

# **The Timing of Family Formation – A New Theoretical Approach**

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Female labour force participation is considered to be an important cause for today's fertility decline in Western societies. But the difficulties of achieving aims in career and family at the same time are different in these societies. This paper focuses on the situation of family foundation in Germany. Corresponding to the classifying of Germany as a conservative welfare state regime (Esping-Anderson 1990), the country can be characterized by a strong traditional idea about female family-care even though the career opportunities for women have increased since the 70s. This results in a structural irreconcilability of family and career. For this reason, women have to decide between the two life-aims family and vocational career.

Current theoretical models, like the Expected Utility Model (Leibenstein, 1975), the New-Home Economy (Becker, 1991) or the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Barber, 2001) assume that the costs and benefits of different life options are compared, and individuals will decide for the most favourable of them - even though in the case of fertility-decisions it can only be done insufficiently, since the costs and benefits are very complex and imponderable. On the basis of traditional role ideas parenthood in Germany is interconnected with considerable disadvantages for women's careers (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

According to these theories parenthood is delayed because of an unfavourable opportunity structure for women, while men hardly influence the decision.

Theories of this kind can well explain the circumstances for postponing parenthood for the benefit of occupational aims. But it can not be deduced under which circumstances parenthood will be realised later in life nor are the costs of adjusting a salient aim included.

Existing theories can not explain a planning of family formation when the circumstances are not perfect or a postponing even though the circumstances seem to be perfect.

We assume that the decision to postpone parenthood or to realize it, is not only a question of opportunity structures, but is also influenced by the risk to fail with individual life-plans. But how are different life-aims and incentives joined together – and how do they influence the decision for parenthood?

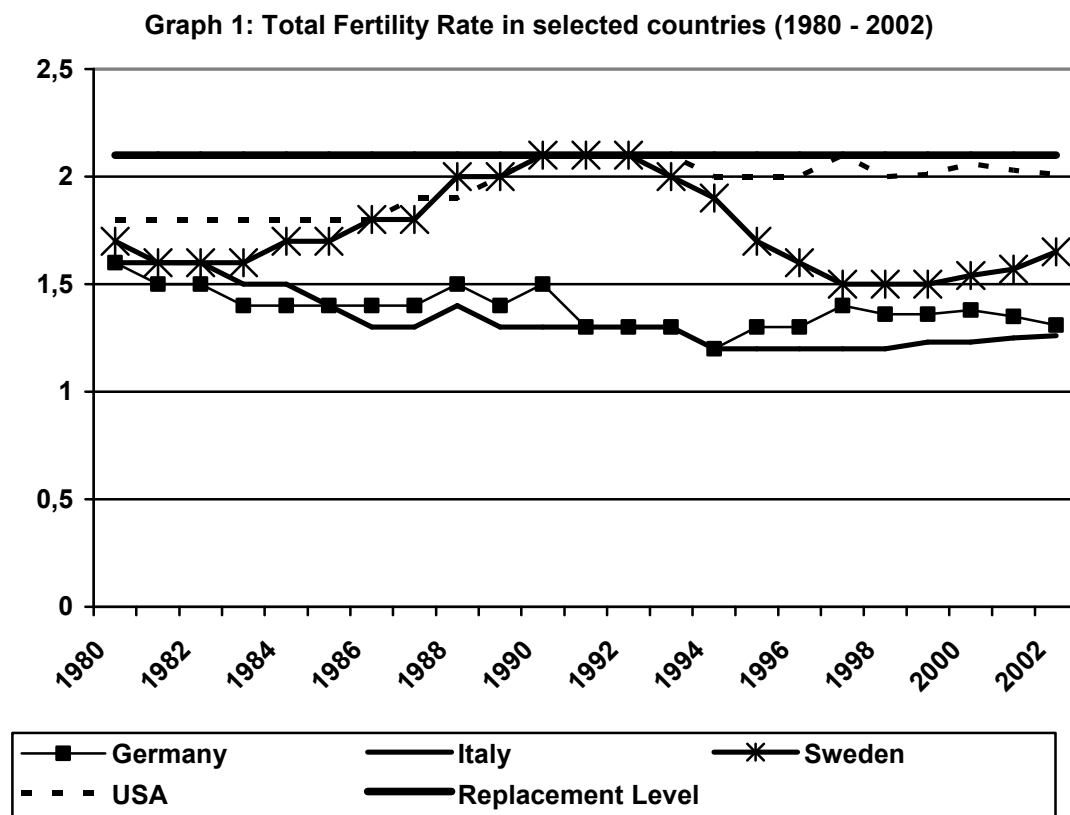
The main argument of this paper is the need to analyse the interconnection of life-goals which is lacking in existing theories. A new action theory will be presented using developmental-psychological assumptions which give the “missing link” between goal-attainment and (the perception) of incentives – and of course a deeper understanding on what is going on in families.

### **Current theoretical and empirical findings**

Fertility has been declining all over the world in the past century. Most countries moving out of the process of the Second Demographic Transition end at a fertility rate below replacement level. The trend arose in Western industrialized nations but is currently observed in developing countries as well (Bongaarts 2002, Bongaarts 1999).

While the crucial factor for the First Demographic Transition was the decline in high parity births, the main reason for the Second Demographic Transition is the rising proportion of childlessness. Additionally, postponement of family formation measured by the increasing age at first birth leads to a decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) as well (Morgan/ Taylor 2006). Several explanations are discussed for this effect. Firstly, the TFR is sensitive to tempo effects, a factum which leads to an underestimation of fertility (Morgan/ Taylor 2006; Bongaarts 2002) and secondly, postponement raises the risk of unintended childlessness. Morgan and Taylor give three reasons for this interaction:

“(a) Later childbearing leaves fewer years at risk of an unintended pregnancy/birth; (b) later childbearing increases the risk of sub/infecundity; and (c) postponement allows women/couples to revise intentions” (Morgan/ Taylor 2006: 380). While postponing family interests women are engaged in other life domains, thus these revisions are in favour of giving up family formations for other interests (Morgan/Taylor 2006). The following diagram shows the change of the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) from 1980 to 2002 in different countries.

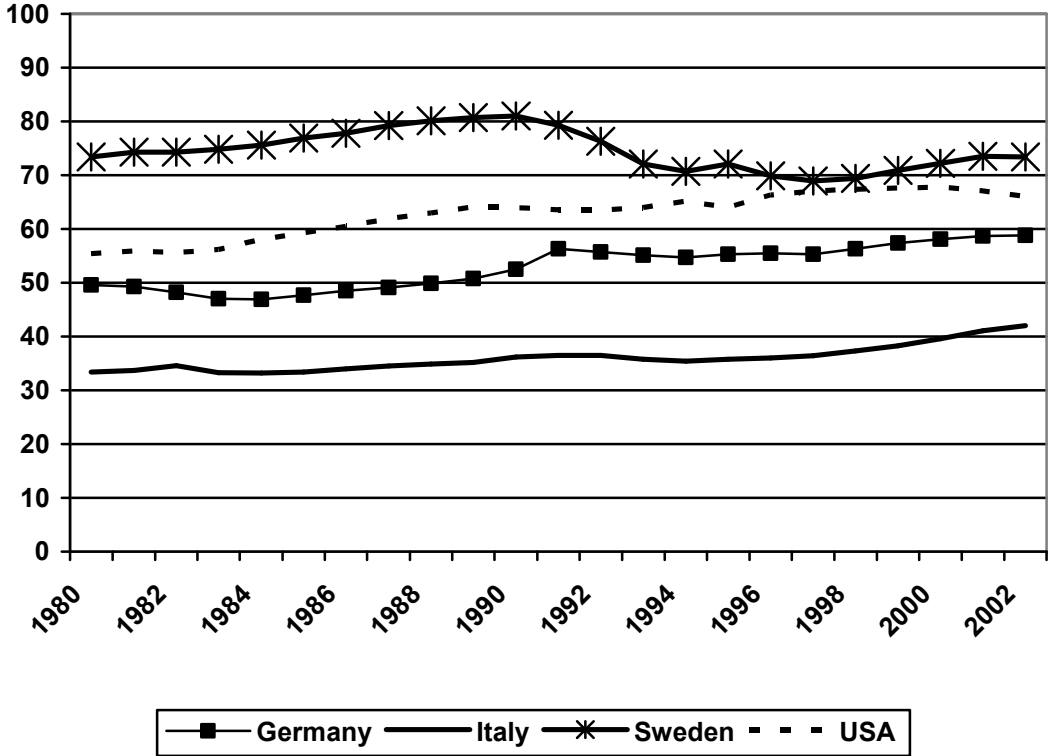


Source: OECD, Society at a glance 2005.

The involvement in other life domains, especially the rising participation in the labour market for women is considered to be an important reason for postponing and eventually not realising fertility. So the effect of women’s labour force participation on fertility is commonly hypothesized to be negative, especially in regard to economic theories. And indeed the effect can be detected on individual level. On national level though, a clearly positive effect is

found. Countries with a high rate of female labour force participation simultaneously have a comparably high fertility rate (Brewster/ Rindfuss 2000; Ahn/ Mira 2000).

**Graph 2: Female employment as a percentage of the female working-age population (1980- 2002)**



Source: OECD, Labour Force Statistics 1983- 2003

However, this-on the first glance contradictory- finding can be explained by considering the political contexts, which facilitates or hinders the balancing of employment and child care (Brewster/ Rindfuss 2000).

Esping-Andersen for example includes different policies towards families in his welfare state typology. Germany is classified as a conservative welfare state which focuses lies on traditional gender roles (Esping-Andersen 1990)<sup>1</sup>. Social systems encourage non-employed mothers and provide only few childcare facilities. Especially for under 3-years-olds childcare is rarely available.

<sup>1</sup> For other classifications see for example Chesnais 1996.

In Germany, the total fertility rate was with 1.3 children per woman in 2005 one of the lowest in Europe. This progress is accompanied with the increase of childless women and the rise of the age at first birth. Estimations for the percentage of childless women in the birth cohorts later than 1965 are up to 30 per cent.

This trend of postponing observed in Germany is often connected to its conservative family politics. While women's labour force participation is on the rise, many women leave employment at least for a limited period when they have a child because of problems in balancing both life domains. So during this time the male partner is responsible for the family's finances (Dornseiff and Sackmann, 2003).

This leads to the necessity of the man to ensure the financial situation before family formation. Insecurities in men's career hinder the transition to parenthood (Tölke and Diewald, 2003). Women see themselves confronted with problems of irreconcilability and react by postponing family formation (Blossfeld and Jaenichen, 1992).

Current theories see this effort to achieve aims in career and family at the same time as an important cause for today's fertility decline: The direct costs of parenthood rise (Leibenstein, 1975) and career opportunities have become more attractive in the last years. Life aims in career and leisure became more relevant, while the importance of family aims and fertility declined. During education and after the career entry the financial situation is often insecure. Under these circumstances fertility postponement can be a strategy to balance the aims in work and family, unless the position in the labour market becomes more stable (Brewster and Rindfuss, 2000). From the view of Becker's New Home Economics the aims in career and family are two exclusive options in women's life (Becker, 1991). In its theoretical approach the monetary costs of the decision are emphasized and with an increasing level of education a

parenthood becomes less attractive for women, and a suitable “timing” of family and career grows to be more and more important.

To estimate for which life aim a woman will decide, preferences for life aims are examined. In classic economic theories preferences were conjectured to be stable for all individuals. This proved to be empirical incorrect. Stigler and Becker (1977) tried to solve this problem by splitting between preferences about universal goods (which are coveted by everyone anytime in the same degree and are stable over time) and instrumental goods (which are required to realize the universal good, and change in intensity according to the monetary circumstances of the individual). Under this assumption the economic terms like time-availability, financial disadvantages and opportunity-costs have a great relevance for the decision.

Lindenberg differentiates these preferences. He assumes that human beings strive only for two universal goods: physical wellbeing and social approval. Other goods are hierarchically organized and have an instrumental function for the satisfaction of the demand for universal goods. Such an intermediate aim can be the foundation of a family: It leads to social approval (universal good), but needs for example a bigger apartment (a secondary instrumental good) (Lindenberg 1996). The extent to which a realized aim like parenthood satisfies the need for universal goods of a person is part of Lindenberg’s social production function. Different from the economic theory Lindenberg assumes that the decision about using children as an intermediate aim for satisfying universal needs is typically not a “rational” calculation of the specific costs and benefits. This type of decision making is chosen only if the condition of the situation appears to the protagonist unfamiliar. In other cases he chooses the option which fits for his interpretation of the situation best - without a cost calculation of the incentives. By applying this model Nauck (2007) shows that an economic theory focussing on the child-costs could satisfactorily be completed by the classical value-of-children approach (Hoffman and Hoffman 1973), which points out the supply side. So the influence of cultural factors on

preferences can be taken into account. It is an important statement of the model that not only the costs of children influence the decision but also the preference-related benefits (or values) of children: Only if the situational circumstances will not match the culturally marked expectations about parenthood, a cost calculation takes place. On the one hand with this approach differences in fertility behaviour within and across societies can be explained, on the other hand the choice of the culture-specific instrumental goods is based on empirical data and is not theory-driven. The universal goods have only a merely heuristic function for the identification of the instrumental goods. Furthermore the model contains only few assumptions about the interaction of different instrumental goods, the weighting and their change over the life-course.

By applying the Model of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) Barber (2001) deals with the coherences between the perceived outcomes of different instrumental goods. She shows that the effect of attitudes towards children (or in other terms: the perceived benefits of children) are related to the attitudes about career and luxury goods. Her empirical data confirm that positive attitudes towards children increase the possibility of childbearing, while positive attitudes towards career and luxury goods reduce them. It seems that the preference for parenthood is reduced, if there are attractive career possibilities. A similar process is described by Hakim (2003). Starting out from her preference theory she chooses an approach differentiating between the sexes, and finds a correlation between the preferences of parenthood and career (i.e. relevance of that aims) in couples and the intention of childbearing (see also Miller et al. 2004). While women want to combine professional and family aims, men usually only consider their professional aims. By using classical balance-theoretical ideas, Hakim assumes that an intention of childbearing only arises if the aims of both partners match each other. In addition, Hakim argues that the preference for a child increases, if women are supported by public policy more strongly.

The results of Baber (2001) and Hakim (2003) not only show clearly that preferences are not only determined by the cultural background but also influenced by the individual's circumstances. In unfavourable situations aims are adapted to avoid the perception of failure by adjusting them to the limited resources or to attempt some assimilative activity to change inappropriate circumstances. This fits to theories of developmental psychology (Brandtstädter, 1990, 2006)<sup>2</sup>.

### **A New Model of Aim - Management**

As noted before, the choice between parenthood and career is not only a matter of different incentives and opportunities – also the individual life planning and the risk of failure influences the decision. Sloan (1987, 1996) points out, that one should separate between small and “big” decisions. These big "life projects" (1987: 114ff) like family foundation or the vocational career accompany individuals over a long time and are carried out progressively. Structural irreconcilableness leads to an altering of individual aims in family, career and leisure activities – or at least to pursuing these aims to achieve one after another. The crucial point therefore is which aims are advanced, and which are put back.

As noted above, the New Home Economic Theory states that external effects are relevant for this decision (Becker, 1991). Households always try to maximize their welfare, and aims like parenthood or leisure activities are only relevant for the production of “basic commodities” (i.e. physical and social wellbeing), and could be replaced by other aims – if these need less resources for producing the same amount of welfare. Women have fewer chances on the labour market than their partners, so they concentrate on the child care to maximize the households' welfare.

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<sup>2</sup> In connection with this, Heckhausen and Wrosch (2001) show that childless women try to have a first child particularly strongly just before the end of their fertility-phase, to prevent the perception of failure, i.e. not having a child at all.



On the other hand though, Heckhausen and Wrosch (2001) demonstrate that the relevance of different life-aims changes over the life-course – and with that also the intensity of achieving these aims changed. According to Sloan (1987) the current relevance of an aim (its "totalization", 1987: 71) decides, how the interconnected incentives are perceived. Similar to Frame-Theoretical-Models (Lindenberg and Frey, 1993) he supposes, that the outcome of an irrelevant aim will not be recognized as utility: if you are not interested in football, two free tickets for a game of your national team will not make you happy – and if you are not interested in career, you will not cut back in your aims connected to parenthood if there are occupational opportunities.

From a life-course point of view we ask for the “when” rather than for the “whether or not” of parenthood or career related decisions; this is what we call the “timing” or “urgency” of parenthood. We assume that the relevance of aims and the perception of the aim-related incentives are connected. The higher the perceived incentives, the bigger the degree of resources one is willing to invest. Like in economic theory the allocation of resources depends on opportunity-cost and the expected outcome – but their perception is influenced by the individual relevance of life-aims and vice versa. The decision to invest fewer resources in an aim also depends on whether one is ready to cut back ones demands (in economical words: the aim-specific elasticity of demand). To know, what influences, whether somebody holds on to his aims or cuts back, can be helpful for a better understanding of life-course decisions, like the decision for parenthood.

This kind of “aim-management” during the life-course is a main topic in two models which include assumptions of developmental psychology about realising and regulating life aims as well as avoiding the experience of failure (i.e. having to cut back in ones aims). It is a central assumption that the perception of failure – losing the active control over the action results – generates high psychological costs, and therefore is tried to be avoided: People strive to

maximize their perceived action control, and to avoid the experience of failures (Brandtstädter and Renner 1990; Heckhausen and Schulz, 1998). Both theories explain how the perception of this control is maximized by certain strategies which can be applied, and some of these assumptions can be used also in our decision-model: Brandtstädter and Renner (1990) distinguish between the processes of assimilation and accommodation. These two strategies influence the perception of the welfare connected to different opportunities and also influence the willingness to cut back in an aim. Using the strategy of assimilation additional resources are invested to accomplish a goal like parenthood. To justify higher investments in view of scarce resources, the outcomes of parenthood are overestimated: Useful aspects of parenthood or their general meaning (the preferences) are emphasized. If no additional resources are available, the aim-specific aspirations are reduced using the strategy of accommodation (for example less time is invested in the professional career). By doing this, one is able to reach the aim without the experience of failure: The salience of childbearing can be played down, or the related aspirations can be reduced to accomplish the lower aims. We assume that this kind of flexible and tenacious behaviour can complement itself: To realize parenthood successfully, the professional aims can be reduced. In view of scarce resources we assume that the realization of the different aims is connected to each other. People can flexible reduce their aspiration in family and career (or in one of the two aims) and pursue their aims tenaciously.

But when does one reduce ones claims and when does one adhere to them? Firstly we can expect that one is more ready to reduce one's claims to aims, which are unimportant in the current life-plan. Secondly, Brandtstädter and Renner (1990) assume that the tenaciousness (and also flexibility) is connected to the aims, and the beliefs of the social network play an important role for the decision between parenthood and career. The social network offers not only an orientation for the salience of the different aims but also for the aspirations connected

to them. Because of the influence of the social network it is an important aspect that people cannot simply adapt their aims or the related aspirations to their resources – a simple maximization of the marginal utility function in the light of the resources, as it is expected by economics, is not possible straight away.

Starting out from these assumptions, parenthood becomes only an alternative (or an addition) to the career, if the relevance of it is high. Furthermore, parenthood has to be pursued tenaciously, or one must be flexible towards professional aims. The following diagram (Table 1) shows, how the aims in career and parenthood are connected if both family and career are highly relevant:

Table 1: The effects of tenaciousness and flexibility on the aim realization

	<b>Career</b>		
<b>Parenthood</b>		<b>tenacious</b>	<b>flexible</b>
	<b>tenacious</b>	No accommodation, high risk of a failure	Cutting back in career, realization of the aims in parenthood
	<b>flexible</b>	Cutting back in parenthood, realization of the occupational aims	Realization of both aims on a lower level of aspiration

The diagram points out that a high salience of parenthood and a tenacious orientation does not “automatically” result in childbearing. It is important at the same time to be flexible in other time-consuming aims, like the career. Childbearing is also probable if one is flexible in both areas. From the view of the economic theory besides the aim-specific incentives also the elasticity of demand – particularly in competitive aims like the career - plays a central role for the timing of parenthood. It decides on the resources which somebody is willing to invest.

With our Model of Aim – Management we present a theoretical model of action, which implements assumptions of developmental psychology, and which therefore allows making statements about the adjusting of life aims and their effects on decision making by the degree of the tenaciousness of parenthood. Besides of the aim related positive and negative incentives and the perception of self-control – we will call these aspects “readiness for parenthood”<sup>3</sup> – it contains also the willingness to cut back in career, the actual relevance of these aims, and the tenaciousness regarding the realization of an aim<sup>4</sup>:

**Hypotheses about aim – management and decision-making:**

- The timing (urgency) of parenthood is not only caused by the “readiness for parenthood” but also by the willingness to cut back in other life aims (i.e. career)<sup>5</sup>.
- The more tenacious someone is about parenthood,
  - the higher is the willingness to cut back in the career (if both plans can not be realized together)
  - the higher is the perception of the readiness for parenthood (if both plans can not be realized together)
- The more salient parenthood is (compared to other life aims),
  - the stronger is the willingness to cut back in career plans
  - the stronger is the effect of the readiness on the urgency of parenthood
  - the stronger is the effect of tenaciousness on the readiness and on the willingness to cut back in the career
- We assume the following time-lag effects:
  - the higher the former salience of the career the lower is the actual salience of parenthood
  - the higher the former tenaciousness of parenthood the weaker is the actual effect of the salience of the career on the salience of parenthood

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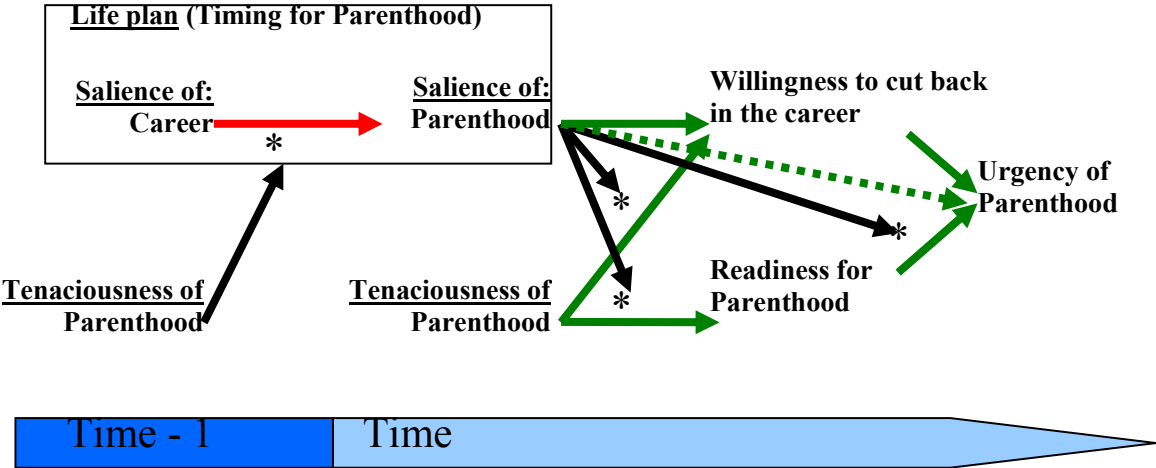
<sup>3</sup> See below for a more detailed description

<sup>4</sup> The effects of flexibility and immunization (also treated by Brandtstädter and Renner 1990) have not been taken into account.

<sup>5</sup> The model can be used for all time-consuming life aims. We concentrate here on career related aims, leisure activities would be another example.

Our theory states that the timing of parenthood is only problematic when one must cut back in career related aims. The diagram below illustrates the various direct and indirect effects of the salience and the tenaciousness on the explanatory variables. The direct effect of the salience (represented by the dashed line) indicates that our model is not complete: Incentives were taken into account only concerning the readiness for parenthood. This simple model does not take the effects of the social network into account either, because we would like to emphasize the processes of the aim – management which has an effect on the perceived incentives in the readiness and the elasticity of the demand for competitive aims.

Graph 3: The Model of Aim-Management



Existing models can well explain under which circumstances parenthood is postponed for the benefit of occupational aims. The advantage of the Model of Aim-Management is that we can deduce under which circumstances parenthood will finally be realised or even put forward before concentrating on career connected aims. The external opportunity structure can influence the decision progress differently according to the salience of a certain aim and it is also influenced by the internal structure of a person, i.e. the tenaciousness. The model is able to take all this into account. It is a central statement of our model that the elasticity of the demand for competitive objectives plays an important role. If one takes into account that

women are (mostly) the ones obliged to take care of the child after the birth, it has to be assumed that they will have to regulate their life aims more strongly than men. For women the willingness to cut back in career should therefore play a stronger role than for the men.

### **Dataset and Variables**

To test our hypotheses we use the dataset of the Mini-Panel. The Mini-Panel is a pretest for a planned nation-wide panel in Germany. The development of the panel currently takes place in the priority programme 1161 “Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics” of the German Research Foundation (DFG). The aim of the Mini-Panel was to test newly developed instruments to measure intimate relationships and family decisions<sup>6</sup>.

The Mini-Panel consists of three waves. The time between the waves was half a year. It took place in autumn 2005, spring 2006 and autumn 2006 in the four German towns Munich, Mannheim, Chemnitz and Bremen. The panel follows a cohort design addressing three cohorts aged at the first interview 15-17, 25-27 and 35-37 years. There were 660 participants in the first wave. The number reduces to 427 in the third wave.

Since we are using a pre-test there are some obstacles in the dataset. There is a very short time between the panel-waves which makes longitudinal research difficult. Furthermore the dataset is not representative for the whole of Germany since we only ask in four towns. Because of this design we have a bias of urban population. There is no rural population included. This can have an effect on the answers. We also have a bias of education. There is a higher level of education in towns, especially in university towns like we used them.

The case numbers are relatively low, especially since we only use childless persons for our calculations. This leaves low numbers for the oldest cohort and a relatively high number of persons who do not want children at all in this age group (selection effect).

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<sup>6</sup> The first wave of the main panel will be collected in autumn 2008. For more information see [www.pairfam.uni-bremen.de](http://www.pairfam.uni-bremen.de)

For our research questions it is sometimes necessary to skip the youth cohort because for them there is hardly any variance for parenthood related questions.

Still we can use this dataset to test our hypotheses and check them with the data of the main panel which is to come in 2008.

The dependent variable in the regression model is the urgency of parenthood. We asked the respondents about the urgency of family formation: “*There are things in life you can’t always postpone. Do you have to attend to the following things now or do they still have time?*”. For the youngest cohort, family formation is not urgent at all. The mean is 0.02<sup>7</sup>, a little more it is for the middle cohort (mean 0.15) but for the oldest cohort it becomes urgent (mean 0.42). These cohort effects are highly significant. We also asked for the urgency to attend to aims connected to career or education. This is on the very urgent for all cohorts (mean ca. 0.8 for all cohorts).

In our model we use several independent variables. We constructed them as follows:

Willingness to cut back in career: Here we ask how much people are willing to cut back in their career-related aims for parenthood. The scale reaches from 1 = *very much* to 5 = *not at all*.

“Readiness for parenthood” (Incentives and self-control): Instead of single incentives we use a summarizing scale, which contains nine cost-intensive requirements for parenthood, and ask for each, how important it is, and whether the person already achieved it. The variable measures how many per cent of the preconditions considered to be important are achieved. The requirements are: finances, a secure job, feeling ready, a stable partnership, reconcilability with the career, reconcilability with leisure interests, reconcilability with other plans, agreement with partner about the division of labour and the availability of child care.

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<sup>7</sup> The scale ranges from 0 = *still has time* to 1 = *attend to now*.

Tenaciousness of parenthood: We use the agreement with two items for the construction: “I can not be dissuaded from my plans connected to parenthood” and “I am very tenacious in achieving my plans” for the third wave. We measure it in a five-point-scale. All formulations in the instrument are close to an instrument about “Tenaciousness and Flexibility” (TENFLEX) which was suggested by Brandtstädter. In the second wave we use an instrument suggested by Heckhausen about different strategies of handling with aims (OPS) “If I want a child and face obstacles, I still won’t be discouraged”.

Salience of Parenthood: Here respondents are asked to divide twelve coins to five life aims (parenthood, career, friends, hobbies and partnership) according to the importance of these aims to them at the moment. The more coins the higher is the salience of an aim. We use the percentage of the coins given to parenthood to measure the salience of parenthood.

## **Empirical Results**

To test our assumptions we use a regression model with the urgency of parenthood as dependent variable in a first step. We estimate the effects of the willingness to cut back in career for parenthood and the readiness for parenthood on the urgency first for all childless respondents and then separately for men and women.

The respondents of the Mini-Panel consist of three cohorts. As described above the youngest cohort shows no variance in their urgency of parenthood since for most of them it is not urgent at all. We therefore do not include them in our model. It then only concludes of the two cohorts aged 25-27 and 35-37 years. Since we refer to family formation there are only childless persons included.



Table 2: Results of OLS-Regression Model

Variables	Model 1 all	Model 2 only women	Model 3 only men
<b>Saliencz of parenthood</b>	-,58 (sig. ,000)	-,56 (sig. ,000)	-,28 (sig. ,084)
<b>Willingness to cut back in career</b>	-,16 (sig. ,024)	-,17 (sig. ,051)	-,18 (sig. ,267)
<b>Readiness for parenthood</b>	-,25 (sig. ,001)	-,32 (sig.001)	-,15 (sig. ,335)
<b>Global fit (n)</b>	R <sup>2</sup> = ,68*** N = 87	R <sup>2</sup> = ,79*** N = 47	R <sup>2</sup> = 18 N = 40

Source: Mini-Panel wave 3, own calculations, without youth cohort, \*\* = p < 0.01; \*\*\* = p < 0.001

The table above shows the effects of the “willingness to cut back in the career” and the “readiness for parenthood” on the urgency of parenthood. In addition, we have controlled for the direct effect of the salience of parenthood in the model<sup>8</sup>.

In the first model we included men and women and we see our predictions about the positive effects of both independent variables verified. So besides the strong effect of the salience, also the readiness for parenthood and the willingness to cut back in another life aim -the career- have significant effects on the perceived urgency of parenthood.

We argued that the problems to reconcile family and career and therefore the need to cut back in one of the aims are still especially true for women. Many couples in Germany use the traditional way to divide household and family labour after a child is born. We see this in the next two models. The effects are stronger in model 2, including only women, and the global fit rises up to R<sup>2</sup> = ,79. So together with the salience the two variables can explain the urgency perceived by women very well.

<sup>8</sup> Due to problems in stability (high multicollinearity) the interaction between salience and readiness could not be taken into account. The results are comparable, though.

But there are no significant effects for men. Regarding the traditional division of labour the non-existing effect of the willingness to cut back in the career is understandable. Men do not think that they will have to cut back because it is their partner who will. But even the aspects of the readiness for parenthood are not relevant for men. The indicator of the readiness includes the fulfilment of several preconditions that are considered to be important for men (compatibility with other aims or financial preconditions) but still this has no effect on their perceived urgency of parenthood.

A question that still has to be answered is what influences the timing decision for men. Is it only the timing decision of the female partner? It is possible that within the partnership the timing of parenthood is planned according to the best timing for the woman. This leads to the question whether the decision for the timing of parenthood is a female decision?

Finally, we take a closer look on our assumptions about interactive influences from the salience of parenthood to the effects of other variables in our model. Since we saw our assumptions about the variables are only valid for women we do not include men here. We assume there are interaction effects of the salience of parenthood and of the tenaciousness about parenthood on other effects in our model. To check the hypotheses we use multiple analyses of variance and point out the F-Values and the significance of all main and interactive effects (see table 4).

Table 3: Interaction-Effects

Interactions between ...	With Effect on...	Results (Anova): Main and Interaction-Effects (F / Sig.)
1) Salience of Parenthood 2) Readiness	Urgency of Parenthood	Main 1) 15,6 / ,000 Main 2) 5,6 / ,003 Interaction: 3,7 / ,019      N = 41
1) Salience of Parenthood 2) Tenaciousness	Willingness to cut back in career	Main 1) 5,1 / ,028 Main 2) 0,5 / ,620 Interaction: 2,8 / ,052      N = 53
1) Salience of Parenthood 2) Tenaciousness	Readiness for Parenthood	Main 1) 5,9 / ,005 Main 2) 3,2 / ,049 Interaction: 1,4 / ,272      N = 61
1) Salience of Career (Wave 2) 2) Tenaciousness (Wave 2)	Salience of Parenthood (Wave 3)	Main 1) 3,5 / ,044 Main 2) 0,6 / ,526 Interaction: 2,5 / ,042      N = 40

Source: Mini-Panel wave 2 and 3, own calculations, only women of the second and third cohort

First we assumed that the effect of the readiness for parenthood on the urgency will rise with the salience of parenthood. The salience weights the perception of the incentives of an aim, so the more salient an aim is the stronger the readiness for parenthood is perceived. Besides of the two significant main-effects of both variables on the urgency of parenthood the interaction effect is significant as well.

We also predicted that the salience of parenthood has an influence on the effect of the tenaciousness, on the willingness to cut back and on the readiness. To avoid perceptions of failure, people have to decide for which aim they reduce their aspirations and cutback and for which aim they “overestimate” the incentives to increase the outcome of their decision. The tenaciousness about parenthood has in itself no significant effect on the willingness to cut back in the career in favour of parenthood. But the interaction effect of the salience and the tenaciousness together is significant. This means the more salient parenthood and the higher

the tenaciousness about parenthood the higher is the willingness to cut back in the career. If the aim is not salient the tenaciousness plays no role. There is no need to cut back for an aim that is not important at the moment, i.e. not salient.

Contrary to what we hypothesized, we do not have a significant interaction between the salience and the tenaciousness on the increase of the readiness for parenthood. There are only independent effects of both variables on the readiness. The higher the salience the higher is the perceived readiness for parenthood and furthermore the more tenacious a woman is about parenthood the higher is the readiness as well.

The panel-data of the Mini-Panel allows us to make estimations over time. Event though there is only half a year between wave 2 and 3 we can find time-effects. We believed that a high degree of tenaciousness considering parenthood over the time prevents a decline in the salience of parenthood, when the salience of career increases. The results confirm the assumption about the effects between the waves.

## **Conclusions**

We hypothesised that the perception of the urgency of parenthood does not only depend on the costs and benefits of the parenthood alone but also on the willingness to cut back in other time-consuming life aims. With the problem of the irreconcilableness of family and career in the conservative welfare state regime of Germany and the still relatively strong traditional female role as carer, the necessity to cut back in the career is highly perceived by women. We saw in our regression models that both –readiness and the willingness to cut back – have strong effects for women.

We also used research of developmental psychology and found interesting interactions of the salience of parenthood and the tenaciousness of the person towards parenthood. The effect of the readiness on the urgency of parenthood for example is the stronger the higher the salience of parenthood. If parenthood is not salient the fulfilled preconditions are less important.

What is still open is the timing-decision for men. We did not find effects of our independent variables on their urgency of parenthood. Do men consider parenthood to be urgent at all? Do they not experience an interconnection between parenthood and other life aims? Does their timing depend only on the suitability for their partner? To face these research questions further research on men and with regards to both partners is needed.

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