

## **Large Families in Germany**

### **Socioeconomic Conditions for their Development from a Life Course Perspective**

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Extended Abstract

#### **1 Background and Research Question**

Germany is one of the countries with lowest-low fertility in the world. The reasons are discussed in different areas of demography and social sciences since years already. Nevertheless there are still open questions as well as answers which need to be updated or even revised. Especially parity patterns could be further explored. Besides the “two-child-norm” the focus on childlessness on the one side and large families on the other seem to be an exciting field of research with promising results.

A relatively high percentage of childless and a low share of large families are characteristic for the current German fertility (with regional disparities). Research and policy measures are more focused on childlessness. Relatively little is known about conditions and situations in life of parents which lead to a decision not to have more than two children. On a descriptive level variables like migration background and education can be associated with large families.

In this paper we will examine which individual socioeconomic and socio-demographic circumstances can have impact on a higher number of births of women in Germany. We define three or more children as a large family. Our research question is basically related to the life course of women living in Germany. For the reason of different parity patterns between Eastern and Western Germany the analyses have to be differentiated by this regional variable.

#### **2 State of research**

The state of research on large families includes a wide range of topics and issues (for a detailed description see Lueck et al 2015). A large share of the research deals with the question: Why have certain groups of men and women a third child and others do not (see Alich 2004, Huinink 1988, Kersten 2011, Rille-Pfeiffer et al 2009, Kravdal 2002, 2007).

A particular focus lies on the socioeconomic situation of large families, represented in terms of education, employment situation, income and poverty (see BMFSFJ 2008 2013; Bradshaw et al 2006; Eggen 2005; Rupp / Bierschock 2005; Bruchholz et al 2002; Allmendinger / Hinz 1998, Czock et al 1994). In general, large families are

placed in a worse position as families with one or two children. Indeed, the relationship is asymmetric U-shaped, because privileged layers are disproportionately represented among large families.

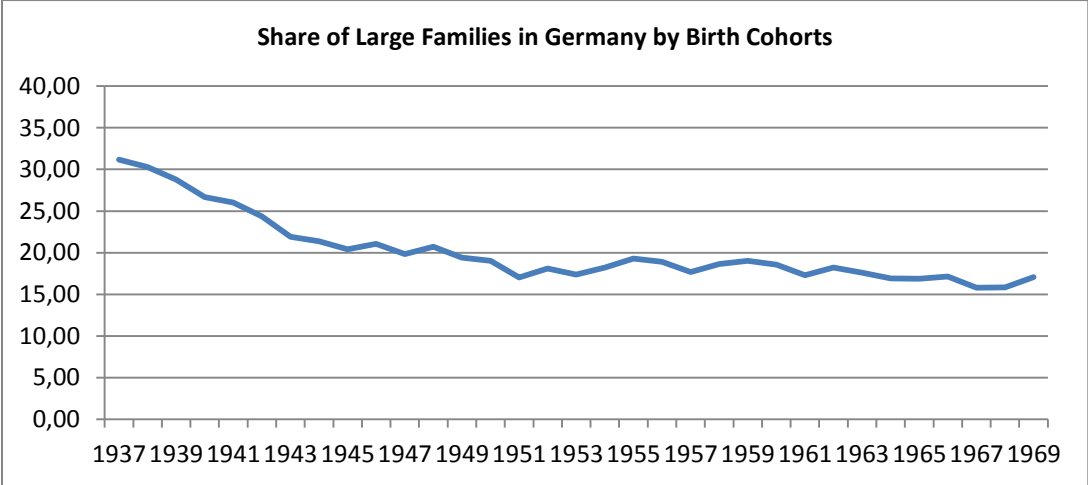
In addition to the socioeconomic situation in the strict sense socio-demographic characteristics play a role for the development of large families (see. Alich 2004, Bien / Marbach 2007, BMFSFJ 2007, Bertram 2008, Eggen / Leschhorn 2004, Eggen / Rupp 2006, Keddi et al. 2010, MGSFF 2003, Rille-Pfeiffer et al. 2009). The important determinants of large families are the migration background, the family form in the family of origin and the partner and family biography. A special role plays the age of birth, the birth spacing and the sex of the first two children.

Often the research described above gives not more than a description of the statistical conspicuity of large families on the basis of cross-sectional studies. This does not allow drawing conclusions about the causality. So it is not clear for example, if lower income leads to large families or reverse. In addition, the research often describes, the characteristics of blended families. This is not necessarily attached to a biological parenthood of three or more children.

The deficit in the German research of large families is a detailed, systematic consideration of socio-demographic and socioeconomic conditions in longitudinal analyses that detects causalities and mechanisms behind the cross-sectional correlations. Here, the following work is to be located.

**3 Description of work**

After showing the theoretical considerations and hypotheses a first part of the planned presentation is dedicated to the description of the phenomenon. These are results from the German Microcensus 2012. This dataset is the main annual official household survey and is used as reference for most other representative surveys in Germany. It covers one percent of all German households. Therefore this will show the prevalence of large families in Germany, compared between different groups. For example the following graph shows differences between birth-cohorts.



Source: Microcensus 2012, Federal Statistical Office

Results of survival analyses will be shown in the descriptive part as well. It aims to show the pattern of transition to the third and further births in association with the age of the mother.

The core of the analyses is the consideration of living conditions in contrast to the event of the third birth and more. Therefore the main datasource is the German Socioeconomic Panel (SOEP). The SOEP is a longitudinal survey of private households and persons in the Federal Republic of Germany. It started in 1984 and is released each year. A very important part of the annual questionnaire is the detailed biographic data about fertility and partnership from women (since 2001 also available for men), which are necessary for fertility and family research. 11015 women and 9791 men participated in the 2012 round.

For the comparative view on the event history analysis it is important to limit the sample on the recent waves of SOEP. We analyze all women which took part in SOEP in 2009 -2013 and already have two or more biological children. Besides description of survival analyses a piecewise constant exponential model will be conducted. Due to this approach we believe time-dependent variables could be taken into account for our research question. The results from this longitudinal regression will be presented and reflected. The aim is to gain knowledge about (more or less) individual obstacles or promotional factors for a higher number of births.

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