

Unequal neighbours? A French-German Comparison of Family Size Related “Leitbilder”

Kerstin Ruckdeschel, Federal Institute of Population Research (BiB)

Anne Salles, Université de Paris IV, Sorbonne

Sabine Diabaté, Federal Institute of Population Research (BiB)

Laurent Toulemon, Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED)

Arnaud Régnier-Loilier, Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED)

Abstract

Since decades we observe different fertility patterns between France and Germany, although both countries are European neighbors: Germany is a low-fertility-country, France a high-fertility-country, so these countries reflect the range of fertility all over Europe. In cross-country comparisons we find higher birth rates not only in those countries with an above-average availability of public childcare (which reduces the opportunity costs of children) such as Sweden or France, but also in countries like Great Britain where public childcare is hardly provided at all. It seems obvious that, given the development of structural circumstances, family lives in Europe could have changed much more than they actually have. So we assume that there needs to be a substantial cultural influence holding change back and stabilizing given fertility patterns. Theories describing such an influence exist, but there are, in comparison, few, and within current family research hardly any of them is frequently used. This article will keep on in the long tradition of French-German comparison and try to explain the differences within the family size-patterns through a cultural concept called “leitbild” (cultural conception of family prevailing in society), which is supplemented to structural concepts. Some questions on attitudes towards childlessness, large families, and partners’ roles within couples have been asked to representative samples in France and Germany. They were referring to personal opinions as well as to the perception of the “general opinion” in public. The comparison between the two countries shows that some prevailing representations (“*leitbilder*” in German) are very influential: In France having children is seen as a normal life event, whereas in Germany there also is a culture of childlessness. Beside that the linkage in Germany between a marriage and having children is higher than in France, while partnership is seen as a prerequisite in both countries. Family policies which influence the representations of financial requirements for family formation also differ, especially for large families. Family formation seems to be easier in France, with less structural and cultural barriers than in Germany.

Key words France, Germany, *leitbild*, cultural conceptions, guiding role model, family role model, rational choice, intended family size, norms, values, gender roles, partnership, generative behaviour, parenting, fertility, family policy

1. Introduction

In terms of fertility France and Germany are often cited as two unequal neighbours – voisins inégaux – ungleiche Nachbarn. France is a country with one of the highest fertility rates while Germany shows one of the lowest fertility rates in Europe. After years of primarily comparing structural factors between countries to explain such differences, lately social scientists try to include more frequently cultural factors such as norms and values in their explanations. Social context matters (Moore and Vanneman 2003), subjects of interest are “fertility-related norms” (Liefbroer et al. 2015), researchers try “bringing norms back in” (Liefbroer and Billari 2010). The aim is to close remaining gaps in explaining fertility differences. Especially France and Germany are suited for such a comparison as they seem to have contradictory norms on fertility. While at first glance both countries follow a strong two-child norm, i.e. the most frequent family size is two children, there are differences in terms of parities: In France there are more large families, in Germany more childless persons. While there is a certain social pressure to become a parent in France (Mazuy 2006) there seems to emerge a culture of childlessness in Germany (Sobotka 2008). These longterm phenomenons cannot be explained by structural differences alone. Cultural aspects, as research shows, produce an additional explanation, why both “voisins inégaux” differ in their fertility structure.

To identify special and unique characteristics of family issues in a country, it is necessary to compare at least two collectives. We chose France and Germany. Apart from being at opposite sides of the European fertility scale, French family policy is often cited as a model for Germany, when it comes to the issue of rising of the birth rate or of work-life balance. Nevertheless comparative studies keep coming back to the conclusion that it is not just differences in the specific conditions, such as the childcare facilities, but that there should be cultural differences too (Ruckdeschel 2012, Salles, Rossier, Brachet 2010). To a lesser extent such differences can be found inside Germany as well. Especially in norms and practice concerning work-life balance East Germany shows in many aspects more similarities with France than with Western Germany.

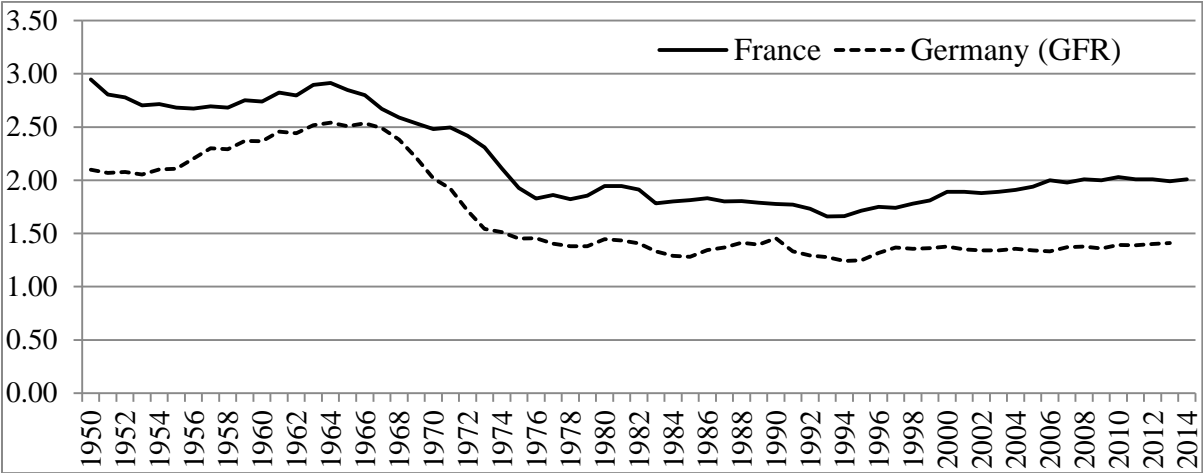
In this paper we therefore want to elaborate the idea of social norms and social context further and expand it to family guiding role models¹ which can be found on individual as well as on societal level. We then want to compare fertility related models in France and Germany (East and West) on both levels. Finally we analyze for the three regions if individuals with different intended final parity differ with regard to these models and if that helps to explain the different fertility outcomes in France, West and East Germany.

¹ The German concept of *leitbild* is more precisely defined in the third part of the paper. We will indistinctly refer to “models”, “social norms” or “prevailing representations”

2. Family and fertility patterns in France and Germany: The Stability of Disparities

Since the end of Second World War, fertility remained continually at a higher level in France than in Germany. While the gap was widening between 2000 and 2010 as fertility increased more in France than in Germany, it is now slightly decreasing since total fertility rate rose a little in Germany in recent years and seems to be actually slightly decreasing in France². Even though, total fertility rate is for the moment about 40 % higher in France than in Germany (see Figure 1). While total fertility rate was very low in East Germany after reunification, it is actually slightly higher than in the Western part of the country (Figure 2).

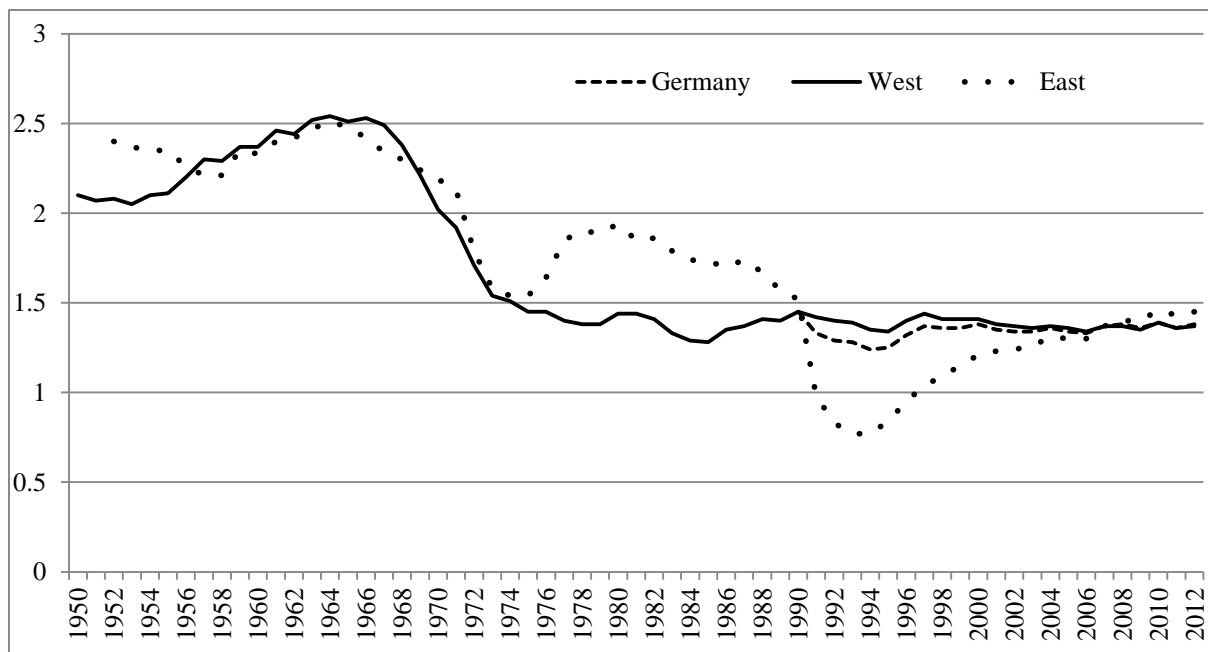
Figure 1: Total Fertility Rate in France and Germany, 1950-2014



Source: own calculations (Destatis, INSEE)

Figure 2: Total Fertility Rate in West and East Germany (GDR and FGR from 1950 to 2014 and unified Germany from 1990 to 2014)

² According to provisional data, the decline in the number of births seems to accelerate in France since the second half of 2014. <http://www.insee.fr/fr/bases-de-donnees/bsweb/serie.asp?idbank=000436391>.

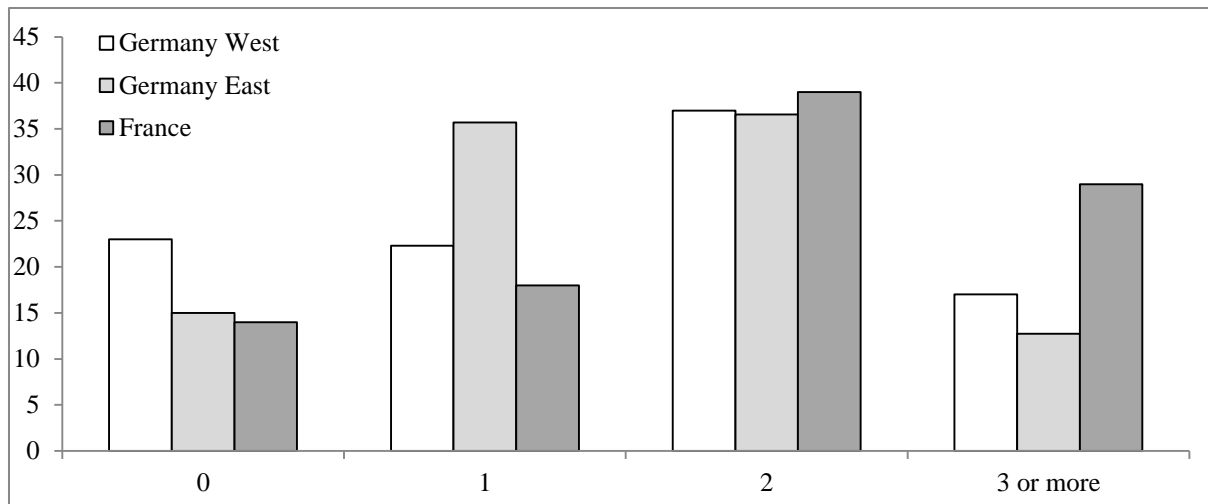


Source: own calculations (Destatis, INSEE)

The gap between Germany and France can be explained by the lower incidence of childlessness and the higher rate of large families in France compared to Germany (Köppen, Mazuy, Toulemon 2016, Hornung 2011, Dorbritz 2008, Prioux 2007). Among women born in 1970, nearly 30 % have three children or more in France compared to less than 17 % in Germany (see Figure 3). France displays a lower share of women with a single child, but a higher proportion of women with at least two children.

While total fertility rate is nearly the same in both parts of Germany, the distribution of mothers by parity remains quite different. 36 % women born between 1968 and 1972 have a single child in East Germany compared to 22 % in West Germany (and to 18 % in France for women born 1970). In East Germany nearly as many women have a single child than two children. East Germany displays also a lower share of large families. Nevertheless total fertility rate is actually slightly higher in the Eastern part of the country, as childlessness is less common than in West Germany.

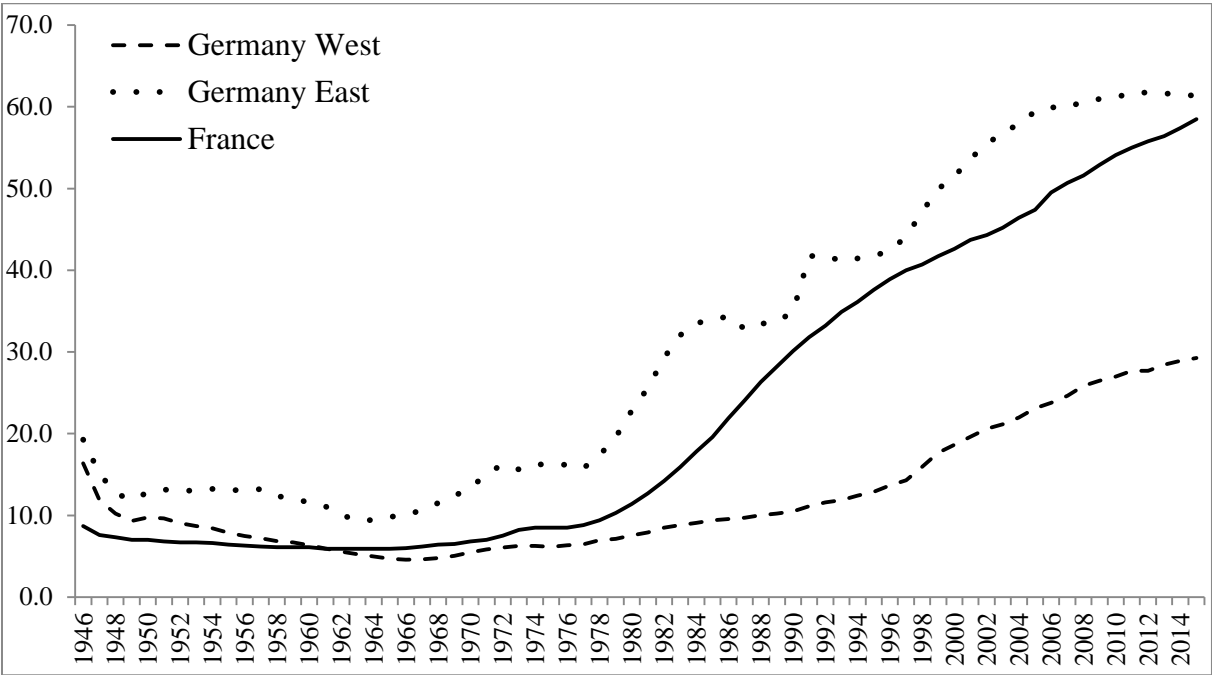
Figure 3: Distribution of German women born between 1968 and 1972 and of French women born in 1970 by parity (%)



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt: Mikrozensus 2008, Köppen, Mazuy, Toulemon 2013

Mean age of women at childbearing is slightly higher in West Germany than in France and East Germany with resp. 31, 30.3 and 29.9 years. Non-marital births are less common in West Germany. In 2015 less than 30 % of births occurred outside marriage in West Germany compared to 62 % in East Germany and 58 % in France. This can be partly related to family policy. In Germany, financial aid linked to marriage – for example tax benefits - is much higher than in France. In the GDR, family policy supporting lone mothers has encouraged parents to have their first child outside marriage and to postpone marriage. This trend weakened the link between children and marriage and contributed to call marriage into question after reunification (Salles 2006).

Figure 4: Proportion of non-marital births in France, West and East Germany (%)



Source: Insee, Destatis

Structural Explanations

Family policy differs significantly in both countries. French family policy has a long tradition of supporting large families, which can be related to the low fertility prevailing in France from the end of the 18th century to the end of Second World War. Therefore financial help for families increases with the number of children and is especially high for the third child. Parental leave is only six months for parents with one child, but three years for parents with at least two children, whereas there is no difference by parity in Germany. Similarly only parents with at least two children are entitled to family allowance and it is notably higher for the third child, while there are nearly the same according to birth order in Germany. In France family allowance is 129.35 Euro for two children, i.e. around 65 Euro for each child, and 295.05 Euro for three children, which means an increase of 165 Euro only for the third child, compared to 188 Euro for the first or the second child, and 194 Euro for the third child in Germany. Likewise the French tax-splitting system benefits large families as it takes into account the number of children in the household and assigns a higher weight to the third child. Large families are also entitled to a 'large family card' and benefit price discounts for cinema or rail tickets, etc. Public officials with at least three children are also qualified for a child-related pension bonus. The pro-birth goal probably explains why French family policy pursues an objective of horizontal equity, in other words redistribution from households without children to household with children.

Furthermore, both countries support family-work-balance, but with some differences. France has a long tradition of promoting better reconciliation of work and family life through diversified childcare provisions, financial support for external childcare and full day school. But for Germany, this is relatively new. Until the mid-2000's it was quite difficult for Western German mothers to combine work and family. This was due to few childcare possibilities under the age of three combined with three years of parental leave and half day school. This situation is changing gradually. Following the recommendation of the European Union, the German government decided in 2005 to develop external childcare and to encourage mothers to work. Family policy reforms in Germany also aimed at promoting gender equality (BMFSFJ 2013, Salles, Letablier 2013). In order to encourage men to share child-rearing responsibilities with women, parental allowance is 65 % of the employee's previous income³. It is only paid for one year so as to attract mothers back to the workforce after one year instead of three. This requires the availability of childcare provision. Therefore the German government extended in 2005 financial support for day care services for children under the age of three. As a consequence of the childcare-reform of 2005 and the resulting development of childcare facilities in Germany, 32.9 % of children under the age of three were in 2015 in external childcare, 18.1% in full time (that means for at least 7 hours a day) (destatis 2016). In France, the ratio of places to children is 52 % and 39 % of the children under three years of age are cared for mainly outside the family (Observatoire national de la petite enfance 2014).

As a consequence of the German reforms, the share of women working before having their child has risen from 53 % in 2008 up to 70 % for mothers of children born in 2014, so that the average allowance also increased. And fathers' take up rate rose to more than 34 % for children born in 2014 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2015). Nevertheless, these changes make little impact on family division of labor between men and women as mothers usually take 12 months parental leave compared to 2 months for fathers. As a result, the rate of working mothers with at least a child under three years old didn't change in Germany during the ten last years. It is still roughly 30 % (Genesis database, www.destatis.de).

So structure (visual by laws and political reforms) in both countries matters, which is a result of a given cultural setting, formed over decades. The process of stabilization of given cultural setting is caused by a strong interaction between culture, politics and behavior. And by this a certain gender culture and family conceptions were established. But so far it is not fully understandable why the fertility patterns between France and Germany differ so significant. So we assume that there needs to be a substantial cultural influence holding change back and

³ For low incomes, parental allowance is more than 65 %. In order to favour fathers' parental leave - take up, parents are also entitled to 14 months paid parental leave instead of 12 if both parents share parental leave.

stabilizing given fertility patterns. Theories describing such an influence exist, but there are, in comparison, few, and within current family research hardly any of them is frequently used. This article will keep on in the long tradition of French-German comparison and try to explain the differences within the family size-patterns through a cultural concept called “leitbild” (prevailing representations of family), which is supplemented to structural concepts.

3. Theoretical background

In trying to explain changes and differences in family lives, the most popular approach recently has been rational choice. Despite success in explaining some patterns (e.g. low fertility among highly educated women, high fertility in countries with good public childcare) other findings remain unclear (e.g. gender difference in the education effect, high fertility in the UK). There are institutional approaches, e.g. by B. Pfau-Effinger (2004, 1996), offering explanations for cross-national differences that complement structural by cultural arguments. Our aim is to develop these approaches further by describing the cultural characteristics more precisely and referring them in this case to two countries.

We refer to *leitbilder* as sets of collectively shared and pictured conceptions of a “normal” state or process, in the sense that it is widely spread, socially expected and/or personally desired (Diabaté and Lück 2014). In this context *leitbild* is a “bundle of socially shared (mental or verbalised) imaginations of a desired or desirable and principally achievable future which are supposed to be realised by corresponding action” (Giesel 2007: 245). *Leitbilder* may refer to family issues, such as the “normal” composition of a family or the “perfect” timing when to have children. Birgit Pfau-Effinger defines *leitbilder* as “typical societal ideal representations, norms and values regarding the family and the societal integration of women and men” (Pfau-Effinger 2004: 382). From our viewpoint this definition seems useful, since it proves to be applicable in empirical research. The conceptions of normality that are bundled in a *leitbild* could partly be addressed as attitudes, preferences or values (if they are personally desired), partly as social expectations or norms (if they are socially expected), and partly as frames, scripts or everyday knowledge (if they are taken as common and self-evident). However, the *leitbild* concept assumes that conceptions of normality mostly fulfil all three criteria at the same time and that these are interrelated (Lück et al. 2016). In this context *leitbilder* are much more complex than most cultural concepts.

The influence of leitbilder on behaviour

A *leitbild* can have an impact on individual behaviour in three ways (Lück et al. 2016, Diabaté and Lück 2014): (1) by the actor's motivation to put their personal desires into practice (like attitudes), (2) by the motivation to fulfil other people's social expectations and to avoid social exclusion (like norms), and (3) by the nonreflective following of routines or social practices in order to save time and effort (like frames and scripts). The actor's personal representations are decisive for the first and third type of influence. For the second type of influence norms (cultural *leitbilder*) are relevant that are predominant within the society and social groups to which the actor belongs.

These guiding models influence behaviour simultaneously with rational reflection and decision-making as well as in interaction with it. The influence of models reproduces and stabilises the customary patterns of family life and decelerates social change (such as the convergence of gender roles). In this sense it is complementary to utilitarian rational decision-making. In context of our comparison we assume that representations at the individual and societal level differ between France and Germany and between the two German regions – West and East. Explanations of the country-differences are connected to structural differences and even to historical development, which influenced the models via norms of childlessness, large families, gender roles and partnership. Especially the political paths and there facets of pronatalism, conservatism and individualism should help to explain the structure of the family-related norms of France and Germany. So we focus individual representations, as manifested elements of norms, on the one hand and perceived opinions in the society on the other hand.

Hypotheses

In summary, guiding role models are a result of an interacting process: They are part of a societies' culture and are shaped by structural factors such as family policy and social welfare systems (which vice versa depend on certain prevailing cultural conceptions) on the one hand and actual behavior of individuals on the other hand. In a society where most of the people follow a certain behavior this fact influences the individual perception of normality which in turn has an impact on their models. These guiding cultural conceptions, finally, influence action, in our case desired final family size. We assume that there are different family cultures depended on the social context. They should diver between the countries. Regarding the distribution beside the dominant 2-child-norm there is a second important large-family-norm in France (3 children and more), whereas in West- and East-Germany the one-child-norm is most important beside the general wide spread 2-child-norm, and childlessness is widespread in West Germany and increasing in East-Germany, more than in France.

We showed in section 2 that besides the structural factors the most prominent differences between France and East and West Germany are the occurrence of childlessness and of large families. Based on our theoretical concept in the three regions there should be different

representations concerning these dimensions to guide fertility related behavior. Our first hypotheses therefore center on these items.

Childlessness

The frequency of childlessness is higher in Germany, especially in West-Germany, than in France. Therefore there should be differences in the representations between Germany and France concerning the acceptance of childlessness.

- H1a Individual level: We assume that in all three regions individuals are convinced by their personal representations and appreciate them. Therefore individuals who want to stay childless consider childlessness as something normal. On the other side persons who generally want children don't consider childlessness as normal.
- H1b Societal level: Childlessness is socially accepted in West Germany. Therefore individuals who want to remain childless see their individual plans socially accepted. In East Germany this perceived social acceptance should be somewhat weaker. In France, finally, childlessness is not accepted socially and individuals who want to remain childless find themselves socially stigmatized.

Large families (3+children)

Large families are more common in France than in Germany. Especially in East Germany they are a relatively rare phenomenon. Again there should be consequences for individual and social norms.

- H2a Individual level: Once again we assume that in all three regions individuals are convinced by their personal representations. Therefore individuals who want at least three or more children consider large families as good. On the other hand individuals who want to stay childless or want only one child don't prefer large families.
- H2b Societal level: Large families are socially accepted in France. Therefore individuals who want to have more than two children see their individual plans socially approved. In West Germany individuals who want to have a large family find their intentions opposing social norms. In East Germany this perceived social rejection should be even stronger.

Another differentiating factor was the higher rate of births out of wedlock in France and in East Germany compared to West Germany. This fact points to a more traditional perception of partnership. As a partner is sort of prerequisite for a birth we included opinions on partnership and their connection with fertility. We concentrated on traditional values, financial security and children as important factors of a partnership. The resulting hypotheses are the following.

Traditional values (Attitude towards marriage/gender roles)

The lower share of births outside marriage in West Germany compared to France and East Germany points to a higher appreciation of traditional values. Additionally the German tax system gives financial incentives to married couples, whereas unmarried parents cannot profit from this possibility. These link, amongst other things, marriage to having children and also having children to traditional gender roles. In France, married couples benefit from the same incentive (*quotient conjugal*), but it is diluted within a family splitting tax rule including children (*quotient familial*).

- H3 Individual level: In West Germany individuals who are not in favor of marriage or traditional gender role models should more often reject having children because these are socially linked. In France and East Germany this should have no influence. In all three regions the appreciation of marriage and traditional gender role models should be combined by a higher intended final parity as having many children fits into the traditional life style model.

Criteria for “good partnership”

In both countries we don't assume significant differences in the importance of having children within a “good partnership”. Only in financial terms there should be a deviation. In France the financial situation is not considered as important as in Germany when individuals consider if and how many children they want to have, because the State and its family policy are supposed to cope. In Germany couples must afford raising their children.

- H4a Individual level: In both parts of Germany individuals who want to have at least one child attach greatest importance to financial security. In France this should have less influence.
- H4b Societal level: In both parts of Germany individuals who want to have at least one child should perceive the great importance given socially to financial security. In France this should have less influence.

4. Data, methods and operationalization

We use data from two national surveys to test our hypotheses. The German data come from the survey Family-related *leitbilder* carried out in 2012 by the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB). The target population is people living in Germany between the ages of 20 to 39 years. The telephone survey was especially designed to explore cultural aspects related to family issues. The French survey Elipps was carried out 2013 as a pilot on tablets. Accordingly, the

sample was smaller. For our age group 18 to 40 we have 340 cases. The comparability of both surveys is challenging with regard to sampling methods and general aims of the surveys. There are more non-response in the French data concerning the questions on guiding role models, i.e. around 18%⁴, than in the German data, where missing answers are extremely low, i.e. around 1%. This could partly be due to a wording effect, i.e. the items could be more appropriate for Germany, but more probably it is also an effect of the different data collection methods. While in Germany interviews have been conducted by phone, in France the questionnaires were filled in by the respondents themselves on tablets, where ‘Don’t know’ and ‘Refusal to answer’ were offered among the set of proposed answers. Nevertheless, we have the great advantage of similar questions on prevailing representations in both surveys, because parts of the German survey were translated and implemented in the French survey. So the same questions were asked in both countries which allows for direct comparability. Both samples are panel surveys, but in this paper we only present results of the first wave. Not all questions could be taken over into the French survey, some of them because they were too specific for the German situation, like e.g. questions on the acceptance of external child care for very young children. Nevertheless, the two surveys offer the first chance to compare France and Germany in respect to family-related models. The questions were asked on two levels: personal opinions on certain aspects and the perception of a societal norm on the same aspects. In praxis that means people were given an item on the personal level, e.g. ‘‘Nowadays it is normal not to have children, do you personally agree?’’⁵, and afterwards⁶ they were asked ‘‘and what does the general public think about this topic?’’ and the same item was asked again with the same scale of agreement (BiB 2016).

For our research question on the impact of family related representations on fertility intentions we chose items covering the themes of childlessness, of having many children and on partnership as a sort of prerequisite of fertility. They are introduced in the next section in detail. As East Germany often proved to be more like France concerning our research question, i.e. female labor force participation and external childcare are more accepted than in West Germany (Ruckdeschel 2012, Salles et al. 2010) we are analyzing the two parts of Germany apart from each other.

⁴ Max. 22% for one question. Our results relate to explicit answers only.

⁵ We used 4-level Likert items with the choice of answers: ‘‘totally agree; partially agree; partially disagree; totally disagree’’

⁶ Normally items were asked in blocks, i.e. a block of 3 to 6 items on personal level and afterwards the same on societal level.

5. Descriptive comparison: The Cultural Dimensions of childlessness, large families and partnership

In a first step we want to introduce and compare the items we chose for the dimensions we are working with (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive results (in %, agree or fully agree) without non response)

	France %	Germany %	West %	East %
Nowadays it is normal not to have children				
individual level	47,3	58,6	58,2	60,0
societal level	27,1	64,8	65,2	63,4
Childless persons are egoistical (only individual level)	25,1	28,5	29,5	24,7
It is wonderful to have many children				
individual level	43,2	72,6	73,8	66,7
societal level	52,3	37,1	37,9	34,3
Only families who have enough money should have many children (only societal level)	62,7	78,6	79,0	77,0
It is not good for a child to be single child (only societal level)	76,1	51,6	53,6	43,4
With too many children you cannot care enough for each single child (only societal level)	69,9	72,7	72,6	72,7
Partnership functions well, if the couple loves each other				
individual level	99,1	97,8	97,8	98,1
societal level	-	-	-	-
has a fulfilling sexual life together				
individual level	95,2	93,2	93,4	92,4
societal level	97,7	93,3	92,9	94,9
in case of doubt lets the man take decisions.				
individual level	10,1	22,7	23,1	21,4
societal level	41,2	47,4	47,4	47,4
leaves each other some space				
individual level	96,7	97,8	97,6	98,5
societal level	89,7	89,2	89,1	89,7
is financially secure				
individual level	63,0	86,1	86,2	85,8
societal level	81,7	93,0	92,7	94,0
has children together				
individual level	30,8	62,5	62,0	64,3
societal level	65,4	70,7	70,1	73,3
Marriage is an outdated institution (only individual level)	31,6	35,1	34,6	37,0
A woman should take her husband's last name after marriage. (only individual level)	56,3	34,5	35,8	29,6
N	340	5000	3986	1014

Data sources: ELIPPS 2013; FLB 2012; persons aged 18 to 40 (France) and 20 to 39 (Germany); German data weighted

Starting with opinions on childlessness we looked at items concerning the normality of childlessness and the perception of childless individuals as egoistical. Looking at the comparison we find the expected differences between France and Germany. Childlessness seems to be

normal in Germany, accepted by individuals and perceived as common sense on the societal level with no great difference between the two regions. In France childlessness seems to be adopted by individuals, nearly half of the respondents call it “normal”, which is still less than in Germany. On societal level, however, it is perceived as not accepted. It seems that French respondents are more open towards childlessness individually than what they perceive for the society they live in. On the other hand even less Frenchmen (25,1 %) than Germans (28,5 %) think that childless persons are egoistical. This latter may be explained by the fact that if having children is seen as normal, then someone who does not have children is seen as somehow underprivileged, as someone who cannot fulfill a certain norm or standard. In this case East Germans resemble more the French sample than the West German. In West Germany not having children is more common and seen more as a choice which also leads to many privileges in comparison to parents.

The evaluation of large families is mainly captured by “it is wonderful to have many children”. Other items are a good financial situation as prerequisite of a large family, the evaluation of single children as bad and the problem of having not enough time for every child if the family is too large. However, looking at large families, the first differences we find are in the definition of “large”.

While large families are families with at least 3 children for French respondents, Germans more often refer to families with 4 children as large. This may be caused by different historical developments. In France a family with 3 children is legally characterized as “*famille nombreuse*” for whom a lot of financial advantages are offered. In Germany on the other hand large families are still somehow connected to the Nazi-Era where mothers with at least 4 children were especially honoured and also got advantages. Coming back to France of today, large families are less valued at the individual level than on the societal level there, but all in all about half of the population agrees that having many children is wonderful. In Germany in contrast there is a wide gap between individual and perceived societal acceptance. Large families are individually valued are supposed to be socially not accepted. Large families are often stigmatized as being financially needy and of living on social welfare. In France, large families (3+) are perceived as more widely accepted hope to the important and long-lasting institutional support. Nevertheless, on societal level also single children are perceived as disadvantaged in comparison to children with brothers or sisters. There seems to be a strong norm towards a limited number of children of about 2 to 3 children. At this point we also find differences between East and West Germany. Larger families are more common in West than in East Germany, a fact which is mirrored by their individual appreciation. More West Germans than East Germans approve of large families. Finally, financial constraints for large families are more important in Germany, while in France the ideology of equal opportunities puts the State in charge of the financial burden in the eyes of the respondents.

The financial situation is also important when it comes to partnership. It is more often perceived as central for the success of a partnership in Germany than in France. Other factors such as love, sex or freedom within the partnership are valued as equally important in both countries. However, the most prominent difference between the two countries is the importance of children for the success of a partnership. Partnership seems to be much stronger linked to children in Germany (both parts) than in France. Taking the acceptance of marriage as an indicator for traditionalism there seems to be no strong difference between the countries, while the question whether a woman should take her husband's last name after marriage reveals strong differences. Germans are more often than French against this tradition. There has been a long public discussion in Germany where keeping their birth-name after marriage has become a feminist symbol for women. The use of the husband's last name by women is more common in France than in Germany . This might be related to the fact that the possibility for men to choose the wife's name is relatively new: it was introduced only in 2011 compared to 1994 in Germany⁷.

6. Effects of guiding role models on fertility intentions

In our next step we compare the individual and societal representations of groups with different final intended parity in all three regions. We want to analyze if there are differences between the perceptions of the respective groups. We define the concept of final intended parity as the number of children one already has plus the number of (additional) intended children plus pregnancies (see e.g. Sobotka 2009; Liefbroer 2009). Because of the non-responses in the French data (see section 4) we decided to analyze a strongly reduced multivariate model controlling for age, sex, partner and educational level. We compare childless persons who want to stay childless, persons with final intended parity one and persons with final intended parity three or more with the "standard" intended two-child family. We calculated two models, one for the influence of family related items and one for partnership related items. In the first models we included all items that showed significant differences in the comparison between the three regions (see section 5). In the final models we only included items that showed significant effects in at least one country or region respectively. The item "marriage is an outdated institution" was included in both models as a proxy for traditionalism.

Family related factors

At first glance we find a lot of effects for Germany and less for France when comparing the influence of family related items (see table 2). One reason could be that the subject is more

⁷ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000024795921&categorieLien=id>

important in the German debate – on both levels, individual and societal. In France having children is a normality which is not questioned or in focus of public debate⁸ while it is more of an option in Germany and therefore an important question of how to live your life.

We supposed to find a strong correspondence between an individual's intention and his or her opinions and perceptions of prevailing representations. In Germany we find this hypothesis confirmed, i.e. individuals who want to stay childless think of childlessness as normality and for those who want to have larger families it is the opposite. That is different in France where individuals who want to stay childless do not consider childlessness as normal and also take their own intentions as being outside of an accepted norm. This finding is confirmed by the qualitative study conducted by Charlotte Debest (2012, see also Debest, Mazuy 2014). The fact that we do not find any significant differences when it comes to the general norms about childlessness in France confirms this finding. There seems to be an overall social consent that childlessness is something not desirable and therefore we do not find any variance between the groups. This is confirmed by the descriptive finding (see tab. 1) that childless persons are not considered as egoistical because childlessness is not seen as a privilege which offers many advantages. Once again the results are very different for Germany. In both parts the results point in the same direction although they are not always significant in both regions. Childless persons regard themselves as normal but perceive childlessness and thus their own life plan as not really accepted on the societal level. The results are similar for persons with final intended parity one in West Germany. They also see childlessness as not accepted on the societal level and maybe having only one child is a sort of concession for them of fulfilling the social model at the minimum level. However, also in Germany childlessness is not seen as a privilege although West Germany shows tendencies in that direction (see tab. 1).

Looking at the appreciation of large families we find our hypotheses on the individual level confirmed in all three regions. Wanting a large family is strongly correlated with individual appreciation of children. For France this is one of the two significant findings. In Germany this hypothesis is also confirmed the other way round, i.e. persons wanting no or only one child are personally not at all in favor of many children. We already found this in the descriptive results (see tab. 1) where large families seem to be a highly controversial topic in both parts of Germany. Once again we find in the German case that individually chosen and approved family options are perceived as not accepted in society. Persons wanting large families see no societal support for their intentions whereas those who do not want any family at all see too much of it.

The significant discrepancies between the appreciation of one's own chosen number of children and the simultaneously disregard of other family life styles may be an indicator of a

⁸ At least this was the case at the time of the interviews. Later on there were changes in family policy which actually lead to a public debate.

trend towards a segmentation of the German society into separate family milieus with not much appreciation for each other. In the same time in France there seems to be a strong governing model which maybe ostracises childless couples as well as single-child parents.

Finally, as hypothesized, in Germany a rejection of children is accompanied by a rejection of marriage. In this point we find a significant difference between East and West Germany. Individuals wanting only one child are rejecting marriage in East Germany whereas in West Germany the dividing line seems to be between no child or any children. We interpret this as an indicator of the stronger separation of marriage and children in East Germany. This can be explained historically because in the former GDR social policies (for instance regarding access to housing and parental leave) towards lone mothers were in practice benefiting also to unmarried parents; therefore marriage was often postponed after the birth of a child.

Summarizing the results of the first model, we find a strong norm of the two-child family in Germany. Other family formations seem to perceive themselves as nonconforming in comparison with this role model which we took as an indicator for a trend towards a separation of society into different family milieus. In France we are witnessing the opposite: There seems to be a widespread consensus about the normality of having children and if there are separate family milieus they are much too small to be found in our data.

Partnership related factors

Looking at the influence of partnership related items on fertility decisions again we find a different culture in France. The only significant result is that a lack of financial security is associated with wanting no children. Financial security is rejected by West German couples who want 3 or more children. This may be explained as a statement of attaching greater importance to the goal of having many children as to financial security. At the same time large families seem to be seen socially as a family life style one has to be able to afford in East Germany. Finally the intend parity 3+ in the East of Germany goes along with a feeling of societal negation of the importance of children for a partnership, financial security is perceived as more important.

However, the most important finding and difference between France and both parts of Germany is that children and marriage do not seem to be so strongly linked in France as in Germany. This already appeared in the descriptive results and also shows up in the control variables where having a partner is a strong impact factor on the choice of family form. In both parts of Germany we find a strong impact of the rejection that a partnership needs children for stabilization from individuals who want to stay childless. Reversely this means that the reference group is in favor of that opinion. And that is exactly what individuals who want to stay childless perceive as a social norm in society. If having children is closely linked to a successful

partnership then the preconditions for having children are stronger than in France, because before children are planned the demands on a partnership have to be fulfilled. If that link is seen less strong then individuals might get children with a partner although they are not always sure if the partnership will last. An explanation for this may be found in the fact that in Germany having children was closely linked to marriage legally for a long time. This connection weakened in the last years, i.e. children born outside marriage have the same rights as children born in a marriage, but it still is strong as model. In both parts of the country the group of intentionally childless persons is also characterized by their rejection of marriage which supports the assumption of a strong link between marriage and children.

Table 2: Persons by desired family size and fertility-related opinions (Ref. final intended parity two children)

		France			West Germany			East Germany		
		no children	one child	three or more children	no children	one child	three or more children	no children	one child	three or more children
dimensions	categories	Exp(B)			Exp(B)			Exp(B)		
Sociodemographic factors	age	1,278***	1,110	0,985	1,031**	1,093***	0,985*	1,010	1,089***	0,995
	sex (ref. female)	0,277*	0,719	0,429	1,307*	0,625***	0,762**	1,102	0,440***	0,882
	partner (ref. yes)	0,915	3,531	0,652	2,473***	0,709**	0,855	2,446***	1,236	0,544**
	education (ref. high)	4,408*	4,559*	1,207	1,186	1,239	0,842*	1,178	1,907**	0,913
Childlessness	Nowadays it is normal not to have children									
	- individual level	0,260*	1,165	0,575	6,012***	1,547**	0,683***	4,413***	1,414	0,707*
	- societal level	0,878	1,165	1,091	0,479***	0,753*	1,292**	0,458**	0,792	1,402*
Large families	It is wonderful to have many children									
	- individual level	0,802	3,352	7,339***	0,343***	0,547***	4,014***	0,341***	0,552**	3,419***
	- societal level	2,907	0,624	1,244	1,629***	1,196	0,814*	1,900**	1,257	1,008
	Only rich persons should get many children (pers.)	0,421	3,433	0,515	1,044	1,325	0,854	1,643	1,006	1,035
	constant	-8,140**	-6,040**	0,953	-3,664***	-4,374***	-0,801**	-3,350***	-4,028***	-1,408*
	N		149+ (340)			3800+ (3910)			1065+ (1090)	
	pseudo R ² Nagelkerke		0,460			0,227			0,232	

Data sources: ELIPPS 2013; FLB 2012; persons aged 18 to 40 (France) and 20 to 39 (Germany); unweighted data; + variables included in the model, i.e. without non-response

Ref. opinion items: do (absolutely) not agree

Table 2 (Contd.): Persons by desired family size and partnership-related opinions (Ref. final intended parity two children)

		France			West Germany			East Germany		
		no children	one child	three or more children	no children	one child	three or more children	no children	one child	three or more children
Dimensions		Exp(B)			Exp(B)			Exp(B)		
Sociodemographic factors	age	1,299***	1,087	1,039	1,028**	1,089***	0,990	1,021	1,095***	0,995
	sex (ref. female)	0,311	0,490	0,773	1,465**	0,597***	0,755***	1,163	0,476***	0,844
	partner (ref. yes)	0,489	1,714	1,258	1,990***	0,683*	0,847	2,172**	1,229	0,580**
	education (ref. high)	2,402	3,420	1,046	1,180	1,220	0,800**	1,286	1,927**	0,866
Criteria for "good Partnership"	Partnership functions well, if the couple... ...in case of doubt lets the man take decisions									
	- individual level	3,643	0,640	0,546	1,049	1,251	1,220*	0,642	0,948	1,306
	- societal level	1,049	3,763*	0,950	1,094	1,183	0,897	1,224	1,144	1,138
	- financial security									
	...is financially secure									
	- individual level	3,827*	0,246*	1,087	0,971	0,896	0,670**	0,760	1,249	0,738
	- societal level	0,621	0,611	1,061	0,784	0,783	1,035	0,658	1,838	1,875
	- children									
...has children together										
- individual level	1,063	0,839	1,362	0,217***	0,633***	1,206*	0,338***	0,911	1,347	
- societal level	1,322	2,188	0,864	1,489**	1,075	0,947	4,361***	1,021	0,791	
Attitude towards marriage	Marriage is an outdated institution (only individual level)	1,287	1,309	0,542	2,471***	1,200	0,919	1,862**	1,764**	1,142
	Constant	-9,925***	-4,227*	-0,562	-2,801***	-3,838***	0,279	-3,304**	-5,446***	-0,904
	N		182 (340)			3725 (3910)		1049 (1090)		
	pseudo R ² Nagelkerke		0,353			0,149		0,157		

Data sources: ELIPPS 2013; FLB 2012; persons aged 18 to 40 (France) and 20 to 39 (Germany); unweighted data; * variables included in the model, i.e. without non-response
 Ref. opinion items: do (absolutely) not agree

7. Discussion

This study points out two different situations outside the norm (in this study we can identify two situations outside the norm). The first case concerns individuals whose personal representations are opposite to what they consider as being the general opinion in society. But they are convinced by their own representations. In other words they stand by what they say and do. This concerns people who want to have at least three children in France as well as in Germany. They tend to support the idea that it is wonderful to have many children, but believe that people in general think different. This might be surprising in France regarding the high proportion of large families and the institutional support for them. This might be linked to the recent family policy reforms, which reduced financial support especially for large families.

This position outside the norm applies also to individuals in East and West Germany who wish to remain childless. They tend to agree at the individual level that it is normal not to have children but think different at the general level. They also don't express personally the idea that having many children is wonderful. But they assume that people in general do so. These opinions / attitudes reveal a significant opposition between representations at the individual and at the general level, but a strong link between fertility intentions and individual perceptions. Those individuals consider themselves as outside the social norm, but value their own representations.

A second group refers to individuals who consider their fertility intentions as being in opposition to representations at the general level but also at the individual level. This concerns the French respondents without fertility intentions. They defend the idea that childlessness is not accepted in general, but also agree personally that it is not normal not to have children, which seems to clash with their own fertility intentions. They also support the item "partnership functions well if the couple has children together" at the individual and societal level. For this group representations at the individual and general level are in line, but opposite to their personal intentions, which seems to be contradictory.

This finding has several consequences. First our hypothesis, that individuals assume their choices and appreciate them is only partly confirmed (H1 and H2). This does not apply to all individuals and restraint therefore the concept of rational choice. Second this reveals a strong two-children norm in both countries. In France as well as in Germany the two-child family is the most frequent. Remaining childless on the one hand, raising a large family on the other, are

considered as family forms outside the norm. The single-child family is also rejected by most of the respondents, especially in France.

Third the position regarding the *leitbild*, notably in the second group, sheds some light on the different fertility level observed in France and Germany. It highlights the different social acceptance of childlessness in both countries and therefore confirms our hypothesis (H1b). Whereas individuals in both countries who wish to remain childless perceive this choice as being socially rejected, in Germany they value their own opinion, in France they don't. This suggests a better social acceptance of childlessness in Germany than in France. Even if individuals do not want to have children, they have interiorized the social norm of childlessness. This finding is also confirmed by the general opinion about childlessness: In Germany most of the respondents agree that it is normal not to have children compared to 25.1% in France. The rejection of childlessness as well as single-child-families reveals a strong parental norm in France (2+)⁹. The higher fertility level might also be related to the high social acceptance of large families in France. This stronger support for large families may be partly explained by the different definitions of a large family in France (3+) and in Germany (4+), but also by the different institutional framework. Last, the higher fertility level in France may also be linked to the lower impact of financial security on fertility decisions (H4).

In this regard we find a rather homogenous picture in France. There seems to be one comprehensive dominating representation of the self-evidence of having children: Childlessness is considered as outside the societal norm and may therefore apply pressure on people who are not sure whether they want to have children or not. Becoming a parent is considered as self-evident and as something desirable. There seems to be a strong and established "culture of having children", whereas the actual number of children is perceived as an individual choice with no focus on a certain family form. The State is supposed to be in charge of the additional costs related to having many children.

In Germany the situation is different: There we find more norms concerning family forms which seem to be stronger and more exclusive. We took this as an indicator for a trend towards a separation of society into different subcultures of family life. Childlessness is perceived as an individual choice, more and more accepted as a fact (but not as a model); on the contrary raising a large family is considered both as "wonderful" and as being socially stigmatized. This situation makes the choice for a certain family form more fundamental.

⁹ This is also confirmed by the media in France. In order to justify gestational surrogacy, the lawyer Caroline Mécarry said on the 22th of July 2016 on France Info Radio « everybody has children ». <http://www.franceinfo.fr/fil-info/article/cedh-gpa-les-enfants-n-ont-pas-payer-les-choix-qui-ont-ete-faits-par-leurs-parents-c-mecarry-avocate-807443>

Besides, there seems to be a stronger link between marriage and family formation in Germany, which confirms our hypothesis (H3). We also found more traditional views among individuals who intend to have at least three children. The reason for the weaker connection in France could be that being a single parent (in case of splitting up after childbirth) is easier to handle, because mothers tend to work full time in France more than in Germany; furthermore, France has a better infrastructure (daytime-care-offerings for all age groups) for childcare, in terms of pre-school and school-time, which offers better opportunities for mothers to work full time. By this single parents in France are less marginalized and therefore the decision to get children is easier than for Germans. There is more governmental compensation in France, so that the opportunity costs in all scenarios of family constellations (large family, single parent) get lower. Maybe the social stigmatization should be even lower, because large families and single parents are better supported than in Germany and therefore less deprived.

Finally family formation in France seems to be easier, with less structural and cultural barriers than in Germany.

Except for a higher rejection of large families and more support for single-child families, we do not find many differences between East and West Germany. This suggests that the differences in representations between both parts of the country have lessened.

This study highlights the importance of representations and role models in fertility intentions and outcomes. The impact of the institutional framework on fertility decisions can't be considered without taking into account the cultural conception of family prevailing in society, called in Germany *leitbild*.

8. References

- Berntsen, D.; Rubin, D. C. (2002): Emotionally charged autobiographical memories across the life-span: The recall of happy, sad, traumatic and involuntary memories. in: *Psychology and Aging*, 17, 636-652.
- BiB Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung - Federal Institute of Population Research (2016). Translated Questionnaire of the panel „Familienleitbilder“.
- Billari, F.C; Goisis, A.; Liefbroer, A.C; Settersten, R.A; Aassve, A.; Hagestad, G.; Spéder, Z. (2010): Social age deadlines for the childbearing of women and men. in: *Human Reproduction*. first published online 15.12.2010. doi:10.1093/humrep/deq360.

- BMFSFJ (2013). Erster Gleichstellungsbericht - Neue Wege-Gleiche Chancen - Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern im Lebensverlauf (<http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/gleichstellung.did=174358.html>)
- Debest C., Mazuy M., 2014, « Rester sans enfant: un choix de vie à contre-courant ». In: Population & Sociétés, 508.
- Debest C., 2012, *Le choix d'une vie sans enfant: des individus confrontés aux normes sociales et de genre*, Thèse de sociologie sous la direction de Numa Murard, Université Paris 7 – Denis – Diderot.
- Diabaté, Sabine; Lück, Detlev (2014): Familienleitbilder – Identifikation und Wirkungsweise auf generatives Verhalten. in: Zeitschrift für Familienforschung, 26 (1): 49-69.
- Dorbritz J., 2008, « Germany: Family diversity with low actual and desired fertility », Demographic Research, vol. 19, 17: 557-598.
- Giesel, K.D., 2007, « Leitbilder in den Sozialwissenschaften », Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Janssen, S. M. J.; Rubin, D. C. (2011): Age Effects in Cultural Life Scripts. in: Applied Cognitive Psychology, 25: 291-298.
- Köppen K., Mazuy M., Toulemon L., 2015, « Childlessness in France », in Konietza D., Kreyenfeld M. (eds.), Childlessness in Europe: Patterns, Causes and Consequences. Springer, in press.
- Hornung A., 2011, « Avoir trois enfants et plus en France et en Allemagne : l'évolution démographique des familles nombreuses ». In: Gouazé, S., Prat-Erkert, C., Salles A. (Eds.): *Les enjeux démographiques en France et en Allemagne: réalités et conséquences*. Lille: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 35-54.
- Liefbroer, A. C. (2009): Changes in Family Size Intentions Across Young Adulthood: A Life-Course Perspective. European Journal of Population 25: 363–386.
- Liefbroer, A., Billari F.C., 2010: . *Population, space and place*, 16, 287-305.
- Lück, Detlev, Sabine Diabaté, Kerstin Ruckdeschel (2016): Cultural Conceptions of Family as Retardants of Change in Family Lives: The 'Leitbild' Approach. in: Vida Česnuitytė, Detlev Lück, Eric D. Widmer (eds.): *Family Continuity and Change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moore, L.M., Vanneman, R., 2003: . *Social Forces* 82, 115-139.
- Observatoire national de la petite enfance, 2014, *L'Accueil du jeune enfant en 2013. Données statistiques*. .
- Pfau-Effinger, Birgit (1996): Analyse internationaler Differenzen in der Erwerbsbeteiligung von Frauen. Theoretischer Rahmen und empirische Ergebnisse. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 48 (3): 462-492.
- Pfau-Effinger, B., 2004: Socio-historical paths of the male breadwinner model – an explanation of cross-national differences. *The British Journal of Sociology* 55, 377-399.

- Prioux F. 2007. « L'évolution démographique récente en France : la fécondité à son plus haut niveau depuis plus de trente ans », *Population-F*, vol. 62 (3), p. 489-532.
- Riley, Matilda White (1987). On the Significance of Age in Sociology. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 52, No. 1, pp. 1-14.
- Ruckdeschel, K. 2012: Comparing desired fertility and perceptions of motherhood in Germany and France. *Demográfia* Vol. 55, No. 5, English Edition, 5-36.
- Salles, A., Rossier, C., Brachet, S., 2010: Understanding the long term effects of family policies on fertility: The diffusion of different family models in France and Germany. *Demographic Research*, Vol. 22: 1057-1096.
- Salles A., Letablier M.-T., 2013, « La raison démographique dans les réformes de politiques familiales en France et en Allemagne », *Politiques sociales et familiales*, CNAF, 112 : 73-88.
- Salles A., 2006, « Les effets de la politique familiale de l'ex-RDA sur la nuptialité et les naissances hors-mariage », 2006, *Population*, INED, vol. 61, 1-2 : 141-152 (« The effects of family policy in the former GDR on nuptiality and births outside marriage »).
- Settersten, Richard A. Jr., Hägestad, Gunhild O. (1996). What's the Latest? Cultural Age Deadlines for Family Transitions. *The Gerontologist. The Cerontological Society of America*. Vol. 36, No. 2, 178-188.
- Sobotka, T. (2009): Sub-Replacement Fertility Intentions in Austria. *European Journal of Population* 25: 387–412.
- Sobotka, Tomáš (2008): The diverse faces of the second demographic transition in Europe. in: *Demographic Research*, 19: 171-224
- destatis (Statistisches Bundesamt), 2015, *Kindertagesbetreuung regional 2014*, Wiesbaden, www.destatis.de.
- Thévenon O., Luci-Greulich A., The Impact of Family Policies on Fertility Trends in Developed Countries, *European Journal of Population*, 29 (4), Nr. 1.
- Toulemon L., Pailhé A., 2008, "France: high and stable fertility", *Demographic Research*, Vol. 19, Article 16, 503-556.