, but… he of course first wants to have a job…And I am lucky that my partner wants to share in parenting. For some time, one could stay at home and then the other. But I think for the first year, you want to enjoy everything, I would want that. But it is a full year and in medicine you can hardly afford it…At the moment, it is up in the air whether we will have children at all. At the moment I don't know. I think I would like to have a child—you might miss something otherwise when you get older. But I do not see it the same way as I did 10 years ago, that it is a must. That it is necessary in order to be fully happy. I do not see it like that any more. Then I could not imagine a future without children. But it was clear that I wanted to pursue my career first. It would be nice to have children, and my partner has the same view, but it does not have to happen at all costs…

Nowadays even 42-year-olds can become mothers. That is not a problem any more. But, no, for me I would not want that. But I see no problem in having a child in my mid-thirties. Of course the clock is ticking, but this is no problem for me… just let it tick. You cannot plan everything. If you then want a child, it might not happen, that's just it. Somehow you will have to live with it. You cannot take it for granted, like when I am 35 years old, I will have my specialty, then we try to have a child and a month later it shall happen, maybe it won't. I will have to see. …I don't put myself under pressure. That is not how it is with me.

Frau Dr. Grawitz' delay of motherhood reflects the demands and uncertainties of her professional career. She studied medicine and wants to finish her advanced training as quickly as possible. She chose her medical specialty with consideration of its compatibility with raising children, i.e., the possibility of working part time. After finishing her five-year specialty, she wants to start a family, which she cannot do while she is in training due to shift work and long hours. Originally, she

wanted to have two children, but has become increasingly pessimistic about it. Now the possibility of having a single child seems to be the best she can hope for. And she already anticipates that having this child will hurt her chances of promotion. Her partner supports her wish for a child, but his long period of unemployment also has negative consequences for their plans, because she anticipates that they will not have enough money to live on once she reduces her work hours. Although the demands and uncertainties of her medical career are clearly an important factor for her, two other aspects come into play. On the one hand, she still upholds the norm that she wants to reduce her working time to care for a small child and cannot see alternatives to that. On the other hand, she does not openly consider the option that her partner could stay at home to care for the child, although he is currently unemployed. Frau Dr. Grawitz wants to combine a professional career and a family, but sees many obstacles in realizing that goal due to the demands and/or uncertainties in her own and her partner's careers. She has already reduced her family goal from two children to one child, and anticipates that even that goal might be unrealistic.

How do social class and education enter as factors in the family formation process for Frau Dr. Grawitz? The class situation of her parents is ambivalent. It is, on the one hand, characterized by the high professional status of her medical doctor father. On the other hand, since he died early, the economic situation of social origin does not match that status level which defined her professional aspirations. Since she has to work to afford her medical studies, she is under greater pressure than her peers might be. A similar class ambivalence is apparent in her choice of partner, who is an unemployed skilled worker. Her experience appears to be a case of upward mobility, aiming to attain her father's social class. Family formation and having children are delayed for the sake of achieving that goal, which assumes priority.

One "demographic" cause for the difficulties of women like Frau Dr. Grawitz may lie in the fact that men at comparable ages with a strong family orientation have already married and become fathers at the time when her career allows her to start a family. Thus, the potential partners left might be those with a weaker family orientation. Another constraint derives from the social norm that professional men can marry less-educated women, but not the other way around. To break this norm and to have a lower-status partner with more time for parenting might be one option for professional women.

> Well, my last boyfriend was totally afraid to have children and to commit to a relationship…
>
> Frau Poldinger: *Abitur* and law degree, works as a lawyer with a large insurance company, strong career orientation, no current partner.

Frau Poldinger was born and grew up in a South German city as the oldest of three children. Her family is part of a left-liberal milieu, and she sees herself as a member of the 1968 generation. Her paternal grandfather was an architect and civil servant. Her maternal grandmother was a tailor whose partner left her alone with two small children. Both parents are architects. Her father worked in several

architectural firms before he took a civil servant position in a public planning group. Her mother worked part time in an architectural office and later as a freelancer. After the second child was born, her mother stopped working. Her younger sister is a landscape architect and has one child. Her younger brother earned an *Abitur* and studied painting at the academy. He dropped out after a few semesters and works in a supermarket.

School and university came easily for Frau Poldinger. After the *Abitur,* she worked as an au pair in the United States, spending half a year with a French family and half a year with an American family. The opportunities for law graduates were not promising when she entered university, and she therefore took an international law specialty course in addition to the normal curriculum. She excelled in both areas in her exams, which allowed her to choose her first job: a position with a U.S. law firm specializing in corporate law, where she worked for three and half years. After some years she felt completely overworked and burned out. Also, in order to make the prospect of having a family more realistic, she decided to take a position as a lawyer in a large insurance company, where a family-related reduction to a part-time schedule is possible. Thus, she anticipated the difficulties of combining work and having small children, and planned her career accordingly.

> I very much would like to have a family, and sooner rather than later, because now I am way into my thirties and I think it is about time. But it just has not happened up to now… Otherwise I would have wanted a child some years ago… For instance, when I changed jobs [from a law firm to an insurance company] one reason in the back of my mind was that I could switch to a part-time job in the new firm when I have a family. But I don't have a family. This is due to the fact that I have not found a partner with whom I could have a child… I did have a number of relationships in recent years, but they only lasted for 1 or 2 years, and then we split up again. And in the times in between I was alone…like now… I would very, very much like to have a child or two very soon—we will see how many. Of course, you do not know how it would develop, but I truly would like to have a family. And I also would like to have a man again. But it does not come by itself. Well, my last boyfriend was totally afraid of having children and of committing to a relationship… And before of course I was also younger. So, until 30, nobody thinks of having children. Some of my girlfriends became mothers before 30, but they were all in long-term relationships… And I had a partner who was 30, but having a child was a long-term goal then… and this relationship did not last… If I started a relationship now, then starting a family would not be a distant goal any more… But, as I already also know from my girlfriends, all men are pretty afraid of having children… You must pressure them quite heavily to convince them… Once they are almost 40, a little bit less so… But even then if a woman gets pregnant they panic that they would have to become the breadwinner… At any rate, when men are younger they say they want children, but just not right now. My hunch is the reasons are economic, but also that they are afraid of losing their freedom…Though they say this less openly and might be less conscious of it, in contrast to material reasons.

Frau Poldinger is an example of a successful career woman who would like to have a family in her mid-thirties, but could not (yet) attain this wish because her partners procrastinated or were openly negative about parenting. Now she is looking for a partner with whom she can start a family.

Although her career commitment is high and she can see herself moving up to management level, she is prepared to reduce her workload in order to have small children and has even strategically changed her employer accordingly. Having a child without a partner, like one of our East German interviewees, is not something she can imagine. She wants a "real family." Thus, despite a long training period and heavy early career investments, neither life course contingencies nor biographical uncertainties appear to be the most salient conditions in her case. Her strong value commitments to both career and family are not undermined by how her career unfolds. It is the lack of a partner willing to become a father which produces the observed outcome, although her absorption in work at her first job, and the feeling that "parenting was not an issue before age 30" might have also influenced the partner malaise. Beyond that, as in the cases of Frau Abach and Frau Grawitz, it is a certain ideal of having a family with a close partner relationship, and the desire to devote time to the child which make the realization of this goal difficult.

Frau Poldinger pursues an upper-middle-class position. She wants a high-level career, a husband of similar professional status, and children. Although she has been advancing rapidly in her career and has channeled it in a manner which should make it easier to combine family and career, the main stumbling block is finding the right partner to consolidate her class position.

> We did not really plan to have a child. It was more like, when it happens, it happens.
> Frau Kretschmann: married, one son, saleswoman in a food chain.

Frau Kretschmann was born in an East German town and grew up in a small town in the northern part of West Germany. Her mother worked as an unskilled worker taking care of animals. She died due to alcoholism when Frau Kretschmann was 5 years old. Her father worked in a slaughterhouse and as an employed sales driver working in open markets. At age nine, he married her stepmother, who worked as a saleswoman. She has an older sister who works as a saleswoman, and with whom she lived for a while after the death of her mother, and a younger stepsister. Frau Kretschmann finished *Realschule* and had an apprenticeship as a sales assistant. Her husband is a metalworker. She moved in with him (and his parents) because of trouble with her stepmother when she was 18. At age 19 they moved into their own apartment. She refused to marry until he got himself out of trouble and had finished an apprenticeship (as a scaffold worker). She married at age 25 "for love"[11] and "because she always wanted to marry"[12] and had a son at age 27. In the first interview in 1998, she said she was unhappy because she has no children, and in the second interview she admitted that they did not plan the timing of the child. The child has a genetic defect resulting in partial disability. She is afraid that another child would not be healthy either, and therefore does not want any more children (this is also due to the additional financial burden). She does all

[11] Very high agreement with item on attitude scale.

[12] Medium agreement with item on attitude scale.

of the housework and childcare. Frau Kretschmann likes her job and is highly respected in it. She declined an offer to become a store manager, because it would take away time from her family.

> He [her boyfriend and now husband] was quite often unemployed. I had to earn the money for both of us… He did not work much. Then he asked me whether I would marry him. I said no way, if you go on like that, I won't marry you… I said if you learn a trade and get your driver's license, then we can talk about it again… Half a year before he finished his apprenticeship, we married… And I am glad. Now we have been together nine and a half years. Our son is now 5 years old. By now our marriage has endured for so long.
>
> We did not really plan a child, no. We said, when it happens, it happens. … We had him when I was 27, it was about time. It was okay then. Before we did not want a child, because I saw to it that my husband first finished his training and all, that everything should be a bit more secure. But then we told ourselves, okay, now we have everything as far as that goes, now we can have a child. But one is enough… He [the son] has a muscular [disability]. And then it might be that the next child would have it also, maybe even worse. This risk is too big for me. So for now, I think, it is most important that I can spend a lot of time with him. Because if I have no time for it, why bring a child into the world… We try to do everything for our child, that he should not have any disadvantages. But I say we are happy. Sometimes we are sitting together here and we tell ourselves how well we are doing. What more do we want? And as long as a family is a family, then we can rely on it. Family I find important.

Frau Kretschmann grew up in difficult circumstances and worked hard not only for her own qualifications, but also for her husband's. She is fully employed and takes care of a child with special needs. Marriage and children are taken for granted, but must also be carefully managed. She delayed marrying, but only until her partner (who was unemployed when she met him and a troublemaker) was close to finishing his training. She is clearly the more active partner and thinks that it is up to her to make the family work. Family ranks very high in her life priorities, but work ranks almost as high.

Frau Kretschmann comes from a lower-class background, below that of the secure working class, but attained a middle level of education. She is good at her job and could advance to a supervisory position. But she declined that opportunity in order to be able to work part time and take care of her chronically ill child. She could have started childbearing earlier given her training and employment trajectory, but the marginal position of her husband-to-be delayed not only cohabitation, but marriage and parenthood by about 5 years.

The West German women born in 1971 were, at the time of our interviews, a few years away from the age they considered too late for having a first child. For almost all of them, marriage and parenthood were part of their initial life plans, but these women faced many obstacles in attaining these goals. Particularly those women who had not yet started a family see the possibility of fulfilling those wishes as dependent on their actual or potential partners, and also on perceived difficulties in combining careers and parenting. An important delaying factor seems to be that the actual or former partners tend to shy away from commitments

to marriage or children. West German men appear to be the more difficult partners in family formation.[13] It is noteworthy that even those women who have resigned themselves to not finding a suitable partner, and, as a consequence, do not have a strong wish for children, planned their careers very consciously for the eventuality of motherhood (e.g., in regard to part-time options). All the women in our case histories, whether or not they have children, find it difficult to combine work and motherhood. Extended careers and their uncertainties impose additional constraints on professional women.

In general, we can put forward the hypothesis that West German women are subject to an involuntary ambivalence: They want a family and children, but they are negatively constrained by partners and/or careers. Thus, it appears as if it is only partially up to them whether they can realize their goals of family formation. Education and training are crucial determinants for fertility outcomes. Long periods of time spent in education and training, and associated investments in careers, not only seem to delay childbearing; they also—and as a further condition of the former—make it difficult to find a partner who is committed to starting a family. The social class of the woman's parents may help as much as hinder family formation. High parental social class tends to prolong education and training, and appears to set high standards for partners. Improvements in a woman's own high social class position does not seem to accelerate family formation, but rather the opposite (to the extent that it involves heavy investments in education, training, and early career; and to the extent that it is not matched by the class position of the partner).

4.7 Family Formation During the Transformation in East Germany: Some Early, Some Late, but Taken for Granted

Family formation for East German women born in 1971 could have been influenced by the norms and behavioral patterns in the GDR, the immediate repercussions of the transformation, and the opportunities and constraints of the new society. Our aim in presenting and interpreting the East German case material is to search for manifestations of all three of these sources of influence. In the traditional GDR pattern, having children was unquestionably taken for granted. In fact, it was a widespread norm to have children in one's early twenties (Kreyenfeld 2006). Two out of the eight East German women in our qualitative sample still followed the pattern of early motherhood. Another characteristic of both the GDR and post-reunification East Germany is the high proportion of unmarried mothers,

[13] The emphasis on male partner reluctance in regard to the delay of family formation of course raises the issue of how reliable women's information about the motives of their partners is. On the one hand, they are corroborated by the cohabitation histories, while on the other hand, we find independent corroboration in the case studies of men (Mayer and Schulze 2009, Chap. 4).

which does not necessarily imply living without a partner. This positive orientation toward parenthood seems to be, in contrast to West Germany, widely shared by East German men (Mayer and Schulze 2009, Chap. 5). The impact of the transformation is manifest in occupational reorientation, residential mobility, as well as job shifts and changes in occupation (see Table 4.2). Finally, West German norms, behavioral patterns and institutional (family policy) provisions could have influenced the family formation patterns of our cohort.

Two of the four following case studies will show the influence of the "Wende" or reunification, with one woman having moved to West Germany for 6 years, and the other living there permanently. Two of our cases show the continuity of former GDR patterns and norms. First, we will present two women with an unbroken GDR mentality, Frau Müller and Frau Pawlak; followed by two women, Frau Magatsch and Frau Mügge, who partially adapted to or are influenced by West German models of female lives.

Frau Pawlak comes from an upper-middle class, bourgeois family, and attained a high level of education and training, as well as a very high-level occupational position. Frau Mügge comes from a middle-class family, but due to reunification did not reach the training levels she aspired to. Frau Müller has a working-class background and current position. Frau Magatsch has a middle-class background due to the professional position of her mother. She herself attained a high educational level and a top professional position.

> I was never especially keen on children. It was just normal to have them…
> Frau Müller: *POS* (intermediate) schooling, trained nurse, real estate manager.

Frau Müller grew up in two big cities in the North and South of East Germany. She does not know her father, and her mother worked in an accounting office. Her stepfather was a master electrician, and since reunification has worked as a production manager in a large printing firm. She has one stepbrother who is 9 years younger. He started studying computer science, but dropped out. He is now training to become a teacher. She finished school at the intermediate level (*POS*), trained and worked as a nurse. Before the end of her apprenticeship, she had her first son and moved in with the father without marrying him. Her second child, also a boy, was born 5 years later. Shortly after the birth of her second child, she and her partner separated. She blames her first partner for only thinking of himself, of improving his qualifications and leaving them alone while training to become a "Master". In 1999, she retrained for 2 years to become an office clerk because she was looking for work which would allow her to easily combine employment and family. Since then, she has worked in a small company as a facility manager. Also, since 1999, she has lived with her new partner, a lower-level civil servant. They do not want to marry or have children of their own. The older boy has special needs and is enrolled in a special school.

> I was never especially keen on children. It was just normal to have them …It was a mentality during the times of the GDR. Really, it was the first child at age 18 and the second shortly after. We just talked today about what might have been the reasons. Maybe you just had more advantages with children…I don't know. Many of my apprenticeship

> group had the same idea, finishing training [at age 19], then I'll have my first child. There were many who shared this view…

Frau Müller is an example of early childbearing, and how it was part and parcel of the concept of life in the GDR. Having a child early was taken for granted. Frau Müller is also an example of the relative readiness in the GDR, and now in East Germany, to have children and a partner without marrying. Having children is not a hurdle for either separating or finding a new partner. Frau Müller combines work and family and takes responsibility for her children, although she does not feel very close emotional ties with her older son, which she decries. In the question about life goals, she ranks "work that I enjoy" and "a happy partnership" both very high. For Frau Müller, having children early was neither affected by her education and training, nor the class position of her partner's parents or her own. It was something which was normal and expected of women of her age and cohort.

> Too bad for the guy, but the next one had to be the father
>
> Frau Pawlak: Career and a child, no partner, executive engineer, living abroad.

Frau Pawlak grew up in or around a large East German town. Her mother completed the *Abitur* and worked as a medical-technical assistant. Her father grew up in the Middle East and migrated to the GDR. He has a university degree and is working as a self-employed media producer. Her maternal grandfather was a high-ranking military officer, her grandmother a homemaker. Her paternal grandfather died before her birth, and was a well-known academic who escaped his home country after a death sentence. She has no siblings. She completed the *Abitur* (*EOS*), and had no definite idea what she wanted to do as an occupation. Her first field of study, business administration, was not her choice, but was assigned to her. From 1990 to 1996, she studied business administration at a technical university and then added an advanced engineering degree in 2000. At age 24 she moved out of the parental home and lived alone in an apartment. She started her career with a permanent contract as a sales manager, but only stayed for a year. After that she worked for another year in the financial sector with a temporary contract. She now works as a high-level utilities manager abroad. At the first interview, in 1997, she said that without reunification she might already have had a child, but would not necessarily be married. She had two partners for short periods of time. Her only child was born in 2003 and is in private day care. Marriage is an obsolete institution for her.[14]

> Well, for me it was more a kind of rational decision, I was 30 and told myself, what do you really want? You have a top job, you have seen a lot of the world, you have had a great time at university, you danced until dawn, and fully enjoyed life, that now the moment has come when it would be good to have a child. Too bad for the guy, but the next one had to be the father, so to speak. It was really that kind of decision: Why should I wait? I did not really want to wait until my dream man appears with whom I want to be together for the rest of my life, and I might be 40 then. And for me it was clear that it would be easy to have a child in this country…My mother said since she was an only child and I was an

[14] Strong agreement with an attitude scale item.

only child, wouldn't it be nice, if someone in the family would succeed in having more than one child. Well (laughs) it will not be my fault. …Of course one does not have to overdo it and have one child after the other, but for me it is clear that my child should not remain an only child… I told myself it would be stupid not to use the opportunities here [for easy child care] and wait until I return to Germany, and then I would have the problems [of combining work and family] they all have…No, no…

Frau Pawlak is an example of a single mother who first advanced her professional training and career and then very purposefully became a mother. She did her first and second university degree in rapid sequence, and had no problems entering the labor market. However, she did not immediately find the right job and made two firm shifts up to her present upper managerial position. At age 30 she decided that she might soon be too old to have a child, and so she planned her pregnancy. It was no problem for her that at the beginning of her pregnancy she knew that the father of the child was not going to stay. The optimal conditions for child care (private day care) and her proactive way of combining her job and her duties as a mother (she would bring the baby along to meetings), seems to imply a very positive context for her decision. And she can imagine having a second child under similar circumstances. Living abroad, she has the ability to hire affordable child care. Frau Pawlak is pursuing her goal of motherhood irrespective of a demanding career, living abroad, and not living in a union. She takes it for granted that she will have at least two children, but she also realizes that this is made easier by living in a country with low-wage child care. In comparing her exceptional situation with that of other women in Germany, she sees her situation as ideal and plans to have a second child while she is still abroad. She values marriage very little, but would like to combine having a family with a good partnership. However, this was not a necessary condition, so having a child was a priority for her. Frau Pawlak represents the older GDR mentality, which embraced parenthood as a "natural" part of one's biographical self-conception. What is new is that this mentality now is no longer supported by institutional structures of comprehensive child care and targeted family policies.

Frau Pawlak is influenced by two traditions pushing towards motherhood: the early fertility norms of the former GDR, and, most likely, the strong family norms of the home country of her father, and of the country where she now lives. Her considerable economic resources allow her to have a child, and probably soon two, without assistance from her family, because she can afford personalized child care.

…already being planned, the project is in the making.

Frau Mügge: textile merchandiser; lower secondary education (*POS*), apprenticeship as shop decorator, lives with partner in their own house; they have no children.

Frau Mügge grew up in an East German industry town near the Polish border. Her mother was a chemical engineer, her father a Master craftsman. She had a younger brother who died early. Her occupational aspirations were to train as an advertising decorator and then to get further training in advertising. With reunification, the latter option was closed off and she moved to the West to work as a shop decorator in a department store. That move was easier because her then-

boyfriend had already moved to the West as well. She could not stay in the firm where she had worked in the East because most workers were laid off. During her time in the West, she obtained further training at an evening trade school in marketing and communication. After six and a half years in the West, she returned to the East, cycled through several jobs, and currently works as a sales promotion manager. For 4 years she lived with a West German, but broke off the relationship because she couldn't stand the West German type of male behavior. At first she was impressed by his polished manners, but after a while she found him too superficial and prone to bragging. Her current East German partner is a construction engineer, and they have rebuilt the small house he inherited. She would marry "if he would ask her," and is trying to get pregnant.

Frau Mügge was all set for the typical very early East German family formation, but the transformation complicated her training aspirations and job trajectory. As a consequence she moved regionally and changed partner. She retained her aspirations to have a family and children and to continue working, but external conditions delayed that process.

> Without reunification my life would have evolved quite differently. Not necessarily better…but much less spectacularly. I would already be married, maybe already divorced again, would have had two children, after some time we would have gotten an apartment and about now we would have gotten the car I applied for when I was 18. We would have a small garden somewhere and go to the Baltic Sea or the Harz for vacations. And most likely I would be still in the same firm where I had started to work; it was unusual to change firms. But I would not have been happier…Reunification came at the right time for me and for me it could have been even earlier. Because then I would have completed my Abitur and gone on to study and would have had a more normal career.
>
> My girlfriends are now all having children. And frankly before age 30, that was not an issue for me… My clear idea was that I would only become a mother when and if the right partner were there, and you have to have some financial security first. And you first have to have good training… and I feel good that I did the jobs I wanted to do, whatever I wanted… so you do not feel sorry if you put less into your career for a while. I would never want to stay at home all day, but I would suspend work for a year and work part time for a while after that. But of course you do not know beforehand whether that is a possibility or not… And I do not think I can do my present job part time. But that is not the important thing, if you have a child, there is always one of us who can take care of the child, especially since my partner has flexible working hours…
>
> It is not that I don't care about marriage, but it is not a high priority. But I wasn't asked yet. I would not ask myself, or ask a man… like women do nowadays … No, no, but I do want to marry sometime in my life, but it does not matter whether it is now or in a year, but I would not do things like giving the child the name of the father if I was not married, I would never do that. Better to marry then and have the father's name, or the child has my name. Some of my friends did that to have less trouble with changing the names when they marry. But why does one still have to marry? And of course many women have children and are not married; I find no problem in that either… I just find it better if the child has the same name as both parents when it enrolls in school. You feel more like a family. I think it is also nicer for a couple, if you are married and you can say 'my husband' and not 'my boyfriend.' It is more of a commitment. But it is not absolutely necessary… and I am not somebody who says I will leave you if you do not marry me. [How about children?] That is already being planned, just in the making.

Frau Mügge is the example of the East German woman for whom the "Wende" had a considerable impact on her work and family trajectory. She lost her job in 1991, and immediately moved to West Germany. She continued to work in the occupation for which she trained, but since the advanced training she had planned was more complicated, she enrolled in a private evening vocational college. After returning from West Germany after 6 years, she searched for a job without finding a position she liked. After three and a half years as a shop decorator, she switched to a firm where she did some internal training and is working as a merchandiser. Reunification also had quite an impact on her private life. Her then-partner moved to West Germany, and she followed him. One and a half years later they split up and she started a relationship with a West German man. After more than 6 years, she separated from him and returned to East Germany. She returned and found an East German partner. Quite in contrast to her can-do mentality otherwise, she wants her partner to propose marriage. She has an ambivalent attitude towards the connection between children and marriage. More in line with West German models, she anticipates interrupting her employment, and subsequently reducing her working hours, but also anticipates having problems doing so in her current job.

Thus, despite all the disruption in her life course and some uncertainties regarding the future, having children, with or without marriage, is taken for granted. Frau Mügge retains her GDR family ideals, but, like her friends, is willing to delay family formation for a few years. Receiving advanced training and launching a career during the transformation period pushed her to start a family later, but the economic position of her partner actually allows her to actively plan that now.

> …here in the West …you always have to choose between a job or children.
>
> *Frau* Magatsch: *Abitur* in the East, studied journalism and works as a television editor in a large Northwest German city, has a partner, does not cohabit.

Frau Magatsch grew up as a single child in a large city in Northeast Germany. Her mother works as a biology and chemistry teacher, and divorced her father when she was 2 years old. Due to her very good grades, she could enter the *EOS*, although this was not unproblematic because her mother was not in the *SED* (Socialist Unity Party of former East Germany) and also not working class.

Since the time she was 14 years old, she wanted to become a journalist (which also made access to the *EOS* difficult) and knew she could do that only if loyal to the party. But even then, this would have been unrealistic in East Germany, because only 20 students per year were allowed to study journalism. After reunification, she was able to realize her career goal and studied journalism at a Bavarian university. She did not like her time at university very much, and found the West German students lacking in knowledge and ambition. After finishing her university degree, she went back to her home town to run a city magazine. Then she applied for work as host of a television show in West Germany. After 2 years she felt burned out, and abhorred the way talk show guests were being publicly exposed. She quit her job and found work as a television journalist in a private

production company doing a show about private lifestyles. She was recently promoted to editor-in-chief of the show.

Frau Magatsch left her partner, a West German, after 5 years because she felt that she was too young for a permanent relationship. Her current partner is from her old home town in East Germany and works as a production planning engineer. He is much more eager to start a family than she is. She sees enormous problems in combining her job and having children. He dreams of a house, but she does not want to get into mortgage debt and would be happy just living together.

> … after 5 years I fell in love with somebody else. That was a pity… But I think I just got to know him too early. He would have been the perfect family father. A cool type, knew everything, was tender and loving, very attentive. I got to know him when I was 20 or 21 years old. And then I thought, there has got to be somebody else. Therefore I don't understand people who marry early, or I understand when they separate again soon afterwards. Today you are free to look around. Perhaps you do not always make use of this freedom. What our grandparents did, 50 years of marriage, golden, silver, diamond wedding anniversaries, that is all gone. It is easy to go separate ways. Or the women are really too independent—and that is good. I would not want to have to stay with a man for my whole life just because of the money. Somehow I have the feeling that the current family policies actually keep women in a bit of a state of dependency. That is really a step backwards, which I feel is quite bad.
>
> My current boyfriend is more eager to have children and to build a house than I am. We are of the same age. I think he wants many children and that is something we still have to talk about… and he comes from a small village and is used to living in his own house. I am not so sure about it… I have moved around too often, somehow. I don't know whether I want to be tied down. And not even that, but I don't want to get into so much debt. We don't even live together yet. I was together with my former boyfriend 5 years, then we moved in together, but after 4 weeks I moved out. I don't think I am unable to cohabit, we spend each day together either in his or my apartment. But I just cherish the feeling that I could withdraw if I wanted to… Maybe it is self-centered, I have no idea. But if you have lived alone for such a long time, then you are busy with yourself and have your own rhythm. And at the time I worked for the talk show I was so exhausted when I got home and I wouldn't want to talk to anybody… I could not have been nice to somebody else… Now I am not so stressed out, and find it okay to talk about work, but I cherish putting my feet up and having no obligations, even the obligation to act nicely… As to family policy, then the town here is special… you can hardly find a place in a kindergarten … they pretend to be child friendly, but actually it is a catastrophe.
>
> … here in the West you have to apologize if you bring your small child to a day nursery and if you do not stay at home for 3, 5, or 7 years. …My girlfriends in the East make fun of the West German women who have their first child at age 39. But here it is very, very hard to have children… when I see how badly other women want children, well I don't want to be alone when I am old. I would like if somebody visited me, and put my feet up and brought me a blanket, or whatever… But here one has to make a decision. And I have a hard time deciding against my job. You always have to choose between job or children. You get immediately branded as a career woman even if you just love to work. I really enjoy my job and I am simply afraid that if I stay at home for a while that I won't be able to get my foot back into the door. …
>
> …the family model here in the West is really archaic: … the man goes to work, earns the money, builds a house, buys his wife a second car and brings in the money for the children, and the wife is at home and is happy and thinks she is the greatest, and is happy that she is at home. I find this awful. And the worst is they get a good education before. At

> university I met many women who saw it basically as a marriage market and the self-respect of women in the West is so low, it's really ghastly …

Frau Magatsch is acutely aware of the problems of combining family and career. On the one hand, she was socialized in the GDR where the norm was for mothers to be employed. Working mothers received a lot of support and the combination of work and family was not a big issue. On the other hand, Frau Magatsch now works in a large West German city and sees the problems women in her environment have as especially critical. She openly criticizes this pressure to choose between a career and children. She is delaying having children, because she does not want to give up her job. This brings her into conflict with her East German partner, who is eager to start a family. Thus, Frau Magatsch is really caught between East and West. She upholds the GDR norms of combining family and work, but sees no way to put this into practice in the West. She is a good example of a woman with a very strong career orientation that brings her into a real dilemma over childbearing. On the one hand, she has the East German orientation that a child is a normal part of one's life, but she finds this orientation difficult with the conditions she finds herself at as a career woman in West Germany. She is as goal-oriented in her professional life as she is cautious in regards to family formation and childbearing.

The women born in 1971 in East Germany were, at the time of our interviews, even closer than West German women to the latest age at which they think they should have a child, because the norm of early pregnancy is still very strong in the East. Having children is taken for granted, even more so than marriage. The opportunities which opened up after reunification for obtaining new qualifications and reorienting occupational pathways have partly delayed having children, but it is almost never an either/or. The uncertainties and turbulence of the labor market make family life more complicated, and sometimes result in divorce and separation, but do not generally deter family formation. The male partners similarly support such a pattern. Never did we hear that a partner did not want to become a father or would not take his parenting role seriously even after a split-up. After 1989, educational levels strongly differentiated the onset of childbearing (Kreyenfeld 2006). Women with apprenticeships in service vocations either followed the early childbearing pattern of the old GDR, or they delayed having children, but stuck to the goal. Women with academic careers either gave up or delayed childbearing, or had children even without having a partner.

4.8 Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, we attempted to understand the mechanisms underlying the delay of family formation among East and West German women. In particular, we focused on the birth cohort of 1971, who faced the turbulence of the post-reunification transformation in the East, and problems entering the labor market in the

West. In the field of demography, our contribution is methodologically innovative, because we were able to draw on both quantitative and qualitative data for identical respondents from the German Life History Study.

The starting point of our investigation was a series of Kaplan–Meier estimates for the transition to cohabitation, marriage, and first birth. In a historical comparison, the 1971 birth cohorts in both East and West show particularly high median ages at first birth. West German women were, on average, 28.3 years old when they first married, and 30.8 years old when they had their first child, while East German women were 32.8 years old when they first married, and 27.6 years old when they had their first child. West German women of different educational levels differ in the onset of childbearing by eight to 10 years, and the overall delay in childbearing can be explained by the changing educational composition, with the exception of the even greater delay among the most recent cohort. In contrast, East German women showed a trend of ever smaller differences in ages at first birth, until a rapidly increasing differential emerged for the most recent cohort. The analysis of the development of West and East German educational differentials provides a longer-term addition to the study by Kreyenfeld (2006), which concentrated on the 1960s and 1970s cohorts.

We focused on five possible causes for the delay in family formation for women: (a) consequences of the lengthening of the education and training period, (b) labor market and economic insecurity, (c) value orientations in regard to marriage and parenting, (d) problems of compatibility between career and raising children, and (e) conditions pertaining to a partner or spouse. We used the case studies reconstructed from both the standardized responses and the narrative interviews to ascertain the presence or absence of these conditions for each case, and to assess their intra-individual weight. Thus, the purpose of this analysis is not to establish causal weights in the overall population, but instead to reconstruct the definition of the situation, the vocabulary of motives, and the logic these women follow when describing themselves in the process of family formation.

Our combination of standardized and qualitative material provides evidence for mechanisms in the delay of family formation that in part turned out to be quite different between West and East German women. For both East and West German women, combining work and family is difficult, but this more strongly deters West German women from having children. Likewise, early relationships with partners and early non-marital unions rarely lead to permanent partnerships in both parts of Germany, but again such complications keep West German women from having children more frequently than East German women. Not being married or even not having a long-term partner at all does not prevent East German women from becoming mothers.

For West German women, the delay in family formation appears to be almost predetermined, because a number of conditions must be simultaneously present, thus making it quite difficult to establish a family. For almost all women, living with a partner and having children are important life goals. Thus, it is clearly not the absence of family value orientations that prevent women from having children or cause them to have children very late. The phase prior to integration into the

labor market with a relatively stable job is prolonged, due to both choice and constraints. This is due less to the fact that more women complete the *Abitur* than to the fact that more women at almost all educational levels have more than one period of training, e.g., by changing subjects at university or adding further training after an initial apprenticeship. Especially for highly qualified women, the uncertainties of employment play an important role. In addition, the practical problems of combining work and having small children are seen as almost insurmountable. Within this context, West German women actively plan their careers to make them compatible with having children by anticipating family leave and a reduction in working hours. However, probably the strongest reason for the delay in family formation seems to be the reluctance of male partners to commit themselves as fathers, and/or problems of employment security and career uncertainties of the male partners. Facing these problems of male ambivalence and lack of support in the work sphere, West German women delay the first birth, reduce the number of children they would like to have from two to one, or abandon their motherhood goals altogether. Interestingly enough, West German women do not want to rely on men as full breadwinners, but anticipate that they will contribute a large share to the family budget.

As socio-demographic data show, East German women born in 1971 on average not only have their first child earlier and marry later than West German women, but also have a much higher occurrence of single motherhood. As regards the mechanisms underlying the processes of delayed family formation, we need to answer two questions: First, do these mechanisms differ between East and West Germany? And, second, to the extent that the mechanisms are similar, do they have the same meaning and impact in the East as in the West? In terms of value orientations, we see not only very clear differences, but also differences in the way they operate. While for West German women, a conscious and fairly positive evaluation of having children seems to be a prerequisite for the decision to become a mother, no such value judgment seems to be necessary in the East. Having children and having children early was taken for granted in the former GDR, and was still very influential for our cohort. A person does not need to like children especially in order to have children. Although quite a few of our West German women do not see marriage as an absolute must, they still see being married as a desirable goal, and ideally a precondition for having children. For East German women, marriage is clearly not a precondition to the same extent. Also important in the value sphere is the strong emphasis East German women place on being fully employed, while West German women all want to suspend and reduce working hours to be a good mother. However, East German women also see this goal as less of a hindrance to motherhood than West German women.

Given the turbulence in their occupational trajectories resulting from the destruction and rebuilding of the GDR economy, East German women should have been much more affected by the mechanisms we study. East German women of this cohort were ready earlier for family formation because they finished their apprenticeships earlier and were much less often enrolled in upper-secondary and higher education. But the interruption of qualification trajectories and stable employment

brought about by the "Wende" by far outweighed this earlier potential for family formation. Less than a quarter of East German women followed the former pattern of early motherhood/marriage and then had to work through marital relationships/parenthood under these difficult circumstances. The majority engaged in time-consuming re-qualification, job, and residential changes, and delayed having their first child. In either case, they still took childbearing for granted as a part of their life, irrespective of job changes and employment insecurity.

Our East German women also ideally want to have children with a partner, but the idea of changing partners or being a single mother is much less of a deterrent for them. They cannot imagine being financially dependent on their partner. But the major difference to the West German women is that they are not subject to widespread male resistance to fatherhood. This is all the more noteworthy, since the occupational lives of these partners are not less, but more turbulent than those of their West German counterparts. Their problems on the labor market make family life more complicated, and sometimes result in divorce and separation, but do not generally deter East Germans from starting a family.

Finally, we want to draw preliminary conclusions from our experiences in combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The first advantage we would like to point out is that we were able to reconstruct the education, work, family, and residential histories on the basis of both the monthly calendars of the quantitative survey and the narrative interviews. In many cases, neither the qualitative nor the quantitative data alone would have been sufficient to give an adequate description of these histories. While the drawback of the qualitative materials in this regard is that they are often incomplete as to particular episodes and their dating, the drawback of the quantitative material is that sometimes necessary contextual information is missing, or that standardized responses might be misleading. Second, we were fortunate in being able to select the respondents of our qualitative study as a stratified subset from our overall panel survey. We thus covered the whole range of timing of first birth and of prior union formation. In this chapter, for space reasons, we primarily looked at six cases with delays and two counter examples. Ideally one would look at the whole range (as we did in Mayer and Schulze 2009). Furthermore, on the basis of a qualitative sample alone, there is always the strong temptation to draw erroneous conclusions concerning the distribution of the dependent variable. This temptation is even stronger in regard to the relative weights of explanatory factors. Conversely, by relying exclusively on the quantitative material, we would not have seen or sufficiently appreciated the particular role of men in the family formation process, and the major differences in how mechanisms operate in the East as compared to the West despite similar outcomes. The qualitative accounts were clearly superior, both in reflecting the ambivalence of attitudes toward children, and of changes in preferences over time. But at this stage of our work, it would be premature to make a final assessment of the deficits of either method, and the advantages of triangulation.

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Appendix

See Tables A.1, A.2.

Table A.1 Transitions into parenthood—Cox proportional hazard models for the birth of the first child—West Germany, women

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Exb(B)	Sig.	Exb(B)	Sig.
Birth cohort				
1929–1931	Ref.	0.000	Ref.	0.000
1939–1941	1.182	0.035	1.262	0.003
1949–1951	0.969	0.702	1.135	0.122
1954–1956	0.697	0.000	0.928	0.338
1959–1961	0.607	0.000	0.855	0.070
1964	0.631	0.000	0.919	0.259
1971	0.441	0.000	0.702	0.000
Education				
No degree, Hauptschule			Ref.	0.000
Realschule, Mittlere Reife			0.689	0.000
Abitur, Hochschulreife			0.340	0.000

Table A.2 Transitions into parenthood—Cox proportional hazard models for the birth of the first child—East Germany, women

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Exb(B)	Sig.	Exb(B)	Sig.
Birth cohort				
1929–1931	Ref.	0.000	Ref.	0.000
1939–1941	1.203	0.102	1.226	0.072
1951–1953	1.350	0.008	1.386	0.011
1959–1961	1.494	0.000	1.518	0.002
1971	0.475	0.000	0.507	0.000
Education				
No degree, Hauptschule			Ref.	0.000
Realschule, Mittlere Reife			1.053	0.612
Abitur, Hochschulreife			0.663	0.002

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