How Context Matters:

Childhood Family Structure and Early Family Formation in East and West Germany.

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Abstract

This study investigated the association between childhood living arrangements and early family formation in Germany. Drawing on persisting socio-environmental differences between East and West Germany the author addressed the question whether the association of childhood family structure and the early transition to adulthood varies in different societal contexts. In line with research from other countries, the analysis based on data from the German Family Panel (pairfam/DemoDiff; *N = 3643*) showed that children from non-traditional family structures experience important demographic transitions faster than children who have been raised by both biological parents. In addition to this rather ubiquitous association, the study revealed considerable context-specific differences, which point to the long-term consequences of the post-war separation of East and West Germany. First, although increasing in relevance, family structure was less predictive for early family formation in East Germany. Second, the results indicated that the link between childhood family structure and the reproduction of social inequality, which has been found in many studies from the US, could only be replicated for West Germany. In East Germany, educational attainment did not mediate the effect of childhood living arrangements on early family formation, nor was it associated with an increased probability of ever having lived in an alternative family structure.

Key words: childhood living arrangements; family formation; home leaving; parenthood; cohabitation; Germany

During the past decades, changes in family structure increased the diversity of childhood living arrangements in many affluent societies. Recent cohorts of children increasingly experience parental divorce, periods of single parenting, parental re-partnering, and re-marriage (Andersson, 2002; Goldscheider, 1997; Shanahan, 2000). A large body of research investigated how children are affected by these changes. One preeminent strand of this literature compellingly shows that children who have not been raised by both biological parents differ from their peers from stable two parent families with regard to family formation (Cherlin, Kiernan, & Chase-Lansdale, 1995; Fomby & Bosick, 2013; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988). In comparison, they are more likely to experience demographic transitions such as leaving the parental home (Bernhardt, Gähler, & Goldscheider, 2005; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998), cohabitation (Ryan, Franzetta, Schelar, & Manlove, 2009; Teachman, 2003), or having a first child (Hofferth & Goldscheider, 2010) at younger ages. Evidence for the transition to marriage is inconclusive, indicating a similar accelerating effect for older cohorts and no or even an opposite effect for more recent cohorts (Erola, Härkönen, & Dronkers, 2012; Wolfinger, 2003). With regard to divorce research has consistently shown that children of divorce and even more so children who experience parental re-marriage or multiple divorces have an elevated divorce risk themselves (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Diekmann & Engelhardt, 1999; Wolfinger, 2000).

Most of this research has been conducted using data from the United States. However, the established mechanisms linking childhood family structure and later family formation behavior are rather generic and applicable to other contexts. International comparative research on the intergenerational transmission of divorce, for instance, indicates a consistent transmission effect in a wide array of developed countries (Dronkers & Härkönen, 2008). Despite this consistency, there are noticeable cross-national differences in effect sizes pointing to the relevance of the larger contexts in which the effects of childhood family

structure unfold. Varying effect sizes across cohorts, as they have been shown for the association of parental divorce and offspring marriage behavior point to a similar direction, indicating that also the temporal context matters (Wolfinger, 2011).

In contrast to the thoroughly examined transmission of divorce, the aforementioned association between childhood living arrangements and the timing of demographic transitions rarely has been studied outside the US. Previous research in this area indicates that children from alternative family structures are experiencing the transition to adulthood at younger ages than children from traditional families. Early family formation, in turn has been argued to affect the life chances of young adults in ways that reproduce social inequality (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Consequently, cross-national differences in the association of childhood living arrangements and offspring family formation can contribute to our understanding of the intergenerational reproduction of family biographies and social inequalities.

In this vein, the present study adds to the literature by scrutinizing the link of childhood family structure and the early transition to adulthood in Germany. Although the German unification happened more than twenty years ago, the case of Germany provides insight into two very different contexts due to the long-term consequences of the post-war separation. Drawing on persisting differences in family formation between East and West Germany this research examines if the findings from previous research are also applicable in these contexts. In addition, using recent data from the German Family Panel (pairfam) allows for a comparison of two German cohorts and provides the opportunity to explore if family of origin effects on early family formation in East and West Germany are converging or remaining stable over time. More specifically, this paper addresses the following research questions: Are alternative family structures during childhood and early adolescence linked to early home leaving, cohabitation, and parenthood in Germany? Can the mechanisms identified in the mainly US-centric literature also be applied to the German context? Are there East-West

differences with regard to the strength and the way in which childhood living arrangement affect the early transition to adulthood?

BACKGROUND

In view of sociology's long-standing interest in family of origin effects this study is informed by several complementary and overlapping theoretical frameworks. At the most general level it is referring to three main principles of the life course paradigm (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003; Elder, 1994). First, the principle of linked lives implies that the family biographies of parents affect their offspring's life courses in multiple ways, for instance via socialization processes or the provision of emotional and economic resources. Second, life course theory focusses on the timing of transitions. In the present study, timing matters with regard to both the outcome and the key independent variable. For instance, the consequences of changes in childhood living arrangements might differ depending on whether they are experienced during early childhood or during adolescence. Moreover, the focus on early transitions in offspring's family biographies follows from the assertion that off-time transitions might entail negative consequences for status attainment or the stability of partnerships. Third, life course theory emphasizes the importance of socio-historical contexts. According to the principle of time and place, similar childhood living arrangements experienced in different historical times and places are likely to lead to very different outcomes. Consequently, a comparison of two German cohorts raised in very distinct societal and historical contexts provides valuable insights concerning the generalizability of previous research, which primarily has been conducted in the United States.

More specifically, research on social stratification and intergenerational family processes provides orientation for understanding how childhood living arrangements affect children's

demographic behavior during adolescence. Previous studies (e.g., Amato, 1993; Teachman, 2003; Wu, 1996) suggest four main mechanisms: economic hardship or status transmission, value socialization, social control, and stress caused by instability. These generic mechanisms have been used as explanations for early transitions to adulthood in a variety of contexts. Each perspective emphasizes different aspects of childhood family structure, such as the duration lived in a certain family type or the number of changes in family living arrangements (Teachman, 2003; Wu & Martinson, 1993). After introducing the basic mechanisms and discussing the peculiarities of the German case, I develop expectations on how family of origin effects and the corresponding mechanisms might influence early family formation differently in the East and West German cohorts studied in this research.

Economic hardship and status transmission

The economic deprivation perspective emphasizes that family income varies by family structure (Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Ginther & Pollak, 2004). In general, children from traditional families with two married parents fare best in economic terms. In contrast, children raised in single mother households are at an increased risk of experiencing economic hardship. Changing household structure due to parental remarriage, however, has the potential to improve the financial situation (Amato & Kane, 2011; Teachman & Paasch, 1994). Consequently, the mediating power of economic hardship should predominantly pertain to single parent households.

Previous research proposes different mechanisms explaining how socioeconomic conditions mediate family structure effects on early demographic transitions. First, adverse economic conditions during childhood might create an unpleasant home environment which ‘pushes’ the children out of the parental home (Bernhardt et al., 2005). For instance, crowded housing due

to scarce financial resources harms the quality of family relationships (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Kiernan, 1992). In addition, economic pressure linked with parental conflict or divorce also increases the risk of harsh, inconsistent, and uninvolved parenting (Conger, Conger, & Martin, 2010; McLeod & Shanahan, 1993). Second, a lack of financial resources exacerbates parental opportunities to invest in the educational attainment of children (Conger et al., 2010). Leaving the educational system earlier, in turn, accelerates family formation. Finally, assortative mating patterns make it more likely that children from economically disadvantaged families will have partners with similar social backgrounds (Erola et al., 2012). Although, these couples tend to delay or to forgo marriage, they experience transitions to cohabitation and parenthood earlier than those from advantaged backgrounds (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Particularly in the United States, cohabiting unions are highly unstable. Together with the recent increase in non-marital childbearing, this instability led to a rising share of single mother households and a new generation experiencing instable family structures and economic disadvantage (Carlson & England, 2011).

A considerable amount of the literature is concerned with the question whether the association of socioeconomic status and family structure is due to social causation or social selection (Conger et al., 2010; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Given the exploratory focus of this study, however, it is of subordinate importance if a child experiences a certain family structure due to the socioeconomic characteristics of its parents or if the family structure is causing economic disadvantage. Instead, it is relevant if there is an association at all and to which extent it mediates the family structure effect on early demographic transitions in different contexts. In this sense, a vanishing effect of family structure under control of socioeconomic status is interpreted as evidence in support of the economic hardship perspective. Using a similar "descriptive regression" strategy, some scholars even argue that

there is no genuine family structure effect on early family formation once family income is taken into account (Ginther & Pollak, 2004). Most research, however, shows only a modest or even no mediating effect of socio-economic conditions during childhood (Amato & Kane, 2011; Aquilino, 1996; Hill, Yeung, & Duncan, 2001; Musick & Meier, 2010; Wu, 1996).

As stated above, the economic deprivation mechanism is supposed to be most salient for children from single mother households. With regard to context, the economic hardship perspective should be of diminished explanatory power in an environment in which family structure is only moderately associated with socio-economic status (Engelhardt, Trappe, & Dronkers, 2002).

Socialization and role modelling

This perspective posits that parents are crucial role models and socializing agents for their children. Several studies on the intergenerational transmission of family attitudes report that divorced parents are more tolerant toward non-traditional family forms and socialize their children accordingly (Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Cunningham & Thornton, 2006; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Although, the transmission effects tend to be attenuated in families of separation, parental preferences still affect children's attitudes (Van Der Valk, Spruijt, De Goede, Larsen, & Meeus, 2008). Research on the intergenerational transmission of early childbearing, for instance, provides support for this view by showing that children of young mothers indeed hold preferences in favor of early family formation (Anderton, Tsuya, Bean, & Mineau, 1987; Barber, 2000, 2001) (Anderton et al. 1987; Barber 2000, 2001). In general, these studies suggest that socialization and role modeling reinforce intergenerational similarities in family formation. Accordingly, non-traditional family living arrangements

during childhood should contribute to the reproduction of non-traditional family trajectories in the offspring generation.

In the present study, non-standard demographic behavior refers to timing. Growing up in alternative family types increases the exposure to parental dating, sexual relationships, and cohabitation. This behavior arguably provides a role model of weak relationship commitment, which is likely to be transmitted to the children (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Ryan et al., 2009). As a result, children from alternative family structures are at higher risk of early family formation because they tend to hold liberal attitudes towards premarital sexual relationships, coresidential unions, and non-marital births (Amato & Kane, 2011; Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2004). Previous research on whether the effect of childhood living arrangements is stronger during early childhood or during late childhood and early adolescence is inconclusive (e.g., McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; Wu & Martinson, 1993). The same is true for the relevance of duration in different family types (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan, 1995; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Ryan et al., 2009). From a theoretical point, however, the socialization perspective suggests that the family of origin effect increases with duration of exposure to alternative family types. Similarly, family structure during early childhood should have a more salient influence, because during adolescence parents tend to loose influence and socialization agents outside the family of origin become increasingly important.

Next to duration and timing, contextual effects are also likely to moderate socialization effects. Boehnke and colleagues (2007), for instance, found that parent-child value similarity is higher in families distant from the *zeitgeist* than in families whose values are more conforming to the contemporary normative climate. In view of that, parents non-traditional family attitudes should be more easily transmitted to their children the stronger they diverge from traditional family values. Consequently, the socialization effect is expected to be weaker

in societies with a higher share and acceptance of alternative family structures. This view is supported by Wolfinger's studies (1999, 2011) on trends in the intergenerational transmission of divorce in the United States. He reports that the intergenerational continuity in divorce is lower for recent cohorts due to the weakening stigma associated with marital dissolution. Engelhardt and collaborators (2002) come to a similar conclusion studying divorce transmission in East and West Germany. Using data on women's first marriages from 18 countries participating in the Fertility and Family Surveys Dronkers and Härkönen (2008), however, did not find support for the stigmatization hypothesis.

Social control

In contrast to socialization theory, the social control perspective highlights the importance of family structure during early adolescence (Wu and Martinson 1993). According to this perspective, parents' supervising capabilities vary by family structure. In particular, single-parent families are likely to control and monitor children less than two-parent families (McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; Thomson, McLanahan, & Curtin, 1992). As a result, adolescents raised by single parents tend to engage in dating and sexual activities at younger ages (Albrecht & Teachman, 2003; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988). This in turn increases the likelihood of early parenthood and union formation.

Whereas the social control literature consistently maintains adverse consequences of single motherhood, the expectations for stepparents or families with coresiding non-biological parents are more ambiguous. Theoretically, each additional adult potentially contributes to supervising and controlling the children in the household. Empirical studies comparing biological parents and stepparents, however, come to a different conclusion. Stepparents' parenting efforts tend to be less intense (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998;

McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Moreover, the children are more reluctant to accept their supervision and advise (Thornton, 1991). Therefore, in terms of the social control perspective, all alternative families are alike; that is, they all supervise their children less than two biological parents (Thomson et al., 1992). Contrary to this assertion, most empirical studies report no or only limited support for the social control perspective (Aquilino, 1996; Hill et al., 2001; Hofferth & Goldscheider, 2010; Teachman, 2003; Wu & Martinson, 1993).

The broader context of childcare settings might be an important mediator in this regard. The relevance of social control should vary according to the degree in which childcare and the supervision of young adolescents takes place within the family context. If children, irrespective of family structure, spent most of their time outside the familial environment, other supervising and socializing agents become more influential. Thus, the adverse effect of limited parental supervision in alternative family structures is supposedly smaller in societal contexts in which institutions, such as full time schools or day care centers, provide supervision and control for the majority of children, irrespective of their family structure.

Instability and stress

The instability and stress perspective emphasizes the adverse consequences of multiple changes in family living arrangements for parents and children. Contrary to the previous perspectives, it suggests that changes in family structure are more important than specific types of family structure. Instability in family living arrangements often is accompanied by stress and each additional transition results in an accumulation of adverse consequences (Amato, 1993; Wu & Martinson, 1993).

Previous research has reported that the experience of family instability increases offspring's exposure to parental conflict, disruptions in parenting, tensions in the relationship with

parents, residential mobility, and uncertainty due to reconfiguration of the roles of family members (Conger et al., 2010). These factors often create an unpleasant home environment and might *push* the children to look for escape strategies such as early home leaving (Aquilino, 1996) or cohabitation (Teachman, 2003). Furthermore, multiple transitions in family structure have been linked to lower educational attainment (Aquilino, 1996; Fomby & Bosick, 2013; Hill et al., 2001), increased risk of premarital intercourse (Albrecht & Teachman, 2003), premarital birth (Wu & Martinson, 1993; Wu, 1996), and nonresidential fatherhood (Hofferth & Goldscheider, 2010). Despite this support for the instability perspective, other scholars argue that not all changes in family structure are equally stressful (Brown, 2006; Shaff, Wolfinger, Kowaleski-Jones, & Smith, 2008). Moreover, studies testing whether changes of family structure or the type of family structure are more important yielded mixed results. For instance, the findings of Wu (1996) and Teachman (2003) are in favor of the instability perspective, whereas the results of Ryan (2009) as well as of Fomby and Bosick (2013) indicate that the type of family structure is more important than the number of transitions. Given that the mechanisms used to explain how instability and stress affect offspring's family formation are referring to economic instability, social control, and value transmission (Hofferth & Goldscheider, 2010; Teachman, 2003) these inconsistencies are not very surprising. Methodologically, the difficulties in disentangling the effects of the number of transitions and the type of family structure are amplified by the small proportion of children who experience more than one change in family living arrangements.

These substantive and methodological considerations should also pertain to the way in which the stress caused by instability varies according to context. The stress perspective focusses on the number of transitions to explain the association between family instability and child outcomes. At the same time, it also incorporates the mechanisms proposed by the other perspectives and therefore partially refers to the same context specific expectations as

described above. For instance, if changes in family living arrangements are a widespread phenomenon and are not considered a social stigma the stress effects are supposedly of moderate size. Nevertheless, the stress and instability perspective could be particular useful in exactly those contexts in which family instability is common. Each single transition would not be as stressful and unsettling as in a low instability setting, but multiple transitions can foster an accumulation of stress and finally affect offspring's family formation. In a society, however, in which only very few children experience family instability already one change in family structure might result in noticeable effects.

One country, two contexts: Persisting differences between East and West Germany

As noted above, previous research on the effects of the discussed mechanisms is largely based on evidence from the United States. The present study draws attention to how these effects might differ by context. In view of the separation after the Second World War, the case of Germany is particularly well suited for this purpose because it provides insight into two very different contexts, the socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the capitalist Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The following analyses are examining the life courses of two cohorts, which both experienced the consequences of the separation in 1949 and the unification in 1990. The first cohort was born around 1970. Members of this cohort at least partially experienced early transitions to adulthood in the separated Germany and in the time right after the fall of the wall. Being ten years younger the second cohort experienced childhood socialization in the divided Germany whereas adolescence and family formation were taking place after the unification.

The huge institutional and cultural differences between East and West Germany led to very distinct life course patterns within Germany. In the pronatalist regime of the FRG, family

formation started at very young ages. In contrast, the transition to adulthood in West Germany was increasingly postponed since the 1970s. Family policies in the GDR fostered early childbearing particularly by providing very extensive childcare facilities for children of all age groups. Another incentive for early parenthood and marriage were the regulations on the mainly public housing market in the GDR that strongly favored married couples and single mothers. Thus, "family formation often was the most successful strategy for leaving the parental household" (Walper, 1995, p. 5).

At the same time, the GDR aimed at the full-time labor market integration of women – including mothers. Compared to West Germany the higher labor market integration and more generous social and financial support for mothers increased the economic independence of women. As a result, marriage was less important for providing financial security to mothers in East Germany (Huinink, Kreyenfeld, & Trappe, 2012). Moreover, the lower importance of religion and the historically weak nexus between the birth of the first child and marriage contributed to a rather high share of non-marital births, which still can be observed today (Becker, Lois, & Nauck, 2010; Klüsener & Goldstein, 2014; Schnor, 2014). The same reasons as well as the young age at family formation also caused higher rates of marital dissolution (Engelhardt et al., 2002; Sharma & Silbereisen, 2007). From a West German point of view, this led to a comparatively high prevalence of alternative family structures, i.e. unmarried or single parents with children.

In contrast to the GDR, the FRG can be characterized as a traditional male breadwinner model. The female labor force participation was considerably lower, particularly after the transition to parenthood. Childcare coverage was and still is lower than in East Germany. Finally, parenthood out of wedlock and divorces were less common. In sum, the traditional nuclear family with married parents, one or two children, and mothers with low labor force attachment was and to some extent still is the normative family model in West Germany. By

contrast, the early onset of family formation with early parenthood, irrespective of marital status, and high labor force participation of mothers can be considered normative for the GDR. Although West German institutions were rapidly implemented in East Germany after the unification, life course patterns in the two parts of the country are still very distinct (Diewald, Goedicke, & Mayer, 2006). For instance, in East Germany women are still one year younger when they have their first child and children are more often born out of wedlock than in West Germany (Goldstein & Kreyenfeld, 2011; Kreyenfeld, Konietzka, & Walke, 2011). In addition, the differences in marriage rates, childcare coverage, and full-time employment of mothers still can be observed today, albeit some of the differences became smaller over the last decades (Huinink et al., 2012; Schneider, Naderi, & Ruppenthal, 2012). In sum, these substantial differences suggest that the effects of family living arrangements during childhood on early family formation might vary in the two different contexts.

In the case of economic hardship, for instance, the extensive monetary and instrumental support for mothers in the GDR, irrespective of their marital status, alleviated the adverse consequences of single motherhood (Forkel & Silbereisen, 2001; Sharma & Silbereisen, 2007). After the unification, however, the financial situation of single mothers in East Germany deteriorated and increased their risk of experiencing economic hardship to over 30 percent in 1992 (Walper, 1995, p. 14). Despite this decline, the economic disparities between children form intact families and single parent families remained smaller in East Germany (Joos, 1997; Walper, 2002). Moreover, Kreyenfeld and Martin (2011) showed that compared to nuclear families also stepfamilies more often report economic hardship in West Germany but not in East Germany. Thus, as far as the effect of family structure is mediated by the experience and the consequences of economic hardship and status transmission, its impact on early family formation should be weaker in East Germany for both study cohorts.

The expectations for the mediating power of social stress and socialization point in a similar direction. Although marriage was part of the ideal family concept in the GDR, the acceptance and support for alternative family structures was much higher than in West Germany (Sharma & Silbereisen, 2007). As a result, marital dissolutions and single parenthood were less stigmatizing and stress producing for parents and children. Engelhardt and collaborators (2002), for instance, refer to this argument as an explanation for the absence of intergenerational divorce transmission in East Germany. In addition, they note that, contrary to the expectations of the stress perspective, parental divorce does not accelerate offspring's transition to marriage. Studies on home leaving also do not find supporting evidence for divorce as a push factor towards a faster transition to adulthood (Juang, Silbereisen, & Wiesner, 1999; Silbereisen, Meschke, & Schwarz, 1996). In a similar vein, Sharma and Silbereisen (2007) report for East Germany that children raised in single mother households do not differ from children who were living with both biological parents with regard to several social and family-related outcomes, such as display of psychosomatic symptoms, perception of stress, and parent-child relationship quality. More negative social and family-related outcomes, however, were observed for adolescents from stepparent families. These children often experience multiple changes in family structure and therefore are particularly exposed to social stress, even in contexts that are more tolerant toward alternative family structures.

Similar to the mechanisms discussed so far, the social control perspective suggests that family structure effects should be less pronounced in East Germany. That is, because irrespective of family structure children in the GDR spend much more time outside the family environment than in the FRG. The regime transferred parts of the socialization and control function of the family to public institutions, such as full time schools or day care centers. Family structure effects caused by a lack of parental social control should be weaker in such a context. After

the unification, however, the former institutions have been abolished or cut back. Childcare coverage in East Germany still was comparatively high but the number of children without any afternoon care increased as mother's labor force participation remained rather high and full time childcare supply decreased (Keiser, 1992; Walper, 1995). Accordingly, the detrimental effects of a lack of social control might have increased after the unification. In sum, however, the effects of an alternative family structure on offspring's transition to adulthood should still be weaker in East Germany due to the persisting normative and social differences outlined above.

DATA & METHOD

Data

The analyses were based on data from the first three waves of the German Panel of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (pairfam), release 4.0 (Huinink et al., 2011; Nauck, Brüderl, Huinink, & Walper, 2013). The data used for this research have been collected between 2008 and 2012 and provide detailed accounts of the respondents' family living arrangements during childhood and their own family biographies. Originally, the data comprise three birth cohorts born 1971–1973, 1981–1983, and 1991–1993. The following analyses were restricted to the two older cohorts because the 1991 cohort was too young for fully studying the transition to adulthood. Data from release 3.0 of the project Demographic Differences in Life Course Dynamics in Eastern and Western Germany (DemoDiff) supplemented the pairfam data (Kreyenfeld, Huinink, Trappe, & Walke, 2012). DemoDiff closely followed the pairfam questionnaire design and collected data from an additional sample of East German respondents. Using this additional sample ensured a sufficient sample size for separate models for the two birth cohorts in East and West Germany.

Sample Construction

The baseline sample consisted of heterosexual respondents without migration background who permanently lived in East or West Germany. These criteria were met by 3782 respondents of pairfam and for 764 participants of DemoDiff, comprising a total baseline sample of 4546 cases. After restricting the sample to persons with full information on their family trajectories, i.e. data on partner and fertility biographies as well as on leaving the parental home, the case number reduced to 3951 (87 percent). Dropping cases with incomplete data on childhood living arrangements further reduced the sample to 3884 cases, i.e. 85 percent of the baseline sample. After these restrictions, only 6 percent of the remaining cases (241 respondents) had missing values on the variables used in the analyses. Thus, list wise deletion of missing values yielded a final sample size of 3643 cases (80 percent).

Measures

Early demographic transitions. The analyses examined the effects of childhood family structure on family formation focusing on three classical demographic transitions: home leaving, first cohabitation, and parenthood. Although the respondents from different family structures also vary in their demographic behavior at later ages, I am focusing on early transitions because they set the stage for later instabilities and adversities in the life courses of the affected persons. Early transitions were measured by generating binary variables based on non-parametric survivor functions for each of the three processes separately by gender, region (East and West Germany), and cohort membership (1971 and 1981). I used the first quintile as a cut-off point to identify early transitions. Thus, respondents were coded one on the binary outcome measures if they belonged to the youngest 20 percent experiencing the transition.

Table 1 shows the corresponding cut-off ages and illustrates that particularly East German women experience the transitions comparatively early.

-- Table 1 --

Childhood living arrangements. The family structure during childhood is the key independent variable. It is based on detailed retrospective accounts of the respondents' family experiences from birth up to age 18. According to previous research, I constructed several different variables to evaluate the impact of childhood family structure. The first measure was a simple binary indicator capturing if the respondent ever lived not with both biological parents up to age 18. For home leaving I only considered living arrangements up to age 14 in order to take into account endogeneity problems arising from the high share of respondents who left the parental home before the age of 18. The second variable was derived from the stress perspective and counted the number changes in family structure. Allowing for an indirect test of the socialization and the social control perspectives, the third variable was a variation of the first indicator that differentiated between four developmental phases: early childhood (age 0-5), late childhood (age 6-10), early adolescence (11-14), late adolescence (15-18). The fourth version of the independent variable was again motivated by socialization theory and measured the duration children spent in different family types. Due to deviations in the questionnaire design, it was not possible to construct the fine-grained versions of the family structure indicators with the DemoDiff sample. Consequently, case numbers for the analysis vary depending on which version was used.

Additional variables. In order to assess the explanatory power of the mechanisms described above additional variables were included in the multivariate models. Although the used indicators are rather indirect measures, together with the key independent variable they still allow for exploratory evaluation of the various mechanisms. For instance, additional family structure indicators, such as the number of (step) siblings and mother's age at birth of the

respondent, point to the socialization and social stress as mediators of family of origin effects. Similarly, the child's level of education can be considered as a proxy for status transmission. If alternative family structures indeed go along with economic hardship and adverse effects on offspring's educational attainment the effect of the key independent variable should be mediated by this indicator. Finally, the retrospective assessment of childhood quality measured how happy respondents were during childhood. This indicator was used as a proxy for social stress.

Analytical strategy

I used binary logistic regressions to predict whether the family structure during childhood affects early family formation. All models were estimated separately for four subsamples that divided the sample by birth cohort and region of residence. The first models only included different versions of the key independent variable to get a first exploratory impression of the baseline effect of family structure. The Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) was used to evaluate which of the four versions of the independent variable fitted the data best (Raftery, 1995). Based on the BIC and the sake for parsimonious models, I used the simplest measure of family structure to estimate extended models. These models included additional variables to evaluate the mediating power of the mechanisms discussed above. Due to scaling effects, the resulting coefficients between the nested nonlinear models could not be compared as easily as across linear models. I therefore calculated predicted probabilities to compare the impact of family structure across the different estimations. As these probabilities still could be affected by scaling effects I also applied an adjustment method proposed by Karlson, Holm and Breen (2012). The results were robust to both specifications (results for KHB not shown).

RESULTS

Descriptive Results

Family structure. Table 2 presents a descriptive overview of the family living arrangements during childhood. As expected, the probability of ever living not with both biological parents was higher in East Germany and increased for the younger cohort in both parts of the country. However, the majority of the respondents still lived in traditional nuclear families throughout childhood. Consequently, the average number of family structure transitions was rather low. Even children who ever lived in an alternative family structure only experienced 1.33 transitions on average and spent more than 50 percent of their childhood in a household with both biological parents (results not shown).

-- Table 2 --

Outcomes and control variables. Table 3 shows information on all variables included in the regressions models separately by family structure. The distribution of the outcome measures illustrates that children from alternative family structures had a considerable increased probability to be among the youngest 20 percent experiencing early demographic transitions. This pattern was particularly pronounced in West Germany. For instance, 44 percent of the children from alternative family structures in the 1980 cohort are in the youngest home leaving quintile. For cohabitation and parenthood, these timing differences were smaller but still sizeable. In East Germany, the association between family structure and early demographic transitions was slightly weaker. Specifically, for the older cohort East-West differences were notable. For example, having ever lived in an alternative family structure involved an increased risk of early parenthood in West Germany (29%) but was not associated with becoming a young parent in East Germany (19%). In the 1981 cohort, however, the results were more similar in East and West Germany for all three transitions.

Table 3 presents additional family background indicators that have been shown to correlate with childhood family structure and early family formation. The results show, for example, that mother's age at birth was lower in alternative family structures than in traditional nuclear families. Furthermore, the total number of siblings, including stepsiblings, was higher in these family types. These results were found in East and West Germany. With regard to educational attainment, however, considerable regional differenced occurred. Whereas children from nontraditional family structures were much less likely to achieve the Abitur in West Germany, family structure did not matter for educational attainment in East Germany. The educational gradient in West Germany even became stronger over time. By contrast, the assessment of childhood quality was similarly associated with family structure in East and West Germany and indicated higher levels of dissatisfaction for respondents who have not lived permanently with both biological parents during their childhood.

-- Table 3 --

Multivariate Results

Baseline Models. The regression models shown in tables 4a – 4c add to the descriptive results by including different versions of the key independent variable. This allows exploring which aspects of childhood family structure are particular influential to predict early demographic transitions. Overall, a comparison of the BIC values across the different models suggests that the simplest model with a binary indicator as measure of childhood living arrangements fits the data best in most of the cases. In other words, just knowing that a child ever had not lived with both biological parents provides a sufficient basis to predict early family formation. That does not mean, however, that other aspects of family structure are irrelevant.

In line with the descriptive results, the estimates in tables 4a – 4c show that family structure was predictive in all models for West Germany. On average, having lived in an alternative family structure approximately doubled the odds of belonging to the group of respondents who experienced demographic transitions early. With the exception of the increasing effect for home leaving a comparison of effect sizes between cohorts revealed no clear trend.

In contrast to home leaving, the effect sizes of family structure were similar across cohorts and regions for cohabitation. Having lived in a nontraditional family household led to faster union formation in East and West Germany. A different pattern, however, occurred for fertility. The transition to early parenthood was not associated with family living arrangements during childhood in East Germany for the cohort born 1981. In the models for the younger cohort, the family structure effect only met conventional levels of statistical significance when it was measured by the number of changes in family living arrangements. In sum, these results suggest that family structure during childhood gained importance in predicting early family formation in East Germany, whereas its effects remained rather stable in West Germany.

With respect to the alternative model specifications, the results point to a timing effect that is in line with the expectations of the social control perspective. Family structure during adolescence had a stronger effect on family formation than early childhood experiences. Moreover, the results indicate that households including stepparents foster fast transitions to adulthood. This finding is in line with the stress perspective, because living in a stepparent family often implicates multiple changes in family structure. The positive effects for the number of experienced transitions provide additional support for this mechanism. Children from single parent households, however, usually experienced fewer transitions and did not differ systematically from children raised by both biological parents.

-- Tables 4a – 4c –

-- Tables 5a – 5c --

Extended Models. Based on the previous regressions the extended models displayed in tables 5a – 5c include additional variables to scrutinize the mechanisms described above. The bottom rows of the tables present predicted probabilities of belonging to the youngest 20 percent experiencing the respective demographic transition. The probabilities were calculated for children from nontraditional family structures and for respondents from traditional nuclear families. The differences between the respective values are presented in the last row of the table, named delta.

Generally, the estimated direct effects in the extended models were as expected. With respect to the additional family structure indicators, this was particularly true for West Germany. Children of older mothers postponed their own family formation, whereas respondents from larger families with more siblings and stepsiblings had a faster transition to adulthood. With the exception of the regression on early parenthood (table 5c) the additional family structure indicators were of weaker explanatory power in East Germany. A comparison of the predicted probabilities substantiated this pattern and indicated that these variables mediated a considerable amount of the main family structure effect in West Germany but not in East Germany. The regression predicting early parenthood for the 1971 cohort (table 5c) is a good illustration of this point. The difference in predicted probabilities between children who ever lived in an alternative family structure and children from traditional two parent families was reduced from 10 to 4 percentage points after controlling for the additional family background indicators. Thus, the original difference was reduced by 60 percent. For the younger West German cohort these effects were less pronounced and in East Germany the family structure indicators hardly had any mediating effects at all.

The results for the educational attainment indicator followed a similar pattern. The main effect of higher secondary education was negative in East and West Germany indicating a postponement in family formation caused by longer periods of education. Additional analyses (not shown) revealed that the postponement effect slightly increased for the younger cohorts. In terms of mediation, educational attainment reduced the effect of living in an alternative family structure in West Germany for both cohorts but for none of the two East German cohorts. This finding points to stronger association between family structure and inequality in West Germany.

Results for the indicator assessing childhood quality, which was used as a proxy for stress, did not reveal a clear regional or cohort specific pattern. In the majority of the models being dissatisfied with the own childhood accelerated the transition to adulthood. The indicator also reduced the main effect of family structure, even after controlling for the previous described mediators.

Discussion

During the past decades, the share of children living in nontraditional family structures has increased in many modern societies. A large body of literature has studied the long-term consequences of the increasing complexity of childhood living arrangements for later family formation. Most of these studies have been conducted in the United States. Drawing on the theoretical and empirical contributions of this rich literature the aim of the present study was to examine these processes in a different societal context. The case of Germany was particularly well suited for this purpose. Due to the post-war separation, it allowed for testing the generalizability of the predominantly US-specific findings by providing insights into two different societal contexts. Moreover, the unique data source used for the analyses facilitated a

comparison of two German cohorts and thus made it possible to scrutinize the stability of within country differences after the unification.

According to research from the United States, the findings indicate an increasing prevalence of nontraditional childhood living arrangements. As expected, alternative family types were more prevalent in East Germany. Already before the Second World War, parenthood out of wedlock has been more common in East Germany and this peculiarity has been reinforced by the socialist family policy during the post-war period. Similarly, timing differences in family formation between East and West Germany remained rather stable. Demographic transitions still occur faster in East Germany.

With respect to the effect of childhood living arrangement on early family formation, however, the within country differences were not as clear as expected. In West Germany, children from nontraditional family backgrounds consistently experienced the transition to adulthood faster than children from traditional two parent families. In East Germany, the effects were similar for early home leaving and cohabitation. This is particularly true for the younger cohort, which experienced the transitions approximately ten years after the unification. Next to these consistencies, the analyses also revealed notable differences in family structure effects between East and West Germany.

For instance, there was no significant effect of childhood living arrangements on home leaving for the older East German cohort. This might be due to two reasons. First, the comparatively small case number for this analysis statistically reduced the chance of obtaining significant effects. A sensitivity analysis (not shown) that considered the effect of living in an alternative family structure up to age 18 instead of age 14 supported this reasoning. Using this alternative indicator allowed for a bigger sample size and produced a moderate but significant effect. As mentioned above the results obtained by this alternative model specification, however, are subject to endogeneity problems. The second reason for the

missing or weak family structure effect points to the situation on the housing market encountered by the respondents who were born around 1970 (Juang et al., 1999). The early home leavers in this cohort either had to find their first apartment within the GDR that strictly restricted access to housing for young unmarried adults without children or in the period directly after the fall of the wall that was characterized by a difficult housing market as well. These circumstances might have suppressed the family structure effect by forcing adolescents to postpone home leaving.

The findings on early parenthood revealed stronger and more robust context-specific differences than the analysis of early home leaving. Having lived in an alternative family structure was not associated with an early transition to parenthood in East Germany. At best, there is a small trend towards convergence for the younger cohort. The effect for East Germany, however, is still insignificant and considerably smaller than in the West. Persisting differences in fertility and marital behavior are likely to be the explanation of this result. Although the total fertility rates in East and West Germany converged two decades after the unification, there are still marked differences. First, compared to West Germany, the transition to parenthood occurs earlier in East Germany. Second, childlessness is less common (Goldstein & Kreyenfeld, 2011). Third, parenthood out of wedlock was and is still much more prevalent in East Germany (Klüsener & Goldstein, 2014). Although marriage lost some of its importance, it often continues to be prerequisite for parenthood in West Germany. Two-thirds of the cohort born 1971 has been married at the birth of the first child. In East Germany, less than 40 percent were married at this transition (Huinink et al., 2012). These peculiarities may explain the stronger effect of childhood family structure in West Germany. The desire to marry before becoming parent is supposedly particularly strong for children from intact families in this part of the country. The majority of the early parenthood transitions, however, are non-marital births. Consequently, it is unlikely that children from traditional nuclear

families will be among the youngest quintile experiencing the transition to parenthood. By contrast, the marital norm is weaker for children from alternative family structures, which in turn increases their likelihood of early parenthood. By contrast, young adults in East Germany, irrespective of their childhood living arrangements, are not exposed to such a strong marital norm.

The differences in the overall effect of childhood family structure raise the question if the mechanisms driving it vary by context as well. In general, the results provided some empirical support for all the mechanisms discussed in the previous literature. For example, the age specific effects of family structure during late childhood or adolescence support the social control perspective. In addition, the positive effects for the number of changes in childhood living arrangements in the baseline models are in line with the stress perspective. As expected, at least some of the models for East Germany indicated that multiple changes in family structure are slightly more predictive for early family formation than having ever lived in a nontraditional family. Nevertheless, both mechanisms, stress and social control, were supported in East and West Germany. With regard to educational attainment and the additional family structure indicators, however, the analyses yielded context specific findings. Both factors only mediated the main family structure effect in West Germany.

With regard to the mediation caused by mother's age at birth, research on the intergenerational transmission of fertility provides a plausible explanation. The vast majority of the transmission studies report evidence in support of intergenerational continuities in the age at first birth. Early parenthood, in turn, also accelerates other demographic transitions such as leaving the parental home or the formation of a first union. Recent research (Fasang, 2014), however, did not find evidence for intergenerational continuities in childbearing in the GDR. The lack of a direct effect of mother's age at birth in the regressions for the East German cohorts suggests that this pattern persisted after the unification. As a result, there is

no evidence for a mediation of the family structure effect by the mother's age at birth in East Germany.

Also in line with the expectations, the proxy indicator used for testing the economic hardship and status transmission perspective did not moderate the effect of ever having lived in an alternative family structure for the East German sample. Already the descriptive results indicated that family structure is only associated with educational attainment in West Germany. Konietzka and Kreyenfeld (2005) reported similar findings for a comparison of the socioeconomic status of mothers in East and West Germany. They found only small differences with regard to educational level and the labor force participation between married and cohabiting mothers in East Germany. In a similar vein, other scholars have shown that even after the unification the status differences between children from intact families and single parent families remained smaller in East Germany (Joos, 1997; Walper, 2002).

The previous juxtaposition of the similarities and differences in effect sizes and mechanisms has to be interpreted in the context of several limitations. First, although pairfam and DemoDiff provide very valuable data sources, the case numbers for some of the regression models on the East German samples were rather small, prohibited more detailed models, and hampered the comparison of effects across subsamples as outlined in the discussion of the regression on early home leaving above.

Second, the observed convergence of the main family structure effect in East and West Germany is based on a comparison of only two cohorts one of which experienced the transition to adulthood in the exceptional historical period of the unification. Particularly for the respective East German cohort family structure effects might be obscured by this exogenous shock. However, theoretical considerations and previous research on older East German cohorts suggest that the weaker family structure effect for children who have been socialized in the GDR is not just a result of a period effect but due to the contextual

differences between East and West Germany. With respect to the future development, a recent study of Lois (2014) suggests a continuation of the convergence trend. Analyzing the third pairfam-cohort that was born in the early 1990s this study examined family structure effects on early home leaving and cohabitation. Lois (2014) does not explicitly compare East and West Germany but includes an East/West-dummy in her models and does not mention a context specific variation of the family structure effects.

Another limitation refers to the measures of the mechanisms. The availability of suitable indicators was limited by the questionnaire design and the retrospective approach of the present study. Prospective measures of family income and attitudes toward family formation, for instance, would have allowed for a more detailed account of the mechanisms. This, however, would require a long running panel study with an explicit focus on family processes. So far, there is no such study in Germany and pairfam has just started to provide a remedy to this shortcoming. Given this restriction, which is common in US studies as well, the analyses should be considered "descriptive regressions" (Ginther & Pollak, 2004) that are a subject to endogeneity problems that preclude strict causal inferences.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the present study gives an explorative overview of family structure effects in East and West Germany and draws attention to context specific regularities and differences. On the one hand, the results suggest that the effects of childhood living arrangements on early family formation are a rather ubiquitous phenomenon in modern societies. Despite the marked socio-environmental differences between East and West Germany, the overall effect of childhood family structure was more similar than expected. In line with research from other countries, children from nontraditional family structures experience important demographic transitions faster than children who have been continuously raised by both biological parents.

At the same time, however, this study indicates that context matters. In spite of the observed convergence tendencies, there are still notable differences in effect sizes and in the way in which the family structure effects operate in the two parts of Germany. The most important finding in this regard, is the absence of the association between family structure and educational attainment in East Germany. This indicates that living in an alternative family structure does not necessarily involve educational disadvantages. In view of the increasing interest in the link between family structure, demographic behavior, and the reproduction of social inequality (Carlson & England, 2011; Conger et al., 2010; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008), this a noteworthy finding that warrants further research. It gives rise to the question under which conditions alternative family structure and early family formation go along with socioeconomic disadvantages. Accordingly, future research should not only compare if the size of family structure effects varies by context but also if the socioeconomic consequences of these effects differ in various socio-cultural environments.

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Table 1 – Cut-off ages for early demographic transitions – first quartile of survivor function

	West Germany				East Germany			
	1971-1973		1981-1983		1971-1973		1981-1983	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Leaving Home	18.7	19.8	18.7	20.1	17.9	18.5	17.5	18.6
Cohabitation	20.3	23.0	20.3	22.7	18.9	21.3	19.0	21.3
Parenthood	25.1	28.3	24.8	29.4	21.5	25.7	23.1	27.3

Table 2 – Descriptive statistics on childhood family structure

	West		East	
	1971	1981	1971	1981
Ever in alternative family (up to age 14) [a]	0.10	0.14	0.12	0.16
N	*1242*	*1031*	*360*	*393*
Ever in alternative family (up to age 18)	0.15	0.19	0.21	0.26
N	*1242*	*1031*	*661*	*709*
Ever in alternative family [a]				
age 0-5	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.10
age 6-10	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.13
age 11-14	0.10	0.14	0.12	0.16
age 15-18	0.15	0.19	0.17	0.23
N	*1242*	*1031*	*360*	*393*
Number of transitions experienced (up to age 14) [a]	0.11 (0.40)	0.16 (0.47)	0.14 (0.43)	0.19 (0.56)
N	1242	1031	360	393
Number of transitions experienced (up to age 18) [a]	0.19 (0.52)	0.26 (0.63)	0.27 (0.61)	0.37 (0.80)
N	*1242*	*1031*	*661*	*709*
Proportion of childhood years (up to age 14) lived with… [a]				
both parents	0.94 (0.20)	0.93 (0.21)	0.94 (0.21)	0.90 (0.26)
single parent	0.03 (0.13)	0.03 (0.13)	0.03 (0.12)	0.05 (0.17)
parent & partner	0.02 (0.12)	0.03 (0.14)	0.03 (0.15)	0.05 (0.17)
someone else	0.01 (0.08)	0.00 (0.04)	0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.06)
N	*1242*	*1031*	*360*	*393*
Proportion of childhood years (up to age 18) lived with… [a]				
both parents	0.92 (0.22)	0.91 (0.23)	0.92 (0.22)	0.88 (0.28)
single parent	0.04 (0.14)	0.04 (0.14)	0.03 (0.13)	0.05 (0.17)
parent & partner	0.03 (0.13)	0.04 (0.15)	0.04 (0.16)	0.05 (0.18)
someone else	0.01 (0.09)	0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.07)
N	*1242*	*1031*	*360*	*393*

Note: Table presents means and standard errors (in brackets); [a]Based on pairfam data only; DemoDiff did not allow detailed reconstruction of childhood living arrangements

Table 3 – Descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis

	West		East	
	1971	1981	1971	1981
Early home leaving				
Intact family	0.19	0.17	0.20	0.18
Alternative family structure	0.28	0.44	0.23	0.33
Total	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.21
Early cohabitation				
Intact family	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.17
Alternative family structure	0.34	0.32	0.29	0.30
Total	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20
Early parenthood				
Intact family	0.19	0.17	0.20	0.19
Alternative family structure	0.29	0.29	0.19	0.24
Total	0.21	0.19	0.20	0.20
Gender (female)				
Intact family	0.54	0.52	0.49	0.51
Alternative family structure	0.63	0.52	0.56	0.65
Total	0.55	0.52	0.50	0.55
Mother's age at birth				
Intact family	27.30 (5.83)	27.13 (4.59)	24.95 (5.40)	24.74 (4.73)
Alternative family structure	25.58 (5.61)	25.63 (4.91)	22.96 (4.26)	23.27 (3.94)
Total	27.04 (5.82)	26.84 (4.68)	24.53 (5.24)	24.36 (4.58)
Number of siblings				
Intact family	1.60 (1.29)	1.39 (1.01)	1.28 (1.24)	1.23 (1.08)
Alternative family structure	1.36 (1.52)	1.18 (1.09)	1.04 (1.33)	0.93 (1.06)
Total	1.56 (1.33)	1.35 (1.03)	1.23 (1.26)	1.16 (1.08)
Number of step siblings				
Intact family	0.20 (0.72)	0.22 (0.82)	0.27 (0.80)	0.25 (0.71)
Alternative family structure	1.06 (1.63)	1.19 (1.48)	1.00 (1.33)	0.97 (1.22)
Total	0.33 (0.97)	0.40 (1.05)	0.42 (0.98)	0.43 (0.93)
Educational attainment: Abitur (or equivalent)				
Intact family	0.48	0.56	0.26	0.43
Alternative family structure	0.36	0.38	0.24	0.45
Total	0.46	0.52	0.25	0.44
Assessment of own childhood (0 = very satisfied; 10 = very dissatisfied)				
Intact family	1.90 (1.70)	1.51 (1.39)	1.63 (1.64)	1.64 (1.59)
Alternative family structure	3.12 (2.13)	2.80 (2.20)	2.42 (2.07)	2.88 (2.34)
Total	2.09 (1.83)	1.76 (1.65)	1.80 (1.77)	1.96 (1.89)

Note: Table presents means and standard errors (in brackets)

Table 4a – Baseline logit models for early home leaving[a]

	West		East	
Childhood Living Arrangements	1971	1981	1971	1981
Ever in alternative family (up to age 14)	1.66* (0.35)	3.81*** (0.73)	1.18 (0.46)	2.20** (0.67)
Constant	.24** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.03)
N	1242	1031	360	393
$\chi 2$ (df)	5.39 (1)	45.53 (1)	0.18 (1)	6.44 (1)
BIC	1.74	-38.59	5.70	-0.47
Number of transitions experienced (up to age 14)	1.55** (0.24)	2.34*** (0.34)	0.90 (0.29)	1.84** (0.36)
Constant	.24** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.26*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.03)
N	1242	1031	360	393
χ^2 (df)	7.66 (1)	34.80 (1)	0.12 (1)	9.65 (1)
BIC	-0.54	-27.86	5.76	-3.68
Ever in alternative family				
age 0-5	0.47 (0.22)	1.04 (0.43)	0.31 (0.26)	0.53 (0.32)
age 6-10	1.93 (1.03)	0.97 (0.40)	2.30 (1.97)	3.70 (3.47)
age 11-14	1.51 (0.60)	3.84*** (1.17)	1.12 (0.75)	1.11 (0.89)
Constant	.24** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.25*** (0.03)	0.23*** (0.03)
N	1242	1031	360	393
χ^2 (df)	9.01 (3)	45.54 (3)	2.71 (3)	9.61 (3)
BIC	12.37	-24.73	14.95	8.31
Proportion of childhood years lived with… (ref.: lived all years with both parents)[b]				
single parent	1.19 (0.62)	3.46* (1.80)	0.57 (0.71)	1.82 (1.20)
parent & parent's partner	2.73* (1.37)	12.11*** (5.96)	1.82 (1.45)	3.09+ (2.01)
Constant	.24** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.25*** (0.03)	0.24*** (0.03)
N	1242	1031	360	393
χ^2 (df)	5.09 (3)	36.51 (3)	0.68 (3)	5.76 (3)
BIC	16.28	-15.69	16.97	12.16

Note: Odds Ratios and standard errors (in brackets) are shown; [a]Based on pairfam data only; DemoDiff did not allow detailed reconstruction of childhood living arrangements; [b]model controlled for years in other family structures; *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.10

Table 4b – Baseline logit models for early cohabitation

	West		East	
Childhood Living Arrangements	1971	1981	1971	1981
Ever in alternative family (up to age 18)	2.28***	2.20***	1.93**	2.20***
	(0.40)	(0.39)	(0.42)	(0.44)
Constant	0.22***	0.21***	0.21***	0.20***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
N	1242	1031	661	709
$\chi 2$ (df)	21.41 (1)	18.51 (1)	8.68 (1)	15.27 (1)
BIC	-14.29	-11.57	-2.18	-8.71
Number of transitions experienced (up to age 18)	1.50***	1.45***	1.50**	1.50***
	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.21)	(0.16)
Constant	0.24***	0.23***	0.22***	0.21***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
N	1242	1031	661	709
χ^2 (df)	11.20 (1)	11.22 (1)	8.06 (1)	14.71 (1)
BIC	-4.08	-4.28	-1.56	-8.15
Ever in alternative family[a]				
age 0-5	1.37	0.87	0.83	2.00
	(0.65)	(0.41)	(0.65)	(1.27)
age 6-10	0.83	0.88	1.16	1.33
	(0.46)	(0.41)	(1.00)	(1.30)
age 11-14	0.57	0.49+	0.22+	0.37
	(0.26)	(0.21)	(0.18)	(0.32)
age 15-18	3.32***	3.97***	6.26***	3.20**
	(0.88)	(1.13)	(2.97)	(1.28)
Constant	0.22***	0.21***	0.20***	0.21***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
N	1242	1031	360	393
χ^2 (df)	25.98 (4)	25.68 (4)	14.73 (4)	15.04 (4)
BIC	2.52	2.08	8.81	-8.15
Proportion of childhood years lived with… (ref.: lived all years with both parents)[a b]				
single parent	1.53	1.27	0.26	2.51
	(0.71)	(0.68)	(0.37)	(1.58)
parent & parent's partner	3.17*	2.01	2.58	2.18
	(1.49)	(0.95)	(1.88)	(1.36)
Constant	0.24***	0.23***	0.22***	0.22***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
N	1242	1031	360	393
χ^2 (df)	11.08 (3)	13.64 (3)	5.25 (3)	15.25 (3)
BIC	10.29	7.17	12.41	2.67

Note: Odds Ratios and standard errors (in brackets) are shown; [a]Based on pairfam data only; DemoDiff did not allow detailed reconstruction of childhood living arrangements; [b]model controlled for years in other family structures; *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.10

Table 4c – Baseline logit models for early parenthood

	West		East	
Childhood Living Arrangements	1971	1981	1971	1981
Ever in alternative family (up to age 18)	1.71**	2.00***	0.94	1.35
	(0.30)	(0.37)	(0.22)	(0.28)
Constant	0.24***	0.20***	0.26***	0.23***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
N	1242	1031	661	709
$\chi 2$ (df)	8.63 (1)	13.58 (1)	0.08 (1)	2.11 (1)
BIC	-1.51	-6.65	6.42	4.46
Number of transitions experienced (up to age 18)	1.45**	1.37**	0.95	1.23*
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.13)
Constant	0.24***	0.21***	0.26***	0.23***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
N	1242	1031	661	709
χ^2 (df)	9.32 (1)	7.52 (1)	0.10 (1)	3.70 (1)
BIC	-2.19	-0.58	6.39	2.86
Ever in alternative family[a]				
age 0-5	2.43+	0.70	0.52	0.76
	(1.23)	(0.32)	(0.42)	(0.47)
age 6-10	0.43	0.90	0.59	4.92
	(0.25)	(0.40)	(0.47)	(5.78)
age 11-14	1.13	1.32	1.53	0.50
	(0.52)	(0.57)	(1.11)	(0.58)
age 15-18	1.80*	1.90*	1.34	0.71
	(0.51)	(0.60)	(0.69)	(0.34)
Constant	0.23***	0.20***	0.27***	0.31***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)
N	1242	1031	360	393
χ^2 (df)	12.94 (4)	15.12 (4)	2.26 (4)	3.59 (4)
BIC	15.56	12.63	21.29	20.30
Proportion of childhood years lived with… (ref.: lived all years with both parents)[a b]				
single parent	1.73	1.93	2.11	1.91
	(0.78)	(0.99)	(1.81)	(1.20)
parent & parent's partner	2.84*	2.15	0.52	0.79
	(1.34)	(1.02)	(0.48)	(0.55)
Constant	0.24***	0.21***	0.28***	0.30***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)
N	1242	1031	360	393
χ^2 (df)	7.50 (3)	11.69 (3)	1.18 (3)	1.86 (3)
BIC	13.87	9.12	16.48	16.06

Note: Odds Ratios and standard errors (in brackets) are shown; [a]Based on pairfam data only; DemoDiff did not allow detailed reconstruction of childhood living arrangements; [b]model controlled for years in other family structures; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$

Table 5a – Extended logit models for early home leaving[a]

	West								East							
	1971 (N = 1242)				1981 (N = 1031)				1971 (N = 360)				1981 (N = 393)			
Ever in alternative family (up to age 14)	1.66* (0.35)	1.20 (028)	1.17 (0.27)	1.04 (0.25)	3.81*** (0.73)	3.34*** (0.71)	3.21*** (0.69)	2.77*** (0.61)	1.18 (0.46)	1.03 (0.42)	1.04 (0.43)	0.88 (0.38)	2.20** (0.67)	2.29* (0.79)	2.37* (0.83)	1.98+ (0.73)
Other family structure indicators																
Mother' age at birth		0.94*** (0.01)	0.95*** (0.01)	0.95*** (0.01)		0.94** (0.02)	0.96* (0.02)	0.97+ (0.02)		0.96 (0.03)	0.96 (0.03)	0.96 (0.03)		0.98 (0.03)	0.99 (0.03)	0.99 (0.03)
Number of siblings		1.11+ (0.06)	1.07 (0.06)	1.06 (0.06)		1.03 (0.08)	0.98 (0.08)	0.97 (0.08)		1.16 (0.13)	1.18 (0.13)	1.16 (0.13)		1.31* (0.14)	1.29* (0.14)	1.25* (0.14)
Number of Stepsiblings		1.27*** (0.09)	1.23** (0.08)	1.20*** (0.08)		1.09 (0.08)	1.06 (0.08)	1.02 (0.08)		1.16 (0.18)	1.16 (0.18)	1.11 (0.17)		1.13 (0.15)	1.10 (0.15)	1.08 (0.15)
Educational attainment: Abitur (or equivalent)			0.50*** (0.08)	0.51*** (0.08)			0.32*** (0.06)	0.33*** (0.06)			1.52 (0.44)	1.56 (0.45)			0.41** (0.12)	0.42** (0.12)
Assessment of own childhood				1.13** (0.04)				1.18*** (0.06)				1.15+ (0.09)				1.11 (0.08)
Constant	0.24*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.02)	0.27*** (0.04)	0.27*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.34*** (0.06)	0.34*** (0.06)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.18*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.22*** (0.05)	0.23*** (0.06)
χ^2 (df)	5.39 (1)	35.02 (4)	55.56 (5)	65.70 (6)	45.53 (1)	57.92 (4)	104.74 (5)	117.06 (6)	0.18 (1)	3.67 (4)	5.76 (5)	8.76 (6)	6.44 (1)	12.81 (4)	23.58 (5)	26.08 (6)
BIC	1.74	-6.53	-19.94	-22.96	-38.59	-30.17	-70.05	-75.43	5.7	19.87	23.67	26.56	-0.47	11.09	6.29	9.76
Predicted Probability																
Intact family	0.19	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.19
Alternative family structure	0.28	0.23	0.22	0.21	0.44	0.4	0.38	0.35	0.23	0.21	0.21	0.19	0.33	0.34	0.34	0.31
Delta	0.09* (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.27*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.05)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.18*** (0.04)	0.03 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.06)	0.15* (0.06)	0.15* (0.07)	0.15* (0.07)	0.12 (0.07)

Note: Odds Ratios and standard errors (in brackets) are shown; [a]Based on pairfam data only; DemoDiff did not allow detailed reconstruction of childhood living arrangements; *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.10

Table 5b – Extended logit models for early cohabitation

	West								East							
	1971 (N = 1242)				1981 (N = 1031)				1971 (N = 661)				1981 (N = 709)			
Ever in alternative family (up to age 18)	2.28*** (0.40)	1.84** (0.35)	1.75** (0.33)	1.57* (0.31)	2.20*** (0.39)	2.17*** (0.43)	2.02*** (0.40)	1.94** (0.40)	1.93** (0.42)	1.96** (0.46)	1.97** (0.46)	1.92** (0.46)	2.20*** (0.44)	2.06*** (0.45)	2.16*** (0.47)	1.92** (0.44)
Other family structure indicators																
Mother' age at birth		0.95*** (0.01)	0.95*** (0.01)	0.96*** (0.01)		0.93*** (0.02)	0.94*** (0.02)	0.94*** (0.02)		0.99 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)		0.97 (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)
Number of siblings		1.25*** (0.07)	1.19** (0.07)	1.19** (0.07)		1.12 (0.08)	1.09 (0.08)	1.09 (0.08)		1.12 (0.08)	1.10 (0.08)	1.10 (0.08)		1.05 (0.09)	1.01 (0.09)	0.99 (0.09)
Number of Stepsiblings		1.24** (0.08)	1.21** (0.08)	1.18* (0.08)		0.94 (0.08)	0.92 (0.08)	0.92 (0.08)		0.98 (0.10)	0.97 (0.10)	0.96 (0.10)		1.05 (0.11)	1.03 (0.11)	1.01 (0.11)
Educational attainment: Abitur (or equivalent)			0.44*** (0.07)	0.45*** (0.07)			0.51*** (0.08)	0.51*** (0.09)			0.65+ (0.16)	0.66+ (0.16)			0.43*** (0.09)	0.44*** (0.09)
Assessment of own childhood				1.11** (0.04)				1.04 (0.05)				1.05 (0.06)				1.10+ (0.06)
Constant	0.22*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.03)	0.22*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.03)	0.26*** (0.04)	0.26*** (0.04)	0.21*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.27*** (0.05)	0.28*** (0.05)
χ^2 (df)	21.41 (1)	54.39 (4)	82.47 (5)	89.58 (6)	18.51 (1)	39.49 (4)	56.70 (5)	57.30 (6)	8.68 (1)	10.94 (4)	14.16 (5)	15.02 (6)	15.27 (1)	18.01 (4)	35.94 (5)	39.72 (6)
BIC	-14.29	-25.89	-46.84	-46.83	-11.57	-11.74	-22.01	-15.67	-2.18	15.03	18.31	23.94	-8.71	8.25	-3.12	-0.33
Predicted Probability																
Intact family	0.18	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17
Alternative family structure	0.34	0.29	0.28	0.27	0.32	0.31	0.3	0.29	0.29	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	0.28
Delta	0.15*** (0.04)	0.11*** (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)	0.07* (0.03)	0.14*** (0.04)	0.14*** (0.04)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.11*** (0.04)	0.12** (0.04)	0.12** (0.05)	0.12** (0.04)	0.11** (0.05)	0.14*** (0.04)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)

Note: Odds Ratios and standard errors (in brackets) are shown; *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.10

Table 5c – Extended logit models for early parenthood

	West								East							
	1971 (N = 1242)				1981 (N = 1031)				1971 (N = 661)				1981 (N = 709)			
Ever in alternative family (up to age 18)	1.71** (0.30)	1.29 (0.25)	1.22 (0.24)	1.15 (0.23)	2.00*** (0.37)	1.74** (0.36)	1.56* (0.33)	1.42 (0.31)	0.94 (0.22)	0.85 (0.22)	0.86 (0.22)	0.75 (0.20)	1.35 (0.28)	1.26 (0.29)	1.33 (0.31)	1.12 (0.28)
Other family structure indicators																
Mother' age at birth		0.95*** (0.01)	0.96** (0.01)	0.96** (0.01)		0.89*** (0.02)	0.91*** (0.02)	0.91*** (0.02)		0.97 (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)	0.98 (0.02)		0.94** (0.02)	0.95* (0.02)	0.96* (0.02)
Number of siblings		1.23*** (0.07)	1.17** (0.06)	1.16** (0.06)		1.24** (0.10)	1.21* (0.09)	1.20* (0.09)		1.32*** (0.10)	1.29*** (0.09)	1.27** (0.09)		1.30** (0.11)	1.23* (0.10)	1.20* (0.10)
Number of Stepsiblings		1.30*** (0.09)	1.27*** (0.09)	1.25** (0.09)		1.03 (0.08)	1.01 (0.08)	0.99 (0.08)		1.14 (0.11)	1.12 (0.11)	1.08 (0.11)		1.11 (0.12)	1.07 (0.12)	1.04 (0.12)
Educational attainment: Abitur (or equivalent)			0.42*** (0.07)	0.42*** (0.07)			0.29*** (0.05)	0.29*** (0.05)			0.43** (0.12)	0.45** (0.12)			0.22*** (0.05)	0.23*** (0.06)
Assessment of own childhood				1.06 (0.04)				1.09+ (0.05)				1.20*** (0.06)				1.14* (0.06)
Constant	0.24*** (0.02)	0.16*** (0.02)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.02)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.26*** (0.04)	0.26*** (0.03)	0.17*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.28*** (0.05)	0.30*** (0.05)
χ^2 (df)	8.63 (1)	43.08 (4)	75.88 (5)	77.97 (6)	13.58 (1)	60.93 (4)	111.61 (5)	114.45 (6)	0.08 (1)	14.95 (4)	25.70 (5)	37.09 (6)	2.11 (1)	18.43 (4)	66.69 (5)	72.89 (6)
BIC	-1.51	-14.58	-40.25	-35.22	-6.65	-33.18	-76.92	-72.82	6.42	11.03	6.77	1.87	4.46	7.83	-33.88	-33.5
Predicted Probability																
Intact family	0.19	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.2	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.2
Alternative family structure	0.29	0.24	0.23	0.22	0.29	0.26	0.24	0.23	0.19	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.24	0.23	0.23	0.21
Delta	0.10** (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.09* (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)

Note: Odds Ratios and standard errors (in brackets) are shown; *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.10