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Between familial imprinting and institutional regulation

Family related employment interruptions of women
in Germany before and after the German reunification

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Abstract

In this paper, I examine how family related employment interruptions for women in the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and the GDR (German Democratic Republic) looked like in the period prior to German reunification. Furthermore, I investigate how career interruptions developed after the German reunification in the old and new states and whether a convergence of re-entry behaviour can be observed. Following research questions are addressed: Which factors are more important: attitudes towards the employment of mothers, which were transferred through socialisation in childhood and adolescence, or institutional arrangements shaped by parental leave regulations? Based on data from the IAB ALWA study ('Working and Learning in a Changing World'), the results show that even twenty years after the German reunification, significant differences between women in East and West Germany are found to exist with respect to family related employment interruptions. These interruptions are subject to strong institutional control. Women who were raised in the GDR and moved to one of the old federal states after the reunification do not behave differently than West German women. This result suggests that institutional arrangements including for example also childcare availability are more important for re-entry behaviour than socialisation. However, the results must be interpreted carefully: it could be that the willingness to move of East German women is also influenced by socialisation.

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Beitrag wird der Frage nachgegangen, wie sich familienbedingte Erwerbsunterbrechungen aufgrund der Geburt von Kindern vor der Wiedervereinigung in der Bundesrepublik und der DDR gestaltet haben. Weiterhin wird untersucht, wie sich Unterbrechungen nach der Wiedervereinigung in den alten und neuen Bundesländern entwickelt haben, und ob eine Annäherung des Wiedereinstiegsverhaltens stattgefunden hat. Folgende Forschungsfragen werden gestellt: Welche Faktoren sind wichtiger: Einstellungen zur Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern, die durch die Sozialisation in Kindheit und Jugend weitergegeben wurden oder die institutionelle Ordnung, die durch Elternzeitregelungen beeinflusst wurde? Die Ergebnisse auf Basis der Lebensverlaufsstudie „Arbeiten und Lernen im Wandel“ (ALWA) des Instituts für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung (IAB) zeigen, dass auch zwanzig Jahre nach der deutschen Wiedervereinigung deutliche Unterschiede zwischen Frauen in Ost- und Westdeutschland bezüglich der Dauer von familienbedingten Erwerbsunterbrechungen existieren. Familienbedingte Erwerbsunterbrechungen unterliegen einer starken institutionellen Steuerung. Frauen, die in der DDR aufgewachsen sind und nach der Wiedervereinigung in den Westen gezogen sind verhalten sich nicht anders als westdeutsche Frauen. Die deutet darauf hin, dass institutionelle Regelungen eine stärkere Bedeutung für das Wiedereinstiegsverhalten haben als Sozialisationsas-

pekte. Allerdings müssen die Ergebnisse mit einiger Vorsicht interpretiert werden. Es könnte sein, dass die Umzugsbereitschaft ostdeutscher Frauen ebenfalls durch die Sozialisation beeinflusst wird.

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1 Introduction

The German reunification in 1990 united two states that had existed separately since 1949 but share a long common history. Within a few months, the reunification dramatically changed the lives of more than 18 million East German citizens and had a large influence on the West German population. Both populations consequently experienced a number of disturbances and structural adaptations in different areas of life. Two areas in which there were especially large differences between the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and the GDR (German Democratic Republic) were the employment behaviour of women with children and the opinion of the population towards the employment of females. Therefore, after the German reunification, major changes in female employment patterns were expected especially for women from the GDR.

In particular, the interaction between family and working lives for GDR citizens has changed significantly through the reunification process. The socialist regime in the GDR supported the gainful employment of mothers directly by means of an extensive nationwide childcare system and indirectly through limited legal options for employment interruptions following the birth of a child. In contrast, in the FRG, it was common for women to assume caring obligations of their children at home for several years, especially when their children were babies or toddlers. Subsequently, those women often returned to the labour market to seek part-time work. This pattern is known as the modified male breadwinner model. This model was additionally supported by a rather generous parental leave system. Only in recent years has the pattern begun to gradually change (Bothfeld et al. 2006).

In contrast, children and young people in the former GDR were raised in a social system in which women and men were expected to participate in the labour market equally, regardless of whether they had to raise children. Thus, children in the GDR were often socialised in their families in a manner that was completely different than that of children and adolescents in the FRG, who were often raised by non-working mothers. This difference may explain why the empirically observed differences in the labour force participation rates of women or mothers in the old and new federal states are more pronounced even today (see Section 3). Growing up in different 'life-course regimes' (Diewald 2010) could lead to persisting inequalities with respect to the labour force participation rate of mothers or even women in general. The socialisation processes in childhood and adolescence could have led to the development of inequalities in one of these processes, namely, family related career interruptions in East and West Germany.

In particular, it is unclear how long women in the GDR, the FRG and today's West and East Germany interrupted their employment after the birth of a child and what factors crucially influenced the length of such interruptions. Likewise, it is uncertain how the transition of the political system of the GDR influenced such employment interruptions. Essentially, identical parental leave arrangements could have led to different results depending on the cultural conditions in which they were embedded

(Hummelsheim 2009). In summary, the German reunification and the influence of social norms for women's employment and institutional arrangements for parental leave provisions is an interesting research field. This paper addresses the following research questions: how were employment interruptions for women in the FRG and GDR shaped before the German reunification? How did employment interruptions change for women after the German reunification when the different institutional arrangements are considered? Which factors are more important: attitudes towards the employment of mothers, which were transferred through socialisation in childhood and adolescence, or institutional arrangements shaped by parental leave regulations?

The first step in answering these questions involves an explanation of the institutional conditions in the FRG, the GDR and reunified Germany in the second section. Additionally, the different attitudes in both parts of Germany are outlined. In the third section, previous research on family related employment interruptions and the employment of women with children is presented. The fourth section describes general differences between the East and West Germany populations with respect to attitudes towards the employment of women with children. The theoretical perspective, which considers approaches on both the institutional and individual levels, is explained in the fifth section. In the subsequent sections, the data are presented and the research questions are examined with new life course data from the IAB study ALWA. Finally, the results are summarized and discussed.

2 Institutional regulations in Germany and the GDR

2.1 Institutional regulations in the FRG and GDR before the German reunification in 1990

A number of institutional conditions in Germany and the GDR prior to the German reunification can be identified as affecting family related employment interruptions. First, the direct influence of the maximum duration of statutory parental leave periods is described. This leave period is connected to a guaranteed right to return to a pre-employment interruption employer. In addition, the state financial compensation for the foregone earnings of families who assume care obligations can affect family related employment interruptions indirectly (Bird 2003).

In Germany, *maternity leave (Mutterschutz)*¹ was introduced in 1952. *Maternity leave* exempts employed women from work six weeks prior to the expected birth of a child and six weeks (from 1968 to the present: 8 weeks) following birth and protects a women from being dismissed by her employer for four months following the birth of her child. *Maternal leave (Mutterschaftsurlaub)* was introduced in West Germany in 1979. In the following decades, *parental leave* regulations changed frequently. Following the statutory period of *maternity leave (Mutterschutz)* of 14

¹ The notations in *italics* correspond to the official names in German law terminology. These names are added in parentheses.

weeks, which is granted to every woman regardless of her employment status prior to the birth of a child, the temporary exemption from work was extended to four months. *Parental leave (Erziehungsurlaub)* was extended to 10 months in 1986, to 12 months in 1988, to 15 months in 1988 and to 18 months in 1990 (Bird 2004; Kreyenfeld 2001; Puhani/Sonderhof 2011; Schönberg/Ludsteck 2007).

In the GDR, the situation was completely different. Although a *maternal leave* scheme had existed since the 1950s, the *Schwangerschafts- und Wochenurlaub*, which provided for 26 weeks of leave with payment of the net average earnings before birth, was not introduced until 1976 (Winkler 1989). In addition, since 1972, single mothers have been permitted to take a *baby year* if no institutional childcare could be made available by the state. Although this *baby year* was introduced for mothers with two or more children in the late 1970s and prolonged to 18 months for mothers with three children or more in 1984, this period was only established by law in 1986 for all mothers regardless of the number of children they have (Kreyenfeld 2001).

These rules must be considered in conjunction with the prevalent social policy in the GDR. Within this framework, gender equality policies had already been established in the constitution as a central goal in the early years of the GDR. These policies included the development of a public childcare system for children less than three years of age and efforts to train women in the same manner as men are trained for the labour market (Marold 2009; Winkler 1989). However, women were also responsible for household duties; therefore, the traditional roles of men and women persisted, and women were confronted with the double burden of employment and family responsibilities (Kreyenfeld 2001; Rosenfeld/Trappe/Gornick 2004).

2.2 Institutional regulations in Germany after the reunification in 1990

Based on the Unification Treaty, the legal regulations of the FRG were enacted for the citizens of the GDR. The first and most recent expansion of parental leave unified Germany occurred in 1992 and increased the parental leave period from 18 to 36 months. However, the payment of *parental allowance* in the form of income-dependent transfer payments to compensate for a loss of income became increasingly important. In 1993, the payment period was increased to 24 months. In 2001, *parental leave* was reformed and the *Elternzeit* system (*reformed parental leave*) was introduced, but 36-month protection of the employment relationship after birth was retained. The next major reform in 2001 allowed parents to work 30 hours rather than 19 hours per week during *parental leave*.

The introduction of the new *parental allowance* system on 1 January 2007 was the most severe change in the law since its introduction. This new *parental allowance* system changed the calculation of financial compensation but did not alter the maximum parental leave period and the right to return to one's previous employer. *Parental allowance* has been calculated based on earnings since 2007. This regula-

tion is expected to encourage new parents, especially higher-income parents, to shorten their interruption periods because the allowance is paid for only 12 to 14 months, depending on whether a father also takes parental leave. An upper limit is established only for high earners with a net income of 2700 € or greater.

The frequent changes in the institutional arrangements of parental leave schemes and, in particular, the extension of the right to return to one's previous employer must be considered in the context of the conservatively oriented political coalition of the late 1980s. This coalition supported a traditional role model, which considered women to be second earners. Moreover, the poor labour market conditions in Germany in the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s may have influenced these policies. In addition, regulations, such as family load balancing (*Familienlastenausgleich*), and other social conditions supported the non-employment of (married) women with children. For example, the joint taxation of married couples leads to significant tax advantages if one partner does not have (full-time) employment (Dingeldey 2002). Moreover, in West Germany, the childcare system for children under three is still only poorly developed, although there have been some efforts to improve the situation in the past. For children in compulsory school, care is institutionally secured only in the morning, although some schools have also begun to offer all-day schools. The childcare supply quotas are historically much higher in East Germany than in West Germany (Federal Statistical Office 2009). Table 1 gives an overview of regulations in the FRG, the GDR and unified Germany.

Table 1
Overview of the legal regulation of parental leave in the GDR, the FRG and Germany

Date	Official Name (English translation in parenthesis)	Duration of statutory parental leave with job guarantee (in months)	Duration of (means-tested) maternity/paternity benefit (in months)
1952	Mutterschutz (Maternity leave)	2 (14 weeks)	2 (14 weeks)
1976	<i>Schwangerschafts- und Wochenurlaub (Maternity leave)*</i>	6 (26 weeks)	6 (26 weeks)
1976	<i>Babyjahr für Mütter mit zwei oder mehr Kindern (Baby year for mothers with two or more children)*</i>	12	12
1984	Babyjahr für Mütter mit drei oder mehr Kindern (Baby year for mothers with three or more children)*	18	18
7/1979-12/1985	Mutterschaftsurlaub (Maternal leave)	6	6
1/1986-12/1990	<i>Babyjahr (Baby year)*</i>	12	12
1/1986-12/1991	Erziehungsurlaub – kurz (parental leave)	12 – 18	12 – 18
1/1992-12/2000	Erziehungsurlaub – lang (parental leave)	36	24/36, depending on the federal state**
1/2001-12/2007	Elternzeit (Reformed parental leave)	36	12/24 (choice)
1/2007	Elterngeld (Parental allowance)	36	12, earnings related

* regulation in the GDR

**The third year was paid in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Rhineland-Westphalia and Thuringia by the state governments.

Source: Bird (2003: 311 ff.); Gottschall/Bird (2003); Kreyenfeld (2001: 18 f., 49 f.); Obertreis (1986: 287 ff.); Trappe (1995: 39 ff.); Winkler (1989); own illustration.

2.3 Fathers and parental leave regulations

Only few men assumed the role of caregivers for their own babies and toddlers both before and after the German reunification. In principle, the *baby year* in the GDR had also been accessible to men since 1986 (Winkler 1989). In addition, beginning in 1986 in West Germany, fathers were allowed to take *parental leave* to fulfil the role of the primary caregiver. However, only one parent was able to take *parental leave* at a time. Therefore, the use of *parental leave* by men was negligible by the end of the 1980s. Only 1.5 percent of fathers took parental leave (Vaskovics/Rost 1999). Beginning in 2001, both parents could take *parental leave* at the same time, divide the leave into several periods or be simultaneously employed for a maximum of 30 hours (Bird 2004). In principle, this regulation would also allow for equal sharing of the leave between a man and a woman, but in reality, this benefit remained largely unused. Only approximately 5 percent of fathers took *parental leave* (BMFSFJ 2004). However, the introduction of the new parental leave allowance in 2007 increased the appeal of the use of *parental leave* by men, as the period for parental benefits could be extended to a total of 14 months because sharing leave leads to an additional two months of *parental leave*. Actually, this allowance has led to a rapid increase in the use of *parental leave*, but most fathers take only the two additional months that would otherwise expire (BMFSFJ 2009).

3 Employment and employment interruptions of women in Germany and the GDR

Before the German reunification, the labour force participation rates of women in the GDR were nearly as high as those of men; the similarity in these rates corresponded to the political principles of gender equality in the GDR. In 1988, the percentage of working women was more than 90 percent (Frerich/Frey 1993: 78). Meanwhile, in West Germany, only approximately 60 percent of women were gainfully employed (Bothfeld et al. 2005). After the reunification, the shares converged: in West Germany, the proportion of employed women increased to 62 percent in 1999, whereas in East Germany, the proportion of employed women decreased significantly to 72 percent. One reason for this development was the economically difficult situation in the labour market in the newly formed federal states. Thus, women in East Germany are often regarded as the losers of the reunification process both in terms of their labour force participation and with respect to the difficulties that they encountered when re-entering the labour market (Rosenfeld et al. 2004; Trappe 2006). Moreover, full-time employment rates decreased over time in both East and West Germany (Kreyenfeld/Geisler 2006). Although part-time work was of great importance in West Germany in the beginning of the 1990s, as 30 percent of employed women worked part time, such work played only a minor role in East Germany: only 18 percent of East German women worked part time during this period (Matysiak/Steinmetz 2008). However, Bonin and Euwals (2005) found that employment behaviour in East and West Germany converged gradually.

A similar trend can be shown for the labour force participation of mothers. During the 1990s, fewer women with children in East Germany had paid employment compared with those in the GDR before 1990. In the East, this rate continued to decrease from 70 percent in 1996 to 65 percent in 2002. Meanwhile, the employment rate for women with children increased dramatically. In West Germany, this rate increased from 48 percent in 1996 to 56 percent in 2002. However, almost 15 per cent in the West were marginally employed. For mothers with small children, the employment rate in East Germany was twice as high as that in West Germany and amounted to approximately 30 percent (Kreyenfeld/Geisler 2006). It is likely that more mothers registered themselves as unemployed in East Germany than in the West of the republic. Participation rates were also higher for better educated mothers than for those with lower educational levels. In particular, the participation rates of women with low levels of education in the East have become aligned with the participation rates of mothers with low levels of education in West Germany over time. For better educated mothers, this alignment did not occur. However, participation rates for mothers remain significantly higher in East Germany than in West Germany (Hanel/Riphan 2012). In 2010, 59 per cent of mothers in the old and 63 percent in the new federal states were employed (Keller/Haustein 2012).

From a longitudinal perspective, family related employment interruptions in terms of East-West differences have rarely been studied. However, several studies that focus solely on West Germany are available (e.g., Aisenbrey/Evertsson/Grunow 2009; Grunow/Hofmeister/Buchholz 2006; Weber 2004). East-West differences are the focus of the studies that were conducted by Falk and Schaeper (2001; Schaeper/Falk 2003). These authors found distinct differences between East and West German mothers: East German mothers tend to have significantly shorter family related employment interruptions than West German mothers. The authors also identify differences in employment interruptions that occurred before and after the German reunification. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the majority of women ended their employment interruptions at the end of the *baby year* (i.e., after approximately one year). After the reunification, interruptions were significantly longer. Return rates were particularly high at the end of the statutory parental leave period. However, the database that was used for the analyses was not representative and was based on a selective group of apprentices from various graduating classes in East and West Germany. In addition, the number of cases under study is rather low. Bredtmann, Kluve and Schaffner (2009) studied East-West differences in women (birth cohorts from 1939 to 1945) who were returning to work with complete pension biography data and found significantly higher return rates for women in East Germany than for women in West Germany: within the first ten years after the birth of a first child, only 45 percent of women in the West had returned to employment, whereas in the East, this number amounted to 87 percent. The return rate for women in the West decreased for each additional child born, whereas in the East, this rate remained relatively constant across all subsequent births. Women in the East often returned to work within the first 18 months of a child's life, whereas women in the West typically

returned to work only after her (youngest) child began to attend kindergarten or school. However, these results were obtained for a period in which there were virtually no statutory regulations with regard to leave schemes in East and West Germany.

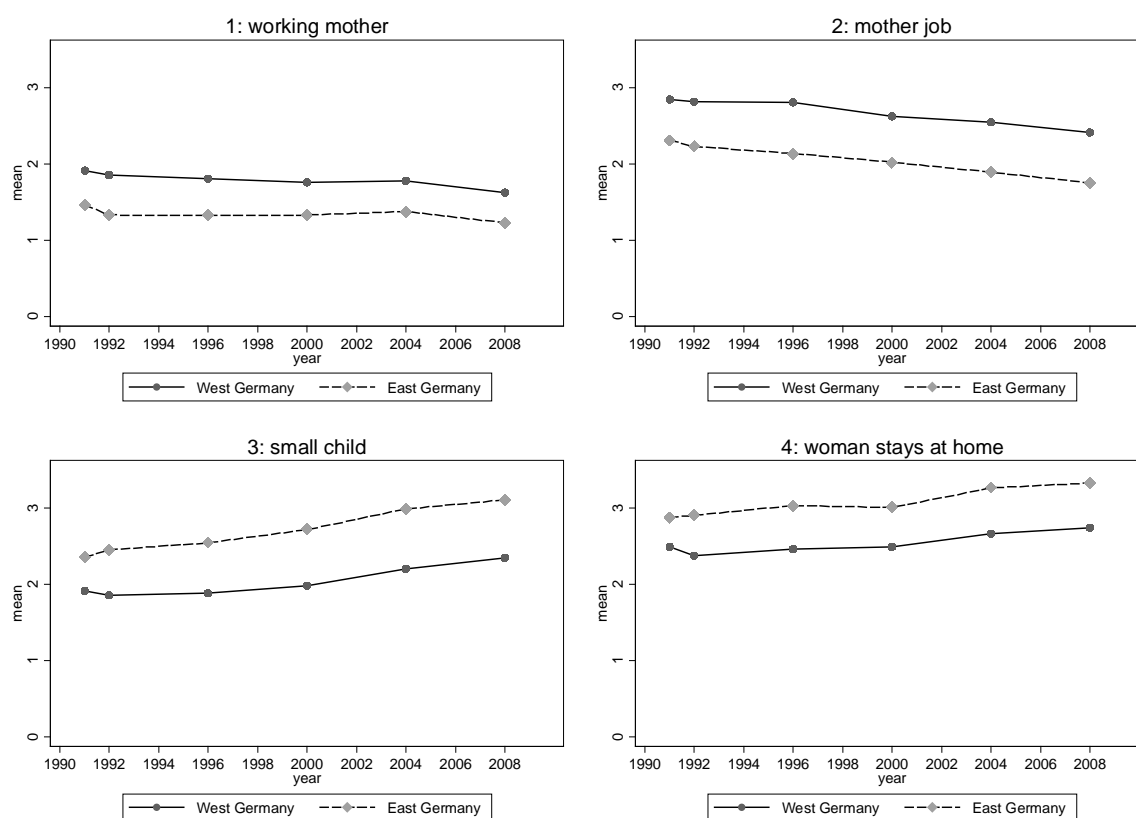
4 Attitudes towards the employment of mothers in East and West Germany

In West Germany, the general attitude towards working women is less traditionally oriented than it was two decades ago. In 1991, only 9 percent of the West German respondents of the GGSS (German General Social Survey; Wasmer/Scholz/Haarmann 2008) completely agreed with the following statement 'A working mother can establish just as loving and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who doesn't work'. In 2008, the consent rate had already increased to 22 percent. In East Germany, the attitude towards this statement has changed little (18 percent in 1991 compared with 19 per cent in 2008). In West Germany, agreement with the following statement changed dramatically (5 percent in 1991 versus 29 percent in 2008): 'A child actually benefits if his or her mother has a job rather than simply concentrating on the home'. Agreement with this statement was already higher in 1991 (12 percent), and the approval rate in 2008 was similar in the East and West; approximately a quarter of the population fully agreed with the statement.

A reverse trend is observed for the following statements: 'A small child is bound to suffer if his or her mother goes out to work' and 'It is much better for everyone concerned if the man goes out to work and the woman stays at home and looks after the house and children'. No decreasing trend in the rate of approval for these statements can be found for the old federal states in contrast with the former GDR states. In 1991, 12 or 10 percent of the West German respondents and 28 or 26 percent of the East German respondents fully approved of these statements. In 2008, 14 and 15 percent of those in the West and 7 percent or 8 percent of those in the East agreed with these statements.

Despite the attitude changes in the old federal states, differences between East and West Germany remain: on average, compared with the population in West Germany, the population in East Germany was and continues to be more affirmative towards the employment of women. Figure 1 illustrates this affirmativeness based on the average values of the attitude statements presented above.

Figure 1
Attitudes towards female employment in East and West Germany, 1991 to 2008 (mean)



1: working mother loving and secure a relationship; 2: child benefits if mother has a job;
 3: Small child bound to suffer; 4: better for everyone if man goes out to work and the woman stays at home
 Legend: 1: Completely agree 2: Tend to agree 3: Tend to disagree 4: Completely disagree
 Source: GGSS 1991-2008, own calculations

These results confirm those of Falk and Schaeper (2001) also for the period after 1996. Additionally, Kreyenfeld and Geisler (2006) noted that the attitudes concerning maternal employment in East and West Germany did not converge. This lack of agreement contrasts with the trend of alignment in the employment rates of women. The results of other studies have been less clear (Besenthal/Long 2004; Hummelshelm 2009; Marold 2009). Additionally, Matysiak and Steinmetz (2008) concluded that women in post-socialist societies adjust their behaviour only as a result of evolving structural conditions but actually continue to reject the male breadwinner model. In summary, different attitudes towards female employment have contributed to differences in the development of women's labour force participation in East and West Germany following reunification. However, the causality remains unclear because although these attitudes certainly affect employment behaviour, these attitudes are also likely to be inversely influenced by current and past employment behaviour (Rosenfeld/Trappe/Gornick 2004).

5 Theoretical background

5.1 Institutional regulations and cultural expectations

The relationship among welfare state arrangements, institutional regulations and reforms at the macro level and the labour force participation of women with and without children on the micro level has already been studied frequently (e.g., Lewis 1992; Geyer/Steiner 2007). These institutional arrangements include *maternity leave*, *parental leave* or *parental allowance* as well as the promotion of childcare and the joint taxation of married couples. The welfare state directly affects access to resources, creates infrastructure or enforces social policies. However, in addition to a direct influence, there is an indirect influence of normative and cultural expectations regarding 'reasonable' behaviour in a society. This indirect influence has been given significantly less attention thus far (Lewis 1992). However, cultural expectations may modify the effects of welfare state policies on the behaviour of individuals (Pfau-Effinger 2005). Thus, both institutions and the prevailing gender culture in a state play important roles. In the corporatist-statist welfare state type (Esping-Anderesen 1990, 1999) to which (West) Germany belongs, one of the prevailing norms is that women, especially those who have small children, assume childcare and family obligations. In contrast, men fulfil their role as financial providers for their families (Hummelsheim 2009, 2010). In the socialist welfare state of the GDR, the role of women was defined differently. Women, including those with small children, were expected to be active on the labour market. The state assumed control of childcare tasks and ensured that childcare was available to all citizens. Thus, to some extent, the state enabled the reconciliation of work and family.

Therefore, the following hypothesis can be presented. First, I assume that the average durations of family related career interruptions differ for women who lived in the FRG and GDR before the German reunification. In addition, after the German reunification, the interruptions are assumed to differ for women from East and West Germany. In general, interruptions in the GDR are expected to be significantly shorter than those in the FRG. These differences can be ascribed to institutional regulations, the orientation of family policies and the predominant gender culture.

The institutional approach to gender research (Krüger 2004) explains attitudes and norms regarding the employment of women are important over a longer period. These norms and attitudes are subject to constant societal change and are progressing towards modern, equal gender roles for men and women. However, it appears to be problematic that traditional gender roles are anchored in social structures and institutions that include parental leave regulations, childcare and joint taxation of married couples. This anchor in social structures and institutions indicates that preferences and the changes in behaviour that result from such preferences occur only gradually over time. This gradual change in behaviour suggests that the labour force participation of women in West and East Germany is expected to change slowly over time. In the West, one can expect slowly rising employment rates, in the East slowly falling employment rates.

5.2 Family, education and welfare state systems as socialisation agencies

The theoretical considerations of Ridgeway (1997) also provide a micro-level explanation of why the labour force participation of women increases slowly despite changing conditions over time. Individuals are constantly in contact with other individuals in their society and are thus influenced by the behaviour of others. This influence implies that women in both West and East Germany generally remain in one place because of their unwillingness to move. Consequently, these women base their behaviour on the behaviour of other women in their environment. Thus, a type of 'invisible hand' (Ridgeway 1997: 218) transfers preferences regarding the intra-family division of labour and the labour force participation of women and mothers to a changing socio-economic and institutional context.

The inclusion of the micro level also enables more precise assumptions regarding the effect of cultural expectations and institutional regulations on individuals. Socialisation theories (Hagemann-White 2004; Hurrelmann 1976, 2006; Hurrelmann/Grundmann/Walper 2008) explain the individual appearance and social reproduction of gender norms through social learning in typical areas of experience in childhood and adolescence. Socialisation means that an 'external reality' (e.g., family or educational institutions) influences the development of a person (Hurrelmann 2006). However, 'inner development' (Hagemann-White 2004: 148), which refers to the basic structure of personality, is also important. Preferences are transferred from parents to children in this phase of development, especially within a family, as the primary socialisation agency, and social structures are also internalised in this phase. This socialisation shapes the personality development of an individual. Another secondary socialisation agency is the educational system in which social knowledge is also transferred (Hurrelmann 2006). According to this approach, socialisation, which occurs during childhood in families, schools and society, shapes the future life course and individual preferences with regard to child-rearing responsibilities and the employment of women with small children.

With respect to the labour market participation of women with children, one can derive the following hypotheses. The socialisation theory predicts that the behaviour of women is influenced by the experiences that they acquire in childhood and youth. Women who were born in the West are expected to follow the principle that women should take care of their children at home at least until their children are of school age (Pfau-Effinger 2005). Because these women have often been raised by non-working mothers, they are socialised in accordance with this principle. Thus, the behaviour of these women corresponds to the modified breadwinner model. Likewise, women who were born in the East should tend to prefer that both women and men should be gainfully employed, and such a preference would correspond to the dual breadwinner model (Lewis 1992). This preference is consistent with socialisation theory and is supported both by the transfer of values in the educational system of the GDR and by the employment of the majority of mothers in the GDR, whose children were familiar with this situation.

One group of people who can provide insight regarding the importance of socialisation theories are women who were born and raised in the GDR but decided to live in West Germany after the German reunification and gave birth to their children in the West. It is theoretically unclear whether these women are more likely to uphold and prefer the ideals of their childhood or pragmatically adapt to the conditions in the West. This adaptation could for example also be due to a non-availability of child-care facilities. Thus, women who were born in the GDR and moved to one of the old federal states after the German reunification constitute an interesting group to study. Ridgeway (1997) predicts that these women would adopt their behaviour to their new surroundings in West Germany because of their constant contact with other women in the West.

6 Data and methods

To investigate the research questions, I use data from the study 'Working and Learning in a Changing World' (ALWA). This survey was conducted on behalf of the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) of the Federal Employment Agency (BA) from September 2007 to March 2008. The aim of this representative survey was to retrospectively collect the life histories of approximately 10,000 adults who were born between 1956 and 1985 (Antoni et al. 2010; Kleinert/Jacob 2008). In addition, family related employment interruptions were explicitly addressed by asking the respondents to describe their experiences with parental leaves in connection with the birth of a child. ALWA also contains the complete employment, training and unemployment histories of all respondents prior to the interview date and longitudinal information regarding the family contexts, children and partners living in their households.

Compared with other previously used datasets, such as the GSOEP (see Kurz 1998; Weber 2004; Ziefle 2004), the German Life History Study (GLHS) of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development (see Lauterbach 1994) and the process-produced data from the Federal Employment Agency (see Bender/Kohlmann/Lang 2003; Schönberg 2008), ALWA offers several advantages: because parental leave periods were addressed directly in ALWA, family related employment interruptions can be clearly identified. In addition, there exists information regarding the employment and family context at the time of return. The dataset includes family related employment interruptions until the time of the latest legal developments concerning parental leave in 2006 and contains information pertaining to interruptions from past decades. Thus, the data enable the comparison of different cohorts and the modelling of changes over time. In addition, the ALWA study contains a sufficient number of cases to enable comparisons among GDR and FRG as well as East and West Germany.

The event that is analysed with event history modelling is employment re-entry after a family related employment interruption due to the birth of a child. The analysis is limited to women, as family related employment interruptions occurred almost exclusively for women during that period. In ALWA, only approximately 100 family related

career interruptions for men can be found over the entire observation period. A family related employment interruption is defined as follows: an interruption begins with the birth of a child and ends with either (re-) entry into employment of 15 hours² or more or an unemployment phase, regardless of whether the phase was reported to the employment agency by the target person. In addition, the differing structural conditions and preferences in East and West Germany concerning the behaviour of women in registering for unemployment and their self-reported homemaker status are considered. Therefore, unemployment is considered to be a non-realised employment re-entry.

The analysis includes women who worked before an interruption and a small number of unemployed women or women who were still in training before giving birth (see also Falk/Schaeper 2001; Schaeper/Falk 2003). Re-entries into full- and part-time employment are not distinguished because it is unclear whether part-time work was desired or determined by general conditions (such as limited childcare facilities). Re-entries into training or education are excluded from the analyses; however, from an empirical perspective, these re-entries occur only rarely.³

All employment interruptions that occurred in or after January 1980 in both the FRG and the GDR are taken into consideration. In sum, the data consist of 476 episodes in the GDR and 1,270 episodes in the FRG that began prior to October 1990. After 1990, the data contain 2,788 interruptions in the old federal states and 368 interruptions in the new federal states. For the multivariate analyses, the employment interruptions in the FRG and the GDR prior to reunification are first examined. Subsequent analyses concentrate on employment interruptions that occurred after the German reunification from October 1990 to 2006. Due to a limited number of available cases and several of employment interruptions that were not completed at the interview date, the period beginning in 2007 is excluded from the analysis.⁴

For both the descriptive and multivariate analyses, event history analyses are used (see Blossfeld/Golsch/Rohwer 2007). Because the information in ALWA was collected on a monthly basis, the process time is measured in discrete time units. The

² This hour limit represents the current definition of the Federal Employment Agency (BA). A person who is available for less than 15 hours per week cannot be considered to be unemployed or seeking work. In addition, the limit often represents the minimum limit for regular employment that is subject to social insurance contributions.

³ For a woman who has another child during her employment interruption, the first episode is right censored, and a new episode begins. This process was more likely to occur after 1992 because the statutory parental leave period was 36 months after that year; thus, the likelihood of having another child within a leave period was increased. Employment interruptions of less than three months were excluded from the analyses because these interruptions were likely to be misreported maternity leaves.

⁴ Of course, the group of women who interrupt their activity due to the birth of a child and the group of women who reported having a child are selective. However, this selectivity is not the subject of analysis.

event data are converted into a person-period file.⁵ The dependent variable measures for each month of the interruption period whether a re-entry occurred. Thus, the data are analysed with event models for discrete-time units (Singer/Willet 2003)⁶. Time dependence is modelled by grouping into intervals of 6, 12, 15, 18, 24, and 36 months and the maximum observed time. This grouping is based on the various statutory parental leave durations and an exploratory analysis of re-entries. Separate models for the FRG and the GDR prior to reunification are estimated. Subsequently, one common model for reunified Germany and separate models for the old and new federal states following reunification are calculated.

The model specification includes both time-constant and time-varying covariates at the individual and institutional levels. A time-dependent variable is included in the models and indicates whether the woman was entitled to statutory parental leave at the respective time because she is not an employee, and e.g., self-employed or unemployed. More precisely, for this variable, the different statutory regulations in Germany at different points in time are included. The models also contain a time-constant variable that indicates whether a woman lived in the GDR or the FRG in June 1989. The variable provides information regarding the type of political system that socialised each woman during childhood. Another variable that relates to socialisation is whether the mother of a woman was employed when the woman was 15 years old. In the descriptive analysis, different child birth cohorts (1980-1985, 1986-1990/1991, 1992-2000, 2001-2006) are distinguished; these cohorts are based on the major changes in parental leave legislation.

Based on previous research results, the models contain a number of other time-dependent control variables. Because the economic situations of women is also relevant to their re-entry decisions (e.g., Becker 1991; Bryant 1990) in addition to cultural norms and institutional arrangements, the educational level of women (low: no training degree, medium: training or technical school degree, or high: university degree or similar) and marital status (married: yes or no) are included as controls. Moreover, the age of a woman in years and her number of children (one child, two children, or more than two children) are considered as categorical variables. The model contains information regarding a woman's work experience (in decades) prior to her employment interruption. Furthermore, in the full model following German reunification, regional female unemployment rates are included separately as time-varying covariates for East and West Germany.

⁵ A person-period file contains for each women and each interruption one observation per month. The resulting dataset become large. However, modern computing facilities can deal with these datasets without problems.

⁶ More precisely, I use a proportional hazard model with an additional error term that controls for individual-specific time-constant unobserved heterogeneity (Jenkins 1995, Jenkins 2005, Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2008; Steele 2011). The model roughly corresponds to a piecewise-constant exponential model for continuous time (Blossfeld/Golsch/Rohwer 2007; Steele 2011).

Unfortunately, the childcare coverage on a regional basis (e.g. administrative districts) is only available from 1992 onwards. Since 2006 regional data are available on a yearly basis. Between 1985 and 2002, only aggregated data for the different federal states measured at a time interval of four years exist. In 2002, the mode of calculation of this statistic changed making results until 2001 and results from 2002 onwards not comparable any more. So, due to data unavailability, the childcare availability cannot be controlled for. However, previous research including this rate show mixed results: Kreyenfeld and Hank (2000) find no significant impact of childcare provision rate on part-time and full-time employment. Frodermann (2011) also does not detect a significant impact of child care provision when looking at re-entries of mother in full-time employment or employment in general. However, for re-entry into part-time childcare exhibits a positive influence. Grunow and Müller (2012) find a weakening influence of being an East German mother when including child care provision.

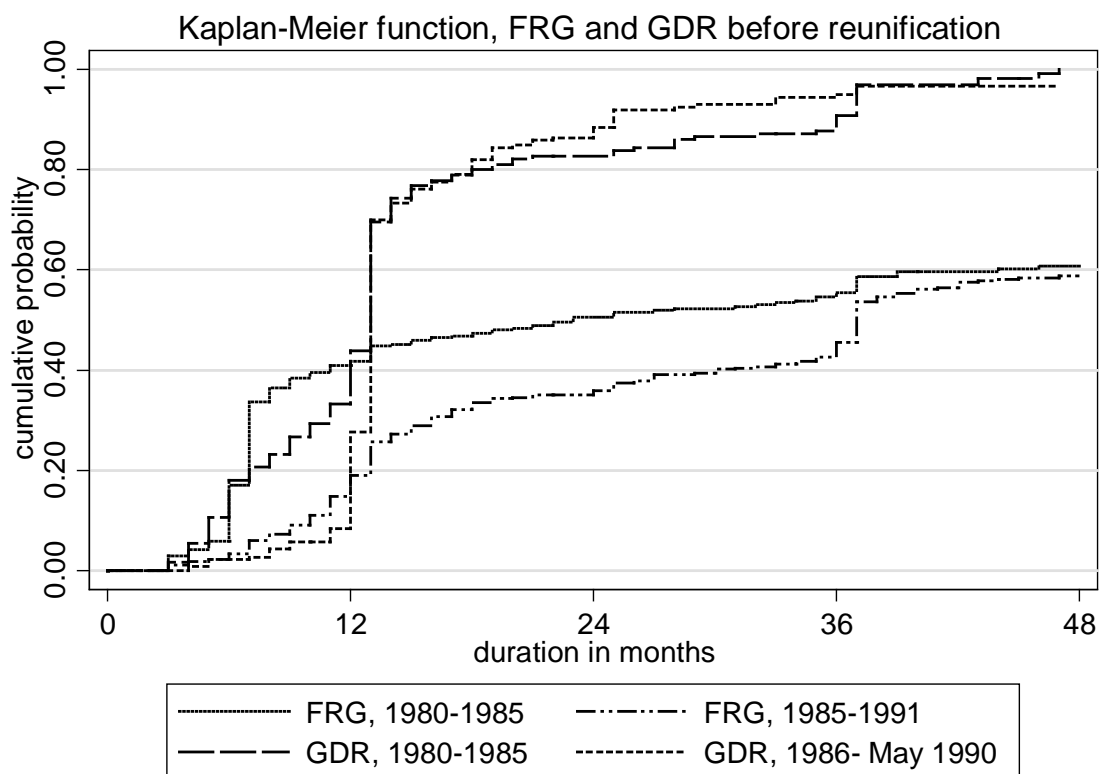
7 Family related employment interruptions in East and West Germany and the GDR

7.1 The duration of employment interruptions: West and East Germany in comparison

The length of family related employment interruptions following the birth of children is shown in Figure 2. Here, I examine births prior to the German reunification and distinguish between two time periods. The first period includes employment interruptions between 1980 and 1985. At that time, relatively short periods of parental leave were guaranteed by law in the FRG. In the GDR, parental leave was guaranteed only for mothers with two or more children. The second period includes the years from 1986 to 1991 for the FRG and the period from 1986 to May 1990 for the GDR. During this time, the legal regulations in the FRG were gradually extended, and in the GDR, the *baby year* was also granted for mothers with only one child.⁷

⁷ The transition period after the fall of the wall until the Unification Treaty on July 20, 1990, is not completely excluded due to the generally low number of cases in the GDR.

Figure 2
Durations of employment interruptions in the FRG and the GDR, child birth cohorts 1980-1985 and 1986-May 1990 (GDR) / 1991 (FRG) (Kaplan-Meier function)



Source: IAB ALWA study, own calculations.

Figure 2 shows that the employment interruptions of mothers in the FRG were longer than those of mothers in the GDR. Striking differences are also apparent in the cumulative return rates. These differences are significant at the 1 percent level as indicated by log-rank tests (see Blossfeld 2007). In the GDR, approximately 70 percent of mothers returned to the labour market 12 months following birth, and 82 percent of mothers returned after 24 months. Four years following birth, the return rate reached almost 100 percent. This pattern corresponds to the political ideal of almost uninterrupted careers of both men and women. The pattern also reflects the social conditions of the GDR with full-time employment as standard form of employment, e.g., marginal employment did not exist in the GDR. In addition, official unemployment statistics are not available, and most companies were owned by the state.⁸ Furthermore, the number of infants in full-time public childcare was high (Frich/Frey 1993: 403).

The return rates in the FRG were considerably lower: prior to 1986, these rates reached approximately 20 percent after 12 months and approximately 35 percent after 24 months. For employment interruptions that began in or after 1986, these rates amounted to approximately 40 to 50 percent. Four years after the birth of a

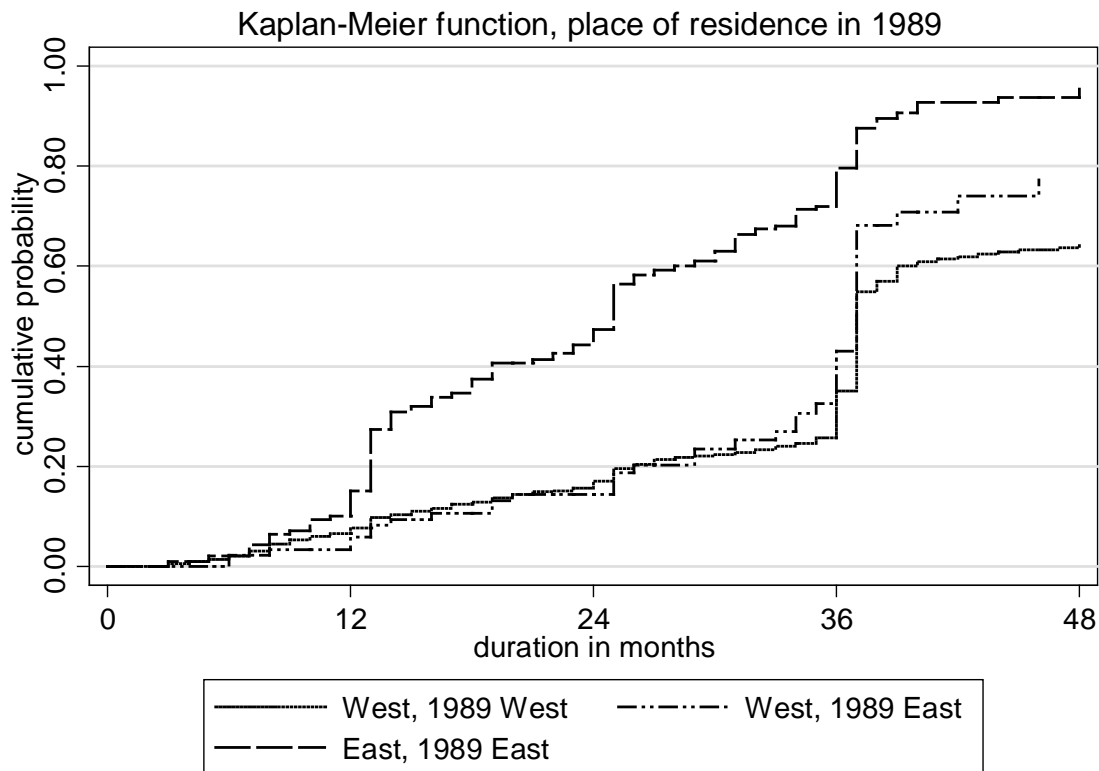
⁸ In reality, 'hidden unemployment' existed in the GDR; that is, production capacity was far from being fully exploited (Gürtler/Ruppert/Vogler-Ludwig 1990).

child, only approximately 60 per cent of women returned to work. Within this period, both the parental leave system and the recessive economic situation in West Germany (which was accompanied by high unemployment) prompted extensive interruptions. In addition, a comprehensive system of childcare for children under three did not exist at that time, and even for older children of kindergarten age, mainly half-day childcare was available. Furthermore, the school system was designed to be compatible with this half-day childcare system, and school often ended in the early afternoon. Women in the GDR showed scarcely any differences at the various time points. Most women in both cohorts returned to their jobs at the end of the first year, which corresponds to the statutory maternity leave of the *baby year*. This consistent finding signifies the importance of institutional regulations for family related employment interruptions in both states.

7.2 The duration of employment interruptions after the German reunification

The development of the duration of employment interruptions following reunification is shown in Figure 3, which separates the old and new states for the period beginning in 1991. In addition, whether the women under study resided in the GDR or the FRG in 1989 is distinguished to address the political system under which these women were socialised. Women who had lived in the old states in 1989 and re-entered in one of the new states are not treated separately because of the small sample size for this group. For *parental leave* periods that ended in the old federal states, a drastic increase in cumulative return probability occurred after approximately three years, and this increase corresponds to the expiration of statutory parental leave. Similar return patterns are visible for women who lived in the West in 1989 and for women who lived in the East in 1989. Women from the East who moved to the old federal states appear to have adapted their interruption behaviour to the behaviour of West German women. This adaptation pattern suggests that institutional factors, such as the provision of public childcare, play a more important role than socialisation in childhood. In the old states, approximately 60 percent of women returned to employment after four years. Thus, the cumulated return probability was greater than the return rate prior to reunification.

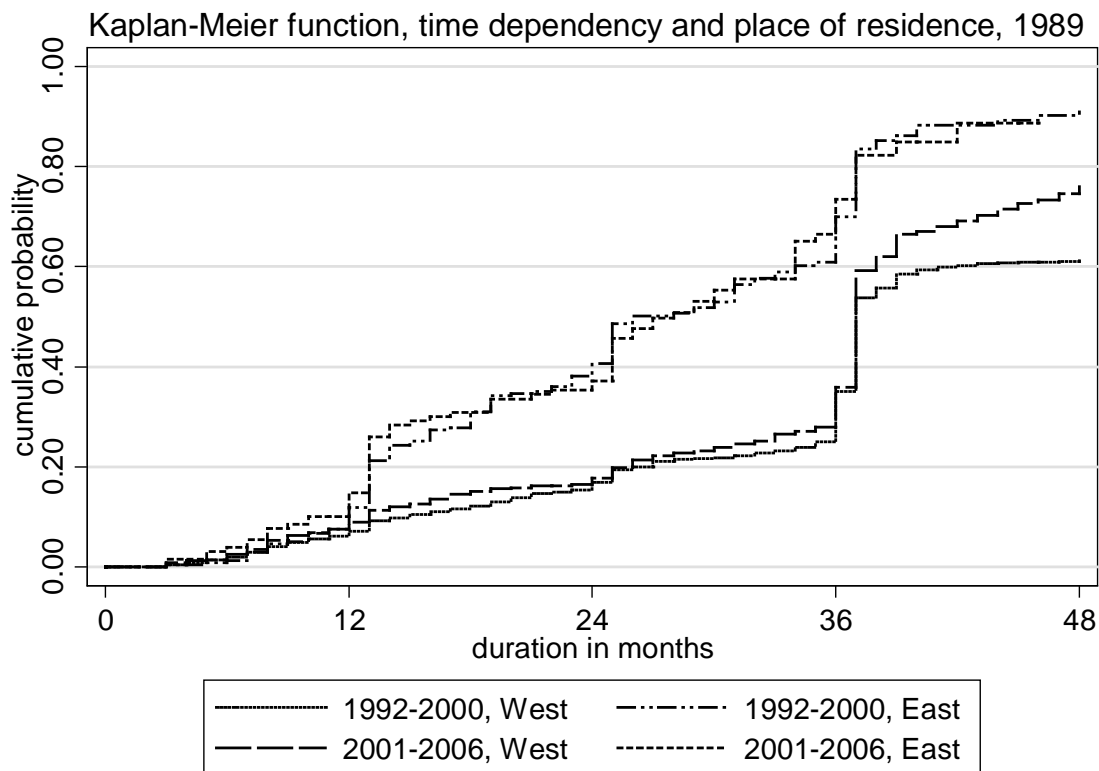
Figure 3
Durations of employment interruptions for Western mothers in the West, Eastern mothers in the West and Eastern mothers in the East (Kaplan-Meier function)



Source: IAB ALWA study, own calculations.

The results differ for women who had lived in the GDR in 1989 and chose to remain there. Some women had already returned to the labour force at the end of a child's first year. In this context, the *baby year* that was established in the GDR era continues to have a clear effect. The return rate corresponded to approximately 20 percent after one year and was almost twice as high as that in the old federal states. After the first year and until approximately three years following birth, the return rate increased steadily. After three years, the return rates increased at approximately the time of the expiration of statutory parental leave, although this increase is less pronounced than that in the West. In total, four years following birth, approximately 95 percent of women in the East re-entered the workforce. The curves resemble those of the interruptions before the German reunification in 1990. These curves also partially reflect the greater likelihood that women in the East report being unemployed. The development of the interruptions in the new and old federal states and whether they converge over time can be observed in Figure 4.

Figure 4
Durations of employment interruptions for the new and old federal states between 1992 and 2000 and between 2001 and 2006 (Kaplan-Meier function)



Source: IAB ALWA study, own calculations.

For women who lived in the GDR in 1989 for the two cohorts for 1992-2000 and 2001-2006, similar patterns emerge. After two years, approximately 50 percent of these women returned to employment or were registered as unemployed, and after four years, this rate approaches 90 percent. In addition, women who lived in the FRG in 1989 experienced few changes over time. In the 1992-2000 childbirth cohort, only approximately 20 percent of all women had returned to the labour market after two years, and 60 percent had returned after four years. After four years, this number reached approximately 70 percent for the 2001-2006 cohort. In addition to institutional arrangements, biographical factors, including aspects of socialisation, may crucially influence return behaviour. However, differences in public childcare availability may also be responsible for this unequal development. The differences between women who were raised in the GDR and those who were raised in the FRG are striking and apply to younger cohorts. A convergence of the re-entry pattern is visible only for the first year of employment interruptions. Subsequently, this pattern is scarcely visible. Only the cumulative re-entry rates for women from the GDR declined across cohorts; in contrast, these rates increased for women in the FRG. Because of the small number of women from the GDR, a multivariate analysis is not appropriate.

7.3 Factors that influence return after family related employment interruptions: GDR and FRG in comparison

In addition to East-West differences in reunified Germany and differences between the former GDR and the FRG, individual and institutional characteristics are expected to influence return after family related employment interruptions. These factors are examined in a multivariate framework (Table 2). First, I compare the FRG (model 1) and the GDR (model 2) and the time span prior to German reunification.⁹

Table 2
Influence factors on the return of mothers after family related employment interruptions before the German reunification in the FRG and the GDR

	(1) FRG	(2) GDR
Education (ref. high: university degree or similar)		
Low: without training degree	0.630** (0.105)	0.306** (0.130)
Medium: training or technical school degree	0.667*** (0.056)	0.700* (0.127)
Parental leave (ref. right expired)		
Entitled to parental leave	0.233*** (0.029)	0.472** (0.123)
Not entitled to parental leave	0.255*** (0.051)	0.433* (0.182)
Number of children in household (ref. one child)		
Two children	0.668*** (0.050)	1.082 (0.180)
Three children or more	0.480*** (0.058)	0.894 (0.207)
Married	0.631*** (0.062)	0.725* (0.113)
Woman's age	0.941*** (0.009)	0.955* (0.020)
Employment experience	1.005*** (0.000)	1.001 (0.002)
Mother of woman employed	1.071 (0.085)	0.836 (0.168)
Number of observations	98996	10439
Number of events	1239	294
<i>AIC</i>	12596.1	2536.6
<i>BIC</i>	12757.6	2659.9

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; exponentiated coefficients (hazard ratios); standard errors in parentheses; time dependency not displayed

Source: IAB ALWA study, own calculations

⁹ The factors that influence the dependent variable in the discrete-time event history models are presented in hazard ratios. Hazard ratios of less than one indicate reduced re-entry probability, and values greater than one indicate increased re-entry probability.

In sum, similar factors were operating in the two states. Institutional arrangements were meaningful in both the FRG and the GDR. Within the statutory parental leave period and for the individuals who were not entitled to benefits (e.g., women who were self-employed or unemployed prior to the birth of a child), the return probability was lower than for those women whose job guarantees has extinguished. The employment circumstance of the mother of the woman during the adolescence of the woman has no significant effect. This result suggests that socialisation played only a minor role – at least when socialization and the decision to move are independent from each other. In both the FRG and the GDR, education was found to have a weak effect: women who have completed higher education returned to work more rapidly than women with lower levels of education. This effect is consistent with general expectations of human capital theory. A similar influence was also found for family status: in both countries, being married reduced the rate of re-entry. No influence in the GDR and only a weak influence in the FRG are found for the labour market experience of a woman.

In the models, the only difference in the influencing factors in East and West Germany was found for the number of children living in a household. In the FRG, a higher number of children decreased return probability, but this result was not found for the GDR. This result may reflect the lack of availability of public childcare which cannot be controlled for in the models. Women in the West with more children experience greater difficulties in reconciling work and family. Conversely, a well-developed public childcare system was available in the GDR; thus, women in the GDR with a higher number of children did not necessarily report having childcare problems.

7.4 Factors that influence the duration of employment interruptions: GDR and FRG in comparison after the German reunification

The research question regarding the type of factors that influence the duration of and exit from a family related employment interruption following German reunification is first examined in a joint model for the old and new federal states (Table 3). The results of the complete model for the old and the new federal states (model 3) indicate that the transition rate was considerably smaller within the statutory parental leave period than after the expiration of statutory parental leave. Even women who did not have a statutory right to parental leave had a lower rate of return to employment. In the overall model, women who had lived in the GDR in 1989 were not more likely to re-enter the workforce than women from the GDR. Furthermore, whether the mother of a woman was employed was found to be unimportant. Again, this result preliminary indicates that socialisation has minor relevance.

Table 3**Influence factors on the return of mothers after family related employment interruptions after the German reunification in Germany in both the old and new federal states**

	(3) Germany [#]	(4) Old federal states	(5) New federal states
Education (ref. high: university degree or similar)			
Low: without training degree	0.465* (0.147)	0.467* (0.148)	0.175** (0.113)
Medium: training or technical school degree	0.457*** (0.078)	0.459*** (0.078)	0.763 (0.205)
Parental leave (ref. right expired)			
Entitled to parental leave	0.066*** (0.008)	0.065*** (0.008)	0.266*** (0.080)
Not entitled to parental leave	0.047*** (0.018)	0.046*** (0.018)	0.217* (0.141)
Number of children in household (ref. one child)			
Two children	0.730** (0.076)	0.725** (0.075)	1.001 (0.209)
Three children or more	0.441*** (0.077)	0.443*** (0.077)	0.730 (0.255)
Married	0.435*** (0.081)	0.436*** (0.081)	0.928 (0.236)
Woman's age	0.960** (0.014)	0.960** (0.014)	0.963 (0.028)
Employment experience	1.001 (0.001)	1.001 (0.001)	1.000 (0.002)
Mother of woman employed	1.245 (0.207)	1.245 (0.207)	2.599* (1.078)
Lived in the East in 1989	0.771 (0.341)	0.766 (0.339)	
Number of observations	101488	101488	7947
Number of events	1534	1271	262
AIC	11612.0	11611.7	2102.0
BIC	11802.6	11792.8	2227.6

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; exponentiated coefficients (hazard ratios); standard errors in parentheses; time dependency not displayed

[#] controlled for regional unemployment rate of women

Source: IAB ALWA study, own calculations

The number of children exerted a significant influence: women who had two or more children had a significantly lower re-entry rate than women who were out of the labour force as a result of their first parental leave period. Moreover, the level of educational attainment influenced re-entry rates following reunification. Women who had medium or low levels of education had a lower employment return rate compared with mothers with higher levels of education. Married women who were partially covered by the incomes of their husbands and did not financially rely on their own

incomes also had lower transition rates. Conversely, the labour force experience of a woman was found to have no influence.¹⁰

When examining separate models for the old and new federal states, one observes similarities between the results for the old states (model 4) and those of the full model (model 3). This finding is not surprising because the results in the overall models are driven by the higher number of cases in West Germany. However, even in this model, no differences were observed in the re-entry behaviour of women who had lived in the GDR in 1989 compared with that of women who had lived in 1989 in the FRG. Therefore, the behaviour of women who were socialised in the GDR but now live in the old federal states did not differ from that of women who were socialised in the FRG. However, this group could also be selective which could bias the results.

In the new federal states (model 5), the statutory parental leave regulations played a similarly important role as in the old federal states. In contrast with the old federal states, the employment of mothers in the new states had a positive effect on the probability of return; thus, this result indicates the importance of socialisation aspects. The number of children in a family was not important; this finding can again be attributed to the broad availability of public childcare even after the German reunification. Moreover, the effects of educational attainment are less clear than in the West. However, this could also be a hidden effect of childcare unavailability because higher educated women in the West can afford public or private childcare more easily. No effect in the new federal states was found for the marital status of a woman. This result suggests that marital status was of less importance in East Germany. In summary, institutional regulations and conditions appear to be more important than socialisation aspects. The effects of the control variables largely confirm the results of previous studies (e.g. Aisenbrey/Evertsson/Grunow 2009; Grunow/Hofmeister/Buchholz 2006; Weber 2004).

8 The long road to uniform re-entry patterns

Together, the results show that significant differences between women in East and West Germany in terms of the duration of family related employment interruptions persist even twenty years after the German reunification. Although the trajectories of employment interruptions for mothers in the East and West appear to converge, one cannot truly speak of a convergence of patterns even today. As observed in past decades, remarkable differences between the East and West German populations remain. The influence of attitudes with respect to female employment and the employment of mothers may contribute to the continuation of these differences. Nevertheless, interruption patterns for East German women following reunification more closely resemble the patterns of women in the West than the patterns of mothers in

¹⁰ The regional unemployment rate at the time of interruptions was found to be not significant and is not displayed in table 3.

the GDR. Falk and Schaeper (2001) obtained similar results. Regardless of the length of legally guaranteed parental leave with a right to return to their previous employers, women tend to use this entire period. This pattern shows that family related employment interruptions are generally subject to strong institutional control, as specifically shown by the effect of the three-year job-protection period.

Women who were raised in East Germany and moved to the West after the reunification had long employment interruptions that were similar to those of West German women. This similarity suggests that institutional regulations were more relevant to re-entry behaviour than socialisation. One must also consider that the group of women who moved to West Germany could be a selective group. This selectiveness could have biased the results. However, the most important reason for a relocation decision was likely to be the tight labour market situation following reunification. In addition, employment decisions, especially those of married women, are made in a partnership context. Thus, when East German women had West German partners, such partnerships could also affect participation decisions. Unfortunately, this possibility cannot be investigated because of the lack of information pertaining to the residential history of partners. Due to the unavailability of childcare coverage for the entire time span, the results must be interpreted carefully although previous research did not show an important role of childcare coverage on female employment.

Nonetheless, socialisation and familial imprinting cannot be neglected: for example, when examining the relevance of marital status in West and East Germany, one can conclude that marriage is more closely linked to the role that men assume as family breadwinners in West Germany than in East Germany. Moreover, the tendency to marry is more pronounced in the old federal states than in the new states. In addition, the employment of the mother of a woman plays a role in the new states but is not relevant in the old states. The descriptive results also indicate the importance of family characteristics. Unfortunately, an unambiguous answer to the research question is unattainable at this point because of the limited number of cases and the lack of information regarding local childcare availability rates. With a higher number of cases it would also be possible to examine West German women and their behaviour when moving to the East.

Long-term employment interruptions in West Germany are particularly problematic from the perspective of labour market and social policy because these interruptions can reinforce social inequalities. This reinforcement can occur because knowledge and skills that are useful in the labour market are not used during these periods and, thus, depreciate over time. This view of the effect of interruptions on knowledge and skills is often held by potential employers. The microeconomic theory (see Mincer/Ofek 1982) also names this as human capital depreciation. Family related employment interruptions also contribute to increasing gender wage differentials because no work experience is acquired during interruptions (Beblo/Wolf 2003). Therefore, family related employment interruptions contribute to gender inequality in life courses. From a social policy perspective, women earn only small pensions during

their inactivity, and these smaller pensions may contribute to poverty in old age. In the long term, differences in family related employment interruptions could lead to differences in the old-age incomes of West and East German women and thus lead to new inequalities in Germany (Strauss 2010).

In 2007, a radical reform of parent leave schemes was introduced, and this reform may lead to a permanent change in the interactions of institutional reforms and individual characteristics. Therefore, the persisting differences between East and West Germany can eventually be overcome as a consequence of this reform and other social changes, such as the ongoing improvement of public childcare where still large differences between East and West Germany exist. Furthermore, the generation of women who were raised in unified Germany after 1989 will become mothers in the near future. The manner in which their employment interruptions develop represents an interesting future research area.

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