Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course

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Research Program and Research Projects

Sociological Research at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development Sociology as a scientific discipline is interested in the formation of institutions and in the social behavior and actions of individuals embedded in institutions. Within the specific context of an interdisciplinary institute for human development, sociology can make two kinds of contributions. First, it examines the roles which the family, the educational and training system, the occupational structure, and the welfare state play in the development and life courses of individuals. Second, it examines the way in which specific life-course patterns express and affect the distribution of life chances.

We share substantive topics, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches with the other Centers of the Institute. With the Center for Educational Research we share an interest in the conditions of attainment in education and training. We are also interested in both the individual and social consequences of differential educational attainment. The longitudinal surveys of the two Centers overlap in the life phase occurring at the end of schooling and early labor market experience. We are currently cooperating with the Center for Educational Research in the new version of the German Education Report. With the Center for Lifespan Psychology we share an interest in the full life course from birth to death, particularly the interplay between social environments and individual development. These common interests resulted in the joint Berlin Aging Study and joint research on psychological covariates of

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employment trajectories in East Germany during the unification process. With the Center for Adaptive Behavior and Cognition we share an interest in assumptions about rational behavior. Although our primary goal is to find and use appropriate individual-level assumptions in models of institutions, we also maintain an interest in the ways social structures shape and bound rationality.

Goals of the Research Program

The Center's research program is oriented toward answering **three sets of questions:**

(1) The first set of questions focuses on the relationships between the macrolevel structure of societies and patterns of the life course. In what manner and with which outcomes do institutions shape the patterns and distributions of individual life courses? We look at life courses as generated by social norms, by institutional configurations, and by opportunity structures, all of which vary across social groups as well as specific national and historical contexts. Life courses are a summary concept for the intertwined processes of residential migration, family history, education and training trajectories, employment, and occupational careers, as well as the temporal patterns of relationships to the social insurance systems. Therefore, with respect to institutions, we are primarily interested in schools and training institutions, the occupational structure and labor market, the family, and the welfare state. The relevant time dimension here is the historical time of socioeconomic change.

(2) The second set of questions focuses on the levels of individual and group action. How do individuals and families actively construct their lives? How do they experience their individual and collective life histories under the given conditions of their own prior biography, their immediate family and work environments, and the generational contexts of their peer birth cohorts? Here we are primarily interested in the proximate influences of the mesolevel of informal groups, formal organizations, and local opportunity structures, as well as microlevel endogenous processes of the individual life course. The relevant time dimensions here are chronological age and the individual aging process, the duration of membership in families, households, and firms, as well as the time dimension of cohort and generational succession.

(3) The third set of questions focuses on feedback processes from the microlevel of individual action to the macrolevel of structural and institutional constraints. How do changes in life-course patterns shape distributional and aggregative features of social structure and institutional arrangements? What are the implications of such processes for social policies? Irrespective of how they arise, life-course patterns are powerful contexts for individual and group action. Life courses form the qualitative and quantitative basis for macrosocial change and for collective political decision-making. Accordingly, the empirical and descriptive social accounting of life-course patterns is an important research task.

We use **four perspectives** in investigating life courses. **First,** we see individual life courses as part and product of social and historical processes operating on different levels. Individual life courses are linked to the life courses of other persons (parents, partners, children, colleagues, and friends) and are embedded in the dynamics of small groups, especially the family. But life courses are also subject to the influences of social organization and the macroinstitutions of society, including

their development over time. **Second,** the life course is a multidimensional process. On the one hand, it unfolds in the different but mutually related life domains (e.g., family cycle and working life); on the other hand, it is dependent on intraindividual processes of organic and psychological development. **Third,** the life course is a self-referential process. The individual behaves and acts self-reflectively on the basis of past experiences and resources, making the life course to some extent an endogenous causal process. This is also partially true for the collective life history of birth cohorts. The past and initial conditions and characteristics of a cohort impact both on their later collective life history (e.g., in the relationship between working lives and life in old age) and on the adjacent cohorts. The different age groups live together in the same time period, but they bring to the present their distinctive past histories. **Fourth,** through the manner in which persons shape their own life courses, they reproduce and transform the social structure. This can happen via "simple" processes of aggregation or in the form of institutional feedback.

Research Areas

The Center's research program is currently organized into the following areas:

Education, Training, and Employment

Research Area 1

The transition between education, training, and employment is a major topic of investigation in the Center. This life phase is crucial for both intergenerational status allocation and the later life history. In reconstructing the collective transition experiences of successive cohorts, we gain empirical insights in the changing institutional linkages between the school and training systems, on the one hand, and between the labor market and the occupational structure, on the other. Moreover, we can examine controversial hypotheses about the lengthening and fragmentation of this transition period and about the increasing polarization of the opportunities for skill acquisition and early occupational careers. Other topics of research interest include the following: What are the consequences of educational expansion for working lives? Is there a crisis in the dual system of vocational training and how can this be accounted for? How widespread and serious are problems of mismatch between acquired and required skills in the labor market? Our guiding hypothesis in this research area is that despite massive distributional shifts and intense pressure for labor market flexibilization, the close linkage between education, training, and occupation persists.

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Büchel, F. (1998). *Zuviel gelernt? Ausbildungsinadäquate Erwerbstätigkeit in Deutschland.* Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann (288 p.).

Konietzka, D. (1999). *Ausbildung und Beruf. Die Geburtsjahrgänge 1919–1961 auf dem Weg von der Schule in das Erwerbsleben.* Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag (Studien zur Sozialwissenschaft, No. 204) (355 p.).

Mayer, K. U., & **Konietzka, D.** (1998). Formation professionnelle et débuts de carrière: Crise ou stabilité du modèle allemand? *Revue française de sociologie, XXXIX-2,* 269–304.

Research Area 2 Life Courses in the Transformation of Former Socialist Societies

The opening of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany not only provided a major challenge for the social sciences to understand and guide this transition, it also provided unique opportunities for theory-guided research. On the one hand, the transformation allowed the functioning and nonviability of the former socialist society to be examined. On the other hand, it provided ample opportunities for the investigation of life courses under the impact of sudden dramatic institutional change. We have collected selected cohort/life-course data on both the German Democratic Republic and the transformation process. In addition, we have intensified research cooperation with Polish social scientists for the purposes of comparative study. Our current investigations concentrate on the micromechanisms of individual adjustment, adaptation in the domains of family and work, the life-course consequences of institutional transfer from West to East Germany, and individual-level processes in the transformation of the system of social stratification and class. Our studies have revealed some rather surprising findings: Despite a rapid increase in labor market mobility and considerable breaks in individual careers, the pattern of social stratification has remained very stable.

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Mayer, K. U., Diewald, M., & **Solga, H.** (1999). Transitions to post-communism in East Germany: Worklife mobility of women and men between 1989 and 1993. *Acta Sociologica, 42,* 35–53.

Solga, H., Diewald, M., & **Goedicke, A.** (2000). Arbeitsmarktmobilität und die Umstrukturierung des ostdeutschen Beschäftigungssystems. *Mitteilungen aus der Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung, 33,* 242–260.

Research Area 3 Welfare State, Life Courses, and Social Inequalities

In this research area we focus on conceptual and empirical studies on the impact of various national institutional configurations on life-course outcomes. The macroinstitutions of the modern welfare state and the specific provisions and rules of the social insurance systems are among the major determining factors in the life course and in the distribution of life chances. The role of the welfare state may prove to be especially important in current societal adaptations to global competition and decreasing public finances. Microanalytic and cross-national studies are required to unravel the mechanisms and consequences of different welfare state regimes and policies. Our guiding hypothesis for Germany holds that life courses are still relatively protected from pressures for flexibility, and that stability and continuity prevail.

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Research Area 4

Life-Course Research and Analysis: Theory, Methods, and Synthesis

This research area focuses on overarching topics and tasks: the provision of the empirical data base for our studies, methodological problems of measurement, analysis, and modeling, issues of general theory, and empirical work on the full set of cohort studies.

The Center's research program is empirically based on a series of six retrospective surveys. These surveys rely on population probability samples and were conducted from the early 1980s up to the present. They now comprise quantified life histories of 5,591 West German women and men (the cohorts born in 1919–21, 1929–31, 1939–41, 1949–51, 1954–56, and 1959–61) and 2,923 East German men and women (the cohorts born in 1929–31, 1939–41, 1951–53, 1959–61, and 1971). Moreover, fieldwork has been concluded and data editing is in progress for an additional 2,911 women and men born in West Germany in 1964 and 1971. Detailed life histories were also obtained for the 516 participants of the Berlin Aging Study, who were born between 1887 and 1922. All of these surveys are retrospective studies. We also carried out a panel study in 1996/97, re-interviewing our East German respondents from 1991/92. Data editing, the development and maintenance of the data banks, and data documentation form an important part of our ongoing research work. In the coming years our efforts will concentrate on establishing a more user-friendly data bank containing all of these cohort studies and putting the data documentation into an electronic format.

The Research Center's own data sets are complemented with other German and non-German longitudinal studies, including the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), the Microcensus, the 1% sample of the Employment Register, the BIBB/IAB Employment Survey, and the British Household Panel Study. Our major methodological tools consist of dynamic models of discrete change in continuous time. Ongoing tasks include maintaining expertise and updating statistical software in this area, as well as improving practices of exploratory data analysis and representation.

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Mayer, K. U. (2000). Promises fulfilled? A review of 20 years of life course research. *Archives Européennes de Sociologie, XLI,2,* 259–282.

Current Research Projects and Research Associates of the Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course

Research Area 1
Education, Training, and Employment

Education, Training, and Occupation: Life Courses of the 1964 and 1971 Birth Cohorts in West Germany (MPI/IAB)—Cooperative Project with the German Institute for Labor Market Research	Michael Corsten, *Steffen Hillmert*, Karl Ulrich Mayer, Antje Mertens, Heike Trappe; Stefan Bender (IAB), Hans Dietrich (IAB)
• **Dissertation Project** Patchwork or Career? Causes and Consequences of Multiple Educational Episodes	Marita Jacob
• **Dissertation Project** The German Apprenticeship System in the 1990s and Its Effects on Individual Employment Chances	Holger Seibert
Education and Mismatch in the Labor Market	Felix Büchel
• **Dissertation Project** School Performance, Occupational Choice, and Labor Market Outcomes	Matthias Pollmann-Schult
Children in the Family Division of Labor	Helga Zeiher

Research Area 2
East German Life Courses after Unification (LV-Ost)

Transformation of the East German Labor Market	Anne Goedicke
• **Dissertation Project** Working Lives in Family Contexts	Anke Höhne
Transformation Processes in Poland and East Germany	*Anne Goedicke*, Bogdan Mach, Karl Ulrich Mayer
Bourgeois and Non-Bourgeois Intelligentsia in the German Democratic Republic: A Study of Biographical Upheaval	Erika M. Hoerning

Research Area 3
Welfare State, Life Courses, and Social Inequalities

Political Economy and the Life Course in Advanced Societies (POLIS)	Fran McGinnity, *Steffen Hillmert*, Karl Ulrich Mayer
• **Dissertation Project** Leaving Home In Germany and Italy	Alessandra Rusconi
Education Report: Higher Education	Karl Ulrich Mayer
Higher Education in Germany and the US	Gero Lenhardt

Research Area 4
Life-Course Research and Analysis: Theory, Methods, and Synthesis

Post-War Social Development as a History of Cohorts	Karl Ulrich Mayer
International Encyclopedia for the Social and Behavioral Sciences (Section on Biographies)—Editorial Project	Karl Ulrich Mayer
• **Dissertation Project** Psychology of Autobiographical Memory and the Reliability of Retrospective Measurements	Maike Reimer

Projects Concluded in 1998-2001

Occupations as Socialization Processes	Michael Corsten, DFG-Project
Changes of the Occupational Structure and Work Life Histories in East Germany	Sylvia Zühlke, Dissertation Project
Organizational Contexts of Occupational Careers in East Germany after 1989	Anne Goedicke, Dissertation Project
Bridges and Traps: Labor Market Entry of Young East Germans under System Transformation	Britta Matthes, Dissertation Project
The Integration of the West and East Berlin Police Force	Fabien Jobard, Postdoctoral Project
Long-Term Trends in Social Mobility in Comparative Perspective	Ineke Maas, HISMA-Project
Education, Training, and Transition into the Labor Market: Life Courses and Institutional Change in Britain and Germany	Steffen Hillmert, Dissertation Project
Berlin Aging Study (BASE)—Sociology and Social Policy	Ineke Maas, Karl Ulrich Mayer
Social Participation in Old Age	Alexej Bukov, Dissertation Project
Social Inequality, Life Course, and Health at Advanced Ages	Thomas Lampert, Dissertation Project
Support and Illness in Old Age	Pascale Dorenlot, Postdoctoral Project

Education, Training, and Occupational Careers: Recent West German Experiences in an Historical and Cross-National Perspective

The research project *Education, Training, and Occupation: Life Courses of the 1964 and 1971 Birth Cohorts in West Germany* constitutes the latest part of the German Life History Study and focuses on the links between the West German education and employment systems during the 1980s and 1990s. Among the crucial factors shaping the life course during these two decades were educational expansion, occupational change, varying demand on the labor market, and demographic developments.

Including the new data (see text box below), our analyses can draw upon the life-course data of seven West German birth cohorts that enable us to describe the patterns of transition from general education to vocational or academic training and from training to employment. This is important because this transition process is central to inter-generational status allocation and to the later life history observed in our data. In reconstructing the collective transition experiences of successive cohorts, we gain empirical access to the historical development of educational and occupational patterns in Germany from the 1930s onwards.

In 1998 and 1999, we added new data to the German Life History Study by interviewing a sample of 2,911 residents of West Germany born in 1964 and 1971. As a result, the work of the last two years has been mainly concerned with the process of thorough data checking and editing. We have also drawn up a conceptual framework taking up issues that have attracted much attention in public and academic debate (cf. Corsten & Hillmert, 2000). Compared to earlier stages of the German Life History Study, the project has a stronger focus on the details of vocational training and occupational careers. The research has been carried out in collaboration with the Institute of Employment Research (IAB) in Nuremberg.

Special methods for enhancing data quality have been introduced to the data collection. For example, computer-aided telephone interviewing was combined with instant consistency checking of major biographical information. The raw data then underwent detailed checking and a process of constantly monitored, rule-based correction; if necessary, respondents were re-interviewed by members of the research group. We intend to combine the close monitoring of this process with our methodological studies.

The future status of work and qualifications

Labor Market Entry—What Are Scenarios and What Are Facts?

In recent sociological discussions over the future status of work and qualifications a popular argument goes that full-time employment has lost its role as a dominant (and realistic) goal in society—standardized forms of employment no longer play a dominant role in individual life courses; careers have become highly individualized and increasingly independent of formal qualifications.

There is no consensus at all as to whether this reflects a fundamental increase in risks for individuals or whether it constitutes an increase in individual freedom. In any case, empirical accounts of these trends are rare to be found. While this also applies to macrosociological analyses, it is particularly true of hypotheses referring to the microlevel.

In response to these contemporary debates on education and employment, we need to acknowledge empirical observations, such as massive distributional shifts, intense pressure for labor market liberalization, and, at the same time, continuing educational expansion even in the youngest cohort, that is, during the 1990s. However, our **guiding hypothesis** in this research area is that these recent developments do not necessarily contradict the persistence of a close link between education/training and occupational careers. On the contrary, our assumption is that institutionalized training forms, especially the dual system of vocational training, and educational qualifications are still the key structures in this transition process. This hypothesis is supported by empirical evidence from our earlier research.

Our collection of life-history studies represents a **unique source of information,** enabling us to shed more light on these issues. Major advantages include the ability to make long-term historical comparisons (covering almost all of the 20th century), rich sequential data on various domains of life, and the great efforts that have been made to ensure their validity. Our basic assumption is that the concepts of the "institutionalization" and "social differentiation" of occupational careers can be investigated more closely from an historical perspective.

How Stable Have Major Institutions and Life Courses Been over the Past Decades?

In Germany, the majority of school-leavers pass through the vocational training system. Since the Second World War, this has increasingly become the standard path taken by young people. In his historical study on the development of the German system of vocational training, Konietzka (1999a) found strong evidence for the stability of both the institutional setting and the individual consequences of vocational training. He was able to show that there are still strong links between vocational training and the first job taken, as well as later career choices.

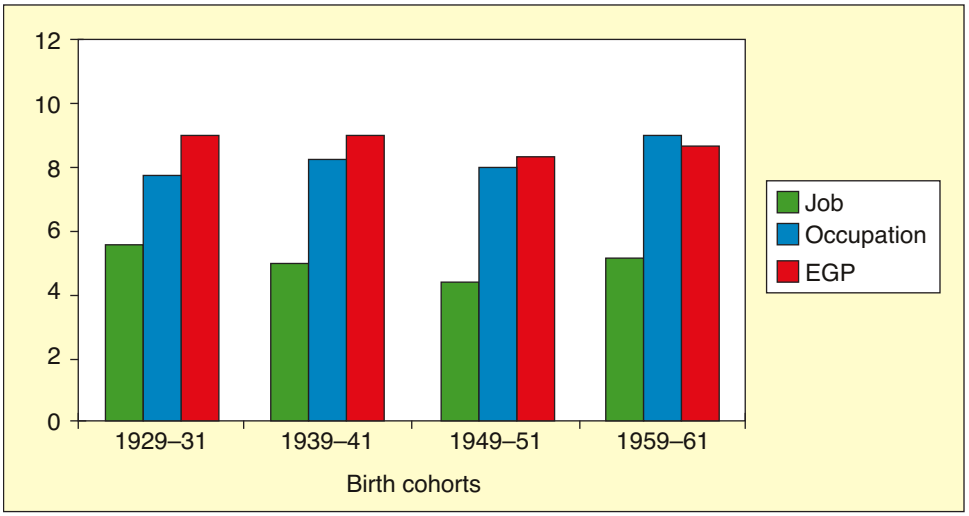
These linkages were reconstructed for five cohorts, including the younger ones born in 1954–56 and 1959–61. At least two significant results of this investigation deserve to be mentioned here. First, a lengthening of the transition phase from vocational training to the first occupational entries was found in the younger cohorts. This was balanced out by swifter upward mobility in the first phase of employment, however. Second, with respect to quality and content, 60% of those who completed vocational training subsequently worked in this occupational field, and those who stayed in the same occupation had a much better chance of stabilizing or improving their occupational status.

Vocational training has become a typical (if not crucial) element of the "normal career" in Germany, and the

proportion of those successfully completing their vocational training has increased across the birth cohorts under investigation—not least among women. At the same time, the proportion of those attaining qualifications in other educational forms in addition to vocational training has also increased. An interpretation of this somewhat paradoxical observation could be that vocational training is a necessary, but not always sufficient, qualification on the labor market. The first analyses with our new data suggest that these relationships have remained rather stable during the 1980s and 1990s (cf. Hillmert, in press-c).

It is this very stability in the patterns of labor market integration (cf. also the figure below) that raises further questions about the ability of the German institutional system to adapt to rapid economic change. Is the dual system of vocational training able to provide trainees with the qualifications they need for the frequently changing demands of the workplace? In this sense, the need for life-long learning has been a major issue over the past few years.

Dimensions of early careers in Germany–median durations, by birth cohort



The figure shows the median durations with the first employer, in the first occupation (ISCO68), and in the first social class (EGP 11) on the basis of Kaplan-Meier estimates (years) for the first stable job. Both the absolute level of mobility and relative differences between the dimensions have remained relatively stable over time. The different stability of jobs and occupations means that employees often stay in the same occupation when changing employers, that is, that the human capital they have acquired can be transferred.

Is There (Still) a "Normal" Life Course?

While it is often disputed that full-time employment will persist as the core element of the individual occupational career, the structure of the social security system impacts directly on the connection between employment and retirement in the life course. Will full-time employment continue to be the basic form of "social inclusion" in modern welfare states and, on a mesolevel, in modern organizations?

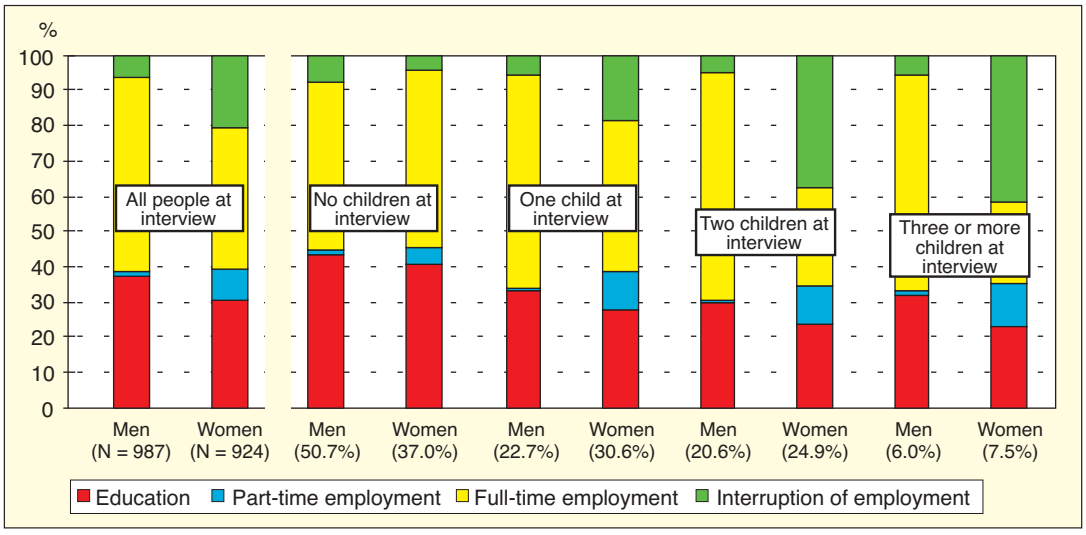
This project attempts to identify the extent to which the transitions from education to work still reflect the so-called "normal biography," with a well-defined sequence of events and stages.

As shown by previous analyses of West German life-course data (Mayer, 2001a), the full-time career was typical of the male life-course model, whereas part-time work has been an alternative for women in all birth cohorts. Is the "feminization" of occupational career patterns an expectable trend for the beginning of the new century? Will we be able to observe a change in the male/female distribution of career models and occupational chances in life?

In order to answer these questions we need to consider and account for the social context of educational and working careers, looking, for example, at the impact of career decisions on family formation and the effects of changes in family composition on educational careers. Trappe and Rosenfeld (1998) have looked at the reproduction of social inequalities between men and women in life-course data gathered in East and West Germany. Looking at various birth cohorts they have shown that male/female differences in income and social status can be attributed to different constellations of the family and that this is mediated by different institutional contexts. In recent works they have looked at occupational gender segregation in East and West Germany before and after unification.

Finally, educational expansion has produced "new" social groups, for example, new middle classes and new forms of upward mobility into the service sector. What have these changes implied for the structures of social inequality? Have the institutional mechanisms which led to inequality been weakened or enforced by educational expansion? These questions point to links with the issues addressed by the **Independent Research Group "Lack of Training: Employment and Life Chances of the Less Educated."**

Average duration of education, full- and part-time employment, and interruption of employment between the age of 15 and time of interview— FRG (birth cohorts 1954–56, 1959–61)



A dynamic view of social structures: "Life-time budgets" of men and women living in different family constellations (at time of interview).

How Do (Training) Institutions Function and How Do They Compare with Normative Standards?

Our ongoing research continues to pursue questions of institutional adaptation. In particular, we aim to evaluate recent institutional changes, individual consequences of the dual system of vocational training, and possible innovative forms of training and to assess the degree to which training institutions can support individual mobility as a means of adapting to structural occupational change.

When we endeavor to relate institutional structures to individual lives, we regard occupational careers not only in terms of qualifying young people for the labor market, but also from the perspective of learning and biographical development. Lifelong learning could be regarded as a temporal pattern of employment trajectories and careers. On the other hand, the acquisition and use of further qualifications in and after the initial phase of education and training is also an increasingly important aspect from a more cultural perspective. Solga and Trappe (2000) have discussed this new perspective with respect to the effects of the German dual vocational training system on the life course. Vocational training can be observed as a phase on three time axes: educational time, work time, and life time. On these levels, Solga and Trappe have identified ambivalent effects of changing educational patterns. The increasing variability of educational time and work time causes deviancies from the ideal model (in the dimensions of life and educational time) with serious consequences for young people's life planning and criteria of orientation. Nevertheless, the dual model of vocational training can still be regarded as providing an interval of "protected time" within the life course.

... and How Are Individuals Socialized within Them?

From this point of view it can be argued that the dual vocational training system serves as a specific institution of socialization. This aspect was further investigated in the project "Socialization Cultures in Occupational Education" (cf. Corsten, 2001).

Three different forms of training were distinguished: the dual system of occupational education in vocational schools and companies, exclusively school-based learning in training colleges, and forms of on-the-job training. The empirical focus was on occupational groups from the service sector. Cultures of socialization were analyzed in three dimensions: (1) qualification, defined in terms of different ways of mediating technical competencies, (2) discipline, defined in terms of different modes of mediation and normative orientations, and (3) the relationship between selection criteria and the support of trainees (and workers).

Conference
"The Future of Training and Work: Challenges for Vocational Training" (Jacobs Foundation Conference)
November 2000

Organizers:
Marlis Buchmann & Karl Ulrich Mayer, together with Michael Corsten

This project was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). The aim of the project was to describe how occupational fields of action which are institutionalized in certain forms of vocational training function in terms of socialization. In order to analyze the processes of occupational socialization in detail and from the trainees' biographical perspective, we chose an interpretative and ethnographic research design. We conducted expert interviews (including group discussions) with vocational teachers, leaders of occupational associations, and heads of company departments and working groups. We also conducted semi-structured biographical interviews with workers trained in five different occupations and held group discussions with classes of trainees.

We found that in each occupational group a specific socialization pattern was apparent in the process of selection/support, discipline, and mode of qualification. In the case of hairdressers, for example, we found a correlation between a selection process focusing on the expressive style of the applicant, a form of discipline based on traditional norm mediation, and a mode of qualification relying on pedagogically supplemented learning-by-doing. When look-

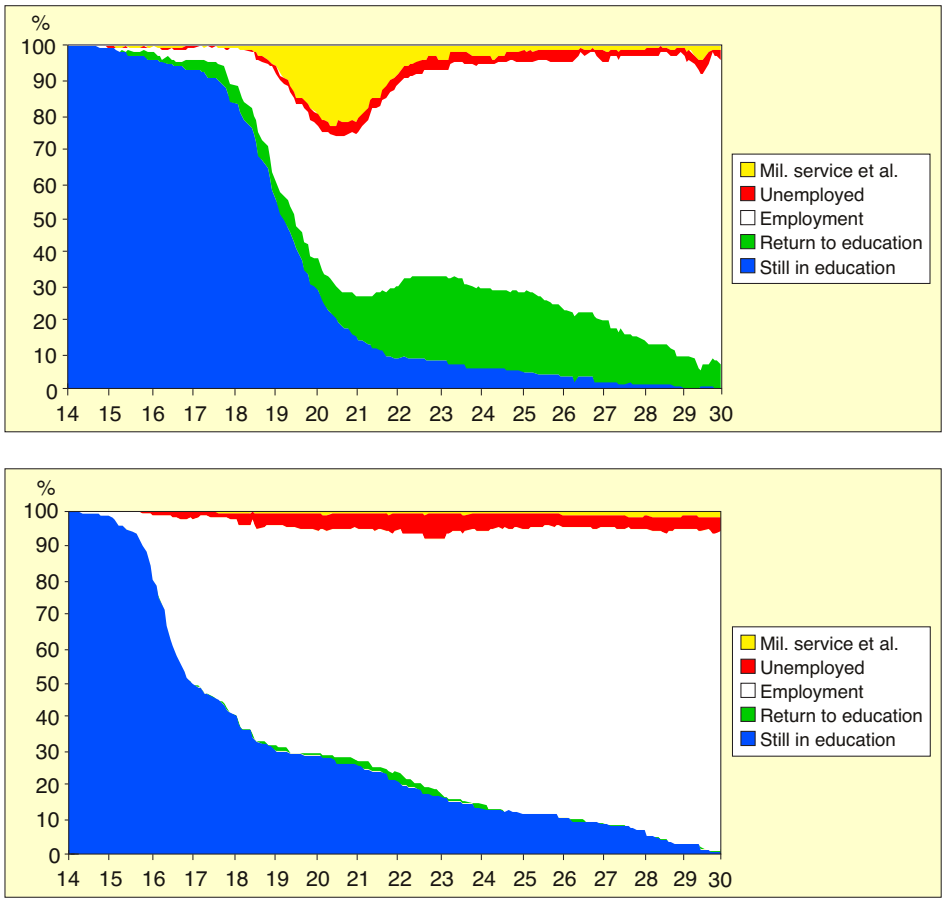
ing at the dimensions separately, East/West differences were shown to play an important role in the selection/support dimension of socialization experiences. On the discipline level, the specific characteristics of the health-care system were significant in the three groups of nurses, physiotherapists, and (to a lesser extent) beauticians. This was particularly apparent in the rigid performance and insistence on bureaucratic norms of teachers and instructors. Gender differences were found in the qualification dimension: Women often described difficulties in coping with discrepancies between theoretical and practical learning, whereas men gained more self-assurance from training situations in which they gained occupational responsibility as fully trained workers.

Are There Different "Political Economies of Life Courses"?

The political situation of post-war Germany is unique, and comparisons of the two parts of Germany have had a prominent position in the German Life History Study (Solga & Konietzka, 1999). We have now begun to look for further possible comparisons in order to extend our research into a broader international context. Here, we have benefited from discussions with the members of the *Political Economy and Life Courses in Advanced Societies* research network.

One part of the life-course project has been a comparison of the systems of **education and training in the United Kingdom and West Germany,** and their consequences for individual life courses (cf. Hillmert, 2001). Using a general model that distinguishes between a horizontal, a vertical, and a temporal dimension of the process of integration into the labor market, we have shown that the two national systems of formal institutions represent different modes of coordination between the educational system and the labor market. Further pursuing these di-

Employment status of young men (aged 14–30) in Germany (above) and Britain (below): 1960 birth cohorts

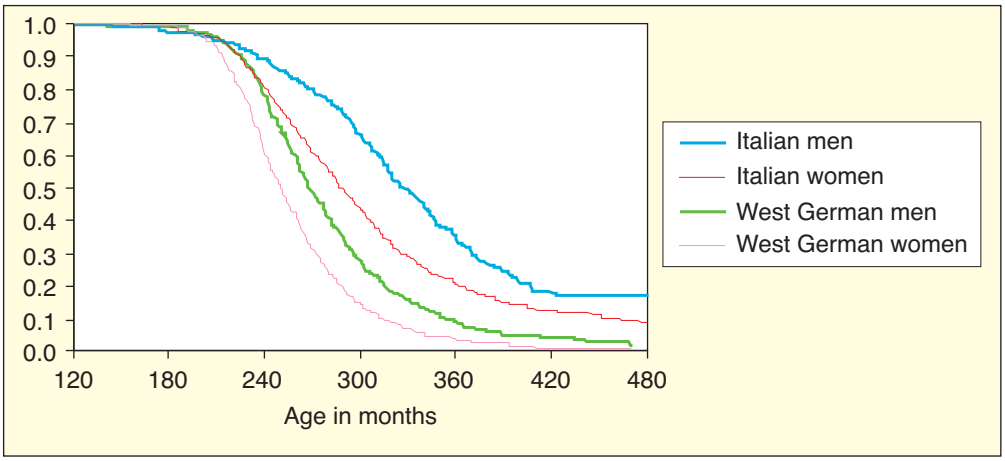


The main international differences include the longer duration of full-time education in Germany (including "returns" after short interruptions as well as the impact of compulsory military service) and higher rates of youth unemployment in the United Kingdom.

mensions in empirical terms, the main stages of research have been to describe the period of transition, to analyze the multidimensional stability of entry positions in early careers, and to assess the effects of formal qualifications on the quality of first jobs. The empirical results suggest that, in Britain, labor market entry is largely determined by the criteria of timing, the hierarchical grading of qualifications, and social status, whereas in Germany, occupational skills also play a major role. Historical research has helped to explain why this is so. Rapid institutional changes, especially in the United Kingdom during the 1980s, have led to a much higher degree of labor market liberalization. In turn, this has undermined collective efforts to establish common standards for vocational training. Overall, the analyses provide evidence for institutional path dependencies and their links to individual life courses in the realm of education and training.

Mertens (1999) compared patterns of **job stability in West Germany** with **the United States and the United Kingdom,** where the literature reports some evidence of slightly decreasing job stability. Using cross-sectional data and calendar information from the German Socio-Economic Panel 1984-1997, a decline in job stability which cannot fully be explained by the business cycle was indeed identified. The median elapsed tenure of male workers has declined from around 10 years to 8.5 years; the probability of short-term employment seems to have increased relatively steadily for both males and females; and the risk of redundancy has continued to rise, despite the fact that the economy experienced a post-unification boom before the subsequent recession. As "outsiders" are more likely to have difficulties finding stable jobs in rough times, separate analyses were carried out for those who had entered their jobs directly from unemployment or non-participation, and for workers who had entered the labor market having just completed their highest qualification. These groups were compared to the "insiders" who had switched from one job to another. While "insiders" were less likely to leave their new job, "outsiders" faced increasing risks of dismissal. It was also shown that the displacement of workers is likely to be the driving force behind this development.

Another "case study" within the life-course project has compared the process of **leaving home in Italy and Germany** (Rusconi, in press). Leaving



International and gender differences in the age at which children leave the parental home: "Survival curves" for Germany and Italy, indicating the proportion of those who have not yet left home.

home is considered to be an important event in the transition to adulthood, but in its interdependencies and consequences, it is also closely connected to educational and occupational "trajectories" and family decisions. The welfare states of Italy and Germany share common features: Although somewhat more accentuated in Italy, there is strong pressure in both countries for parents to remain financially responsible for their children, even when they enter young adulthood. In the first decades of the post-war period, the process of leaving home was rather similar in Italy and Germany. Now, however, the process has developed quite differently in the two countries. Young Italians seem to have adopted the strategy of living with their parents for a longer period of time and do not usually "leave the nest" until they get married. In contrast, young Germans become residentially independent at an earlier age and experience various forms of living arrangements. These developments suggest that explanations of international differences can only be found in a combination of macro- and microlevel analyses.

Can We Distinguish "Eras" of Dominant Life-Course Models? What Have Been the Long-Term Trends in Social Mobility?

In political economy, it is common to talk about different eras of economic development, work organization, and institutional regulation (the "Fordist" model probably being most prominent). The question arises whether this approach can be transferred to life-course research: Has there been an historical sequence of dominant life-course models and typical "life packages" of events that are expected to be achieved by a given time? The alternative would be that there has been only a very loose connection of rather continuous developments. In this respect, it will be particularly important to further link the life-history (cohort) information to data sources that reflect the macrosocial and macroeconomic situation in calendar time. From an international perspective, the question to be asked is whether other societies have developed in a similar way, or whether there has been variation and institutional path dependency in these developments.

Going back even further in history, another project has compared long-term trends in occupational and marital mobility in Western countries (Leeuwen et al., 1998). Against the background of relatively stable mobility patterns and small between-country differences after the Second World War, we ask whether trends were clearer and between-country differences larger during the 19th and early 20th centuries. International differences in general mobility rates and trends will be related to the timing and extent of industrialization, urbanization, educational expansion, and social policy. Differences in mobility chances within countries will be related to individual characteristics, such as occupation and literacy, and regional factors, like degree of urbanization and rates of geographical mobility. The main data sources for the project are church registers and censuses. Data sets on occupational mobility in 19th-century Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, England, Canada, and the United States have been collected and a network of mobility researchers from these countries (HISMA) has been created.

How Do We Ensure the Appropriate Analysis of Life Courses and How Do We Improve the Quality of Our Data?

The German Life History Study has always been associated with methodological advances, drawing especially on methods of event-history analysis. In the life-course analyses we have conducted over the past few years, we have

also made use of recent methodological innovations, for example, introducing Heckman-type econometric models that account for sample selection effects (cf. Engelhardt, 1999). Life history data essentially represent information about individual sequences of activity states, and various attempts have been made to use the full sequential information contained in the data. One possibility is Optimal-Matching Analysis (Halpin & Chan, 1998), which allows whole sequences of life courses—rather than single transitions—to be compared and classified. Another step will be to include techniques of multilevel modeling (Jacob, 2000) and simulation to our research.

As our latest wave of data collection (1964 and 1971 cohorts) was carried out in **collaboration with the** government-based **Institute of Employment Research (IAB),** we have a unique opportunity to link two independent sources of information: the life-history data from our survey and official (longitudinal) data from the *Beschäftigtenstatistik,* which is based on data from social security files. (The interviewees' consent is required for the information to be matched in each individual case.)

This linkage will allow us to investigate, for example, the effects of retrospective underestimation of mobility due to memory failure, drawing on a report that has reviewed the literature on this topic (Reimer, 2001). It will also allow us to conduct detailed investigations into the relationships between firm characteristics, firm dynamics, and individual working careers.

This will enable us to further promote the German Life History Study as a reliable source of information, especially for external researchers interested in dynamic analyses on the recent social structure of Germany, as well as those interested in the more historical and/or international context.

Open questions: re-interviewing respondents in the latest part of the German Life History Study.

Education and Mismatch in the Labor Market

Productivity Losses Caused by Unemployment and Overeducation It is widely assumed that the human capital which a society accumulates in the form of education is a crucial location factor in the context of global economic competition. It should, however, be noted that the capital in question here is not the total volume of human capital produced by the education system, but the human capital invested "productively" in the economy. Because of the mass unemployment currently prevailing in Germany, substantial amounts of human capital are lying dormant, resulting in overall economic underachievement. "Superfluous" skills and qualifications—those for which there is no demand on the labor market—are not only temporarily sidelined, they are rapidly devalued owing to disuse and a lack of training opportunities.

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Büchel, F. (1998). *Zuviel gelernt? Ausbildungsinadäquate Erwerbstätigkeit in Deutschland.* Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann (288 p.).

Büchel, F., & Weißhuhn, G. (1997a). *Ausbildungsinadäquate Beschäftigung der Absolventen des Bildungssystems. Berichterstattung zu Struktur und Entwicklung unterwertiger Beschäftigung in West- und Ostdeutschland.* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot (Volkswirtschaftliche Schriften, 471) (128 p.).

One of the main aims of this project is to draw attention to the fact that the actual surplus of skills and qualifications produced by the education system considerably exceeds the surplus indicated in the unemployment statistics, even when hidden labor reserves are taken into account. The reason for this is that the unused and, therefore, unproductive skills of individuals who are obviously overqualified must also be taken into consideration. In Germany, similar to other industrialized economies, about one sixth of the employed population is considered to be overeducated. This calls the efficiency of the education system into question and raises the question of the resultant economic losses.

German research focusing explicitly on overeducation is still a rare commodity. Before the MPIB mismatch project was initiated in 1998, Büchel prepared a monograph summarizing essential information on the subject of overeducation in Germany (Büchel, 1998). Büchel and Weißhuhn also authored a number of other monographs on behalf of the German Ministry of Education and Research (Büchel & Weißhuhn, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c).

The project is relevant to the research intentions of the Center of Sociology and the Study of the Life Course for two main reasons. First, the issue of overeducation involves several socioeconomic aspects which cannot be discussed from a purely economic perspective, but have far-reaching social implications. Second, most of the overeducation research carried out thus far has been cross-sectional. In the **mismatch project,** we are able to take advantage of the Center's extensive expe-

rience with longitudinal methodology to establish a longitudinal research perspective for the field of overeducation research. The project is of particular relevance to Research Area 1 ("Education, Training, and Employment") since all researchers in this area share an interest in identifying the factors which impede the transition from education to qualified employment, that is, to an occupation which fits in with the expectations of those who have acquired specific skills in the vocational training or university system.

What Did We Find out?

(1) Overeducation researchers have not yet reached a consensus on how best to measure skill mismatch. The lack of a standard approach means that traditional labor market researchers are very hesitant to accept this young discipline. Thus, the first phase of the project consisted in a broad analysis of measurement problems within the context of overeducation research. The typological similarity between unemployment and overeducation was also carved out by analyzing standard subjective measures in unemployment research, for example, the life satisfaction and political aptitude of unemployed, overeducated, and correctly allocated workers (Büchel, in press-b).

(2) One of the most popular explanations for the existence of overeducation is the career mobility theory developed by Sicherman and Galor. According to this theory, it may be rational for employees to accept an overeducated status at the beginning of their career path because wage losses are (over-) compensated by better promotion prospects. We found no empirical evidence to support this theory, however. When controlling for the starting level—which is crucial—the career paths of correctly allocated workers are significantly steeper than those of their overeducated counterparts. This result is validated by the finding that overeducated workers seem to be systematically excluded from on-the-job training (Büchel & Mertens, 2000).

(3) A largely unexplored field in overeducation research is the motivation of firms to tolerate skill mismatches. The few existing studies conclude that overeducated workers are less productive than their correctly allocated counterparts as a consequence of frustration. These findings raise the question of why firms not only refrain from dismissing overeducated workers, but in fact hire them in large numbers. Our findings reveal that overeducated workers are less productive only when compared with correctly allocated workers with similar skills, that is, workers with the same educational level, but higher job requirement levels. This is not surprising, because the overeducated—by definition—work in jobs with lower skill requirements. When job requirement levels are kept constant, however—as is the case when personnel managers are charged with filling a specific vacancy—the reverse was found to be the case. Overqualified employees were healthier, more strongly work- and career-minded, more likely to participate in on-the-job training, and had longer periods of tenure with the same firm than their correctly allocated colleagues who—by definition—were less well-educated. No significant differences in job satisfaction were found. These findings are consistent with the established fact that overeducated workers receive wage premiums for their surplus schooling. The overall results make the hiring of overqualified applicants understandable and could explain the employers' motivation to accept persistent overeducation in the labor force (Büchel, in press-a).

(4) A major issue in German overeducation research is the question of whether overeducation patterns are

Key References (cont'd)

Büchel, F., & Weißhuhn, G. (1997b). *Unter Wert verkauft—Ausbildungsinadäquate Beschäftigung von Frauen in West- und Ostdeutschland: Arbeitsbedingungen und sozio-ökonomische Bestimmungsgründe.* Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann (71 p.).

Büchel, F., & Weißhuhn, G. (1998). *Ausbildungsinadäquate Beschäftigung der Absolventen des Bildungssystems II. Fortsetzung der Berichterstattung zu Struktur und Entwicklung unterwertiger Beschäftigung in West- und Ostdeutschland (1993–1995).* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot (Volkswirtschaftliche Schriften, 471/II) (85 p.).

Büchel, F. (in press). Overqualification—Reasons, measurement issues, and typological affinity to unemployment. In P. Descy & M. Tessaring (Eds.), *Training in Europe. Background report to the second report on vocational training research in Europe 2000.* Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (CEDEFOP reference document).

Büchel, F. (in press). The effects of overeducation on productivity in Germany—The firms' viewpoint. *Economics of Education Review.*

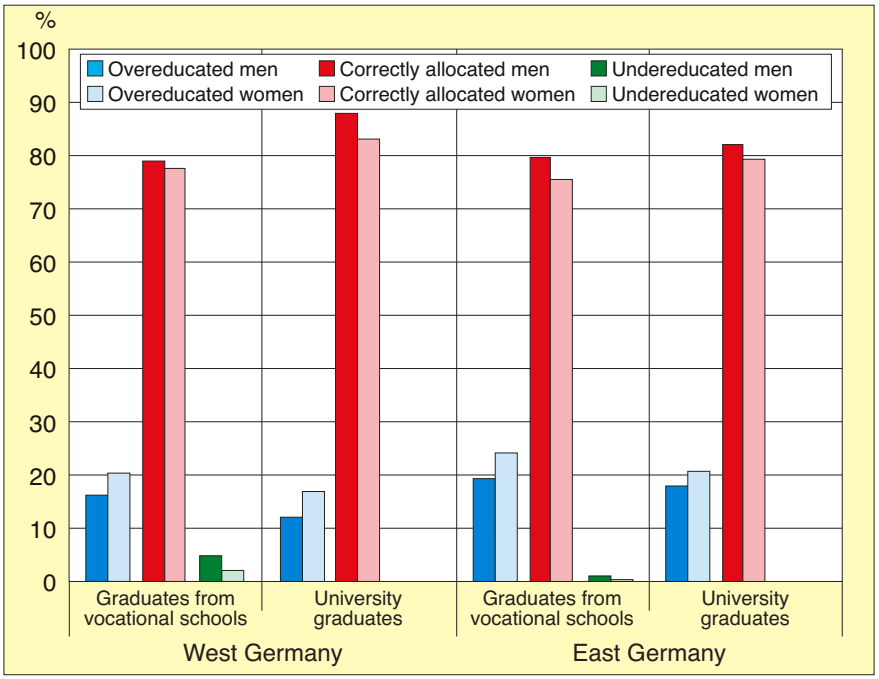
Key References (cont'd)

Daly, M. C., **Büchel, F.,** & Duncan, G. J. (2000). Premiums and penalties for surplus and deficit education: Evidence from the United States and Germany. In H. Oosterbeek (Ed.), The economics of over- and underschooling. *Economics of Education Review, 19,* 169–178 (Special Issue).

mainly determined by (inefficient) institutional characteristics of the education system, or whether some degree of skill mismatch is inevitable in highly differentiated labor markets (as anticipated by neoclassical theory in the case of "natural" unemployment). This question was addressed by conducting a comparative analysis of data gathered in Germany and the US. Together with co-authors from the US, we compared similarities and differences in the incidence and wage effects of over- and undereducation in the US and West Germany. Two points in time were analyzed in the US, and it emerged that there were more similarities between the two countries than over time in the US. Bearing in mind the substantial differences in the structuring of the education system and the labor market in the two countries, this is a remarkable result (Daly, Büchel, & Duncan, 2000).

(5) In Germany, women are not only more likely than men to be unemployed, they are substantially more likely to be overeducated. One of several competing explanations is that gender-specific differences in rates of overeducation are caused by spatial constraints on married women. According to the theory of differential overqualification developed by Frank (1978), married women living in rural areas run a higher risk of working in jobs for which they are overqualified. This is due to the problem of a dual job search being much more difficult to optimize than a single job search. In such a situation, husbands tend to follow the "Male Chauvinist Family Location Decision Rule" (Frank) and optimize their personal job search—possibly by interregional migration. Wives are "tied movers" or "tied stayers" (Mincer, 1978), and look for a job only under the condition their husbands already have found their optimal job—which determines their specific local labor market. Particularly in rural areas with small local labor markets, this leads to a higher risk of mismatch between formal qualifications and job requirements. Only McGoldrick and Robst (1996) and Battu, Seaman, and Sloane (2000) have previously tested this theory empirically, and their results led them to reject the theory. In contrast, our own findings are consistent with Frank's theory (Büchel, 2000b). However, at this stage of research we can only speculate about the factors that produce this unsatisfactory discrepancy in result patterns. There is an obvious need for further research.

Educational mismatch in the German labor market



Source: Own calculations from the German Socio-Economic Panel GSOEP (1998).

Further research perspectives

What Would We Like to Know?
(1) Spatial factors implying a higher risk of overeducation have, as yet, only been analyzed in the very specific context of married women (see above). We plan to analyze **the impact of local labor markets and regional mobility** on the risk of skill mismatch in a more general form. For this purpose, multilevel regression models (individual level, household level, and regional level) will be developed using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP). The data protection commissioner has already granted us special permission to use information on the GSOEP individuals' place of residence. This information can be matched with information about local labor market structures, local unemployment rates, branch structures, etc. The research will be conducted **in cooperation with Maarten van Ham** from the Faculty of Geographical Sciences at the **University of Utrecht,** the Netherlands.

(2) Overeducated status can be taken as evidence of a jobholder's flexibility. Flexibility and mobility are important mechanisms which enhance the efficiency of allocation on the labor market. In general, the level of flexibility and mobility displayed by German employees is considered to be below average. We intend to analyze flexibility and mobility on the labor market, looking for as many objective and subjective indicators as possible. This will enable us to consider skill mismatch in a broader context than is usually the case. Seen from the individual perspective, is mismatch primarily a voluntary or an involuntary outcome? Are there specific groups with atypically low flexibility and mobility? Can efficient policy measures to improve flexibility and mobility be identified? Special emphasis will be placed on **the graduate labor market,** and on **a German/US comparison** based on German data from the GSOEP (1994–1998) and the 1991/92 BIBB/IAB Employment Survey, and US data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID, 1993–1997) and the 1992 Highschool & Beyond Survey (HS&B). This project will be sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the central results are expected to be included in the Ministry's annual *Report on Germany's Technological Capability.*

(3) In Germany, overeducation is much more widespread among **non-graduates** with vocational qualifications than among **graduates.** Neubäumer has developed a plausible theoretical framework to explain this kind of mismatch (Neubäumer, 1999). According to Neubäumer, branches that offer jobs with poor working conditions tend to train more apprentices than will be required as skilled workers. This strategy compensates for the above-average rates of anticipated dropout, resulting in a systematic overproduction of skills in specific occupations (ironically, mainly in those occupations with a low market applicability, such as hairdressing). Hence, those trained in these branches tend to have above-average rates of overeducation (and unemployment). The planned analyses will be performed **in cooperation with Renate Neubäumer** and will be based on data from the BIBB/IAB Employment Survey.

(4) Although the German school system is characterized by a strong and persistent trend toward higher education, most German school-leavers still enter into vocational training. It is thus a matter of interest to determine whether the **vocational training system** is able to adapt to the changed circumstances, that is, to continue to offer young people a form of training which will protect them from later unemployment or overeducation. The analyses will focus on long-term trends in the training-to-work transition in Germany

and will also be based on data from the BIBB/IAB Employment Survey.

(5) A general assumption underlying overeducation research is that overeducated workers are less "able" than correctly allocated workers with comparable formal qualifications. However, this assumption—which is consistent with a neoclassical view of labor markets—has never been explicitly proved. This could be due to the fact that ability-related information (beyond the school-leaving certificate held) is rare in micro-economic data sets, particularly in Germany. However, the German Life History Study (GLHS) which provides life-course data for West German cohorts born in 1964 and 1971 (collected by our Center in 1998), contains information on both the grades attained in apprenticeships and on any skill mismatch in the job performed at the date of interview. These data will be used to analyze the **correlation between ability and overeducation,** measuring ability not by the type of qualification acquired, as is usually the case, but by the grades achieved within comparable types of qualification. Questions about school grades will be included in the GSOEP for the first time in the 2001 questionnaire. This information (expected to be available for public use in fall 2002) will be used to validate our results.

The Longitudinal Working Group Berlin and Brandenburg (LWBB) (Längsschnitt-Werkstatt Berlin-Brandenburg [LWBB])

The LWBB was founded in 1996 by an initiative of 17 young researchers working in the Berlin/Brandenburg area. These founding members included several researchers from our Center (Martin Diewald, Götz Rohwer, and Heike Solga). Two of the other founding members subsequently joined the Center (Felix Büchel from the Technical University of Berlin and Antje Mertens from Berlin's Humboldt University).

The main impulse behind this initiative was the unanimous opinion that longitudinal research needs to be promoted. The aim was to create a local network to facilitate data access and improve the transfer of technical and methodological know-how. In addition, the LWBB was set up to stimulate cooperation among its members, with a special accent being placed on interdisciplinarity. The founding members included sociologists, economists, and political scientists.

The LWBB is affiliated with the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) in Berlin, the workplace of the initiative's *spiritus rector,* Jürgen Schupp. All expenses incurred in the work of the LWBB (over DM 200,000 in total) have been fully funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research.

One of the working group's main activities has been the establishment of a powerful server at the DIW, providing access to about 20 of the most important longitudinal data sets from Germany and abroad. Public access to these data is made easier than usual by providing support for users in terms of data-protection declarations and the technical assistance of a student worker. The data server at the DIW provides guest researchers with access to longitudinal studies including the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), the British Household Panel Study (BHPS), the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS), the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), and, of course, the German Socio-Economic Panel survey (GSOEP). Different data formats are available, and access and links to the Geocode information are included.

Other LWBB activities have included arranging a series of seminars on methodological issues, inviting distinguished lecturers to address the group (Prof. M. A. Ferber, Prof. J. A. Nelson, and others), holding workshops on specific datasets, and organizing or co-organizing the following **conferences:**

- Labor market statistics between reality and fiction (September 1997, Berlin)
- Longitudinal data in social stratification monitoring (March 1998, Berlin)
- The polarization of occupational and life chances—Is Germany establishing an underclass? (October 1998, Berlin)
- Recent trends and methods of social stratification research (April 1999, Potsdam)
- Low pay—low qualification? Opportunities and risks of a low pay sector in Germany (May 2000, Berlin)

The following **publications** have resulted from these conferences:
Schupp, J., **Büchel, F., Diewald, M.,** & Habich, R. (Eds.). (1998). *Arbeitsmarktstatistik zwischen Realität und Fiktion* (Labor market statistics between reality and fiction), Berlin: edition sigma (Series "Sozialstruktur und Sozialberichterstattung" of WZB Berlin) (240 p.).
Büchel, F., Diewald, M., Krause, P., **Mertens, A.,** & **Solga, H.** (Eds.). (2000). *Zwischen drinnen und draußen. Arbeitsmarktchancen und soziale Ausgrenzung in Deutschland* (Labor market prospects and social exclusion in Germany), Leverkusen: Leske + Budrich (236 p.).

All papers presented at the "Low pay—low qualification?" conference are available on a **CD** jointly released by our Center and the DIW.

The members of the LWBB are currently engaged in intense discussion on the future of the initiative. The main question is whether to apply for additional funding and for which specific purposes.

East German Life Courses during the Transformation of the Former GDR

Despite considerable research to document and describe the political, social, and economic changes that have taken place in East Germany since 1989, accounts of these transition processes are still characterized by a weak understanding of their dynamics, long-term causes, and lasting consequences. The unique expertise of the Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course enables the societal transformation of East Germany to be placed in an historical and cross-national perspective, thus allowing theoretical generalizations to be drawn. Drawing on a series of quantitative life-course studies, as well as qualitative accounts of institution (re-)building, we are able to systematically investigate the new, post-1989 society in East Germany and to compare it to the past society.

In the first half of the 1990s, our research on East Germany (primarily within the project **"Life Courses and Historical Change in the German Democratic Republic"**) focused on a reconstruction of GDR society and its social history. Based on these results, a follow-up project **"East German Life Courses after the Transformation"** (in progress since 1995) was designed to investigate the process of transformation in East Germany and the associated process of German unification. This project involves studying the life courses of different birth cohorts as "mirrors" of social change, while bearing in mind the inner dynamics of individual trajectories.

One of our research questions is how the system of social inequality has changed in East Germany since 1989. Have old social positions disappeared, perhaps as a result of their state-socialist specificity? Have new social positions emerged, possibly as a result of the market character of the "destination" society? Assuming that a change in social positions has occurred, which mechanisms were operating and how were people matched to the new positions? How did individuals and families in East Germany cope with institutional and organizational change on the labor market and in society in general? Since societal transformation in East Germany was accompanied by a massive transfer of institutions from West to East Germany, a baseline hypothesis is that similarities and differences between institutions in the GDR (the society of "departure") and institutions in West Germany (the society of "destination") are of great consequence for individuals' success or failure after 1989.

A first phase of the project "Life Courses and Historical Change in the German Democratic Republic" was completed in the summer of 2000. Research here concentrated on restructuring processes in the *labor market,* one of the main domains of social stratification and social inequality. We explored the shaping of employment histories by institutions and organizations, and endogenous causalities of individual careers, with special emphasis on time-dependencies. Patterns and causal conditions of individual employment histories in post-1989 East Germany have been analyzed in two doctoral theses and one habilitation thesis. A doctoral thesis on the labor market entry of young East Germans is in preparation. In addition to these studies, research findings have been presented in a series of publications. Furthermore, important results were discussed with external scholars at a **conference** that we organized **in November 1999** on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Since studies restricted to East German data continually raise questions about the extent and specificity of change, we relate our analyses on East German societal transformation to the pre-1989 GDR, to West Germany, and to Poland as an example of another post-socialist society.

Conference
"The Incomplete Unification: Social Inequalities and Occupational Trajectories in East Germany"
November 1999

Organizers:
Karl Ulrich Mayer, Martin Diewald, & Heike Solga

The East German Life History Study

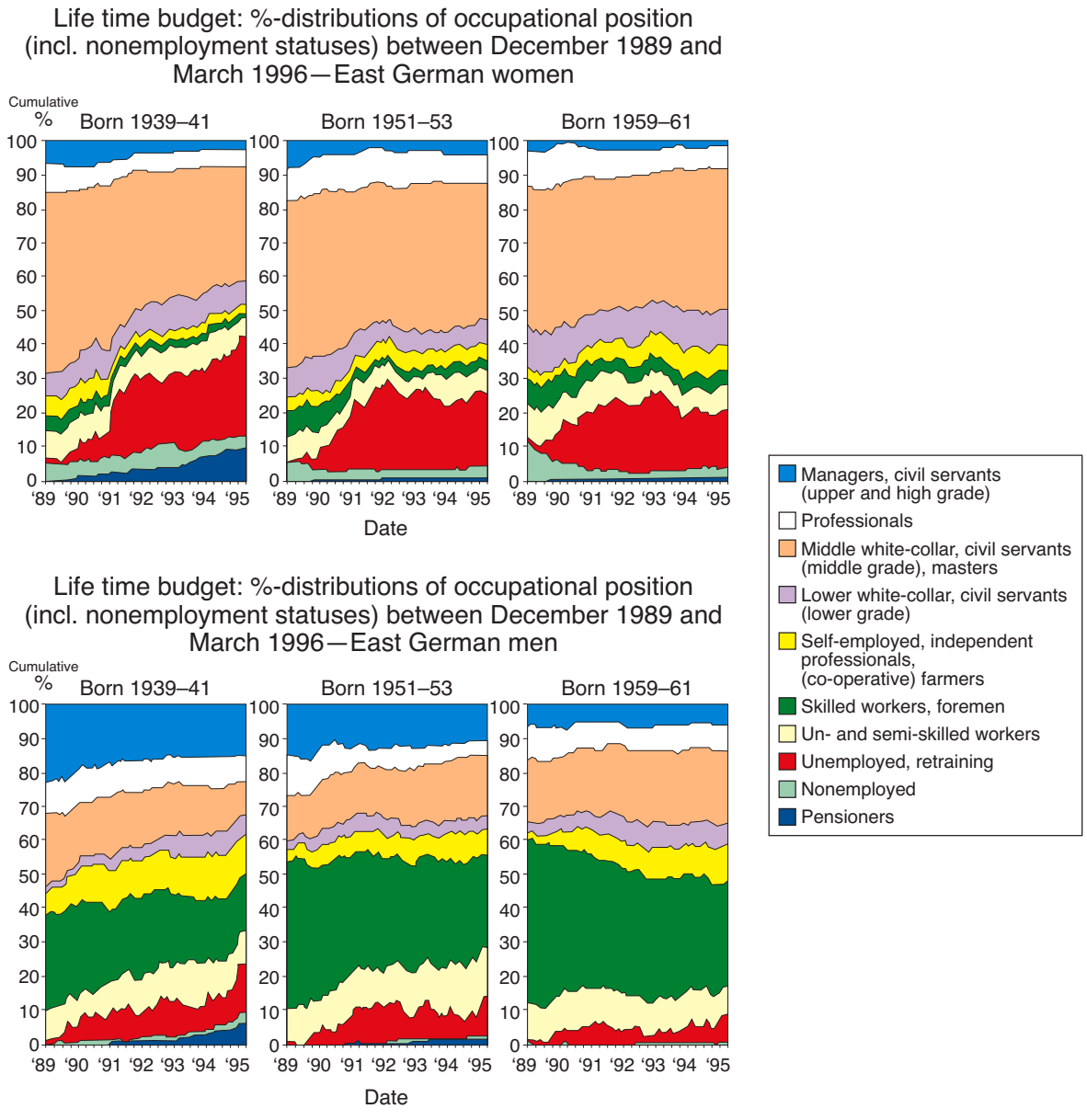
The main empirical basis for our life-course analyses of East Germans is a data set that combines a panel survey with an event-history design. In 1991/92, a total of 2,331 East German men and women from four birth cohorts were interviewed about their whole life history. These interviews were conducted as part of the project "Life Courses and Historical Change in the Former GDR." In 1996/97, we succeeded in re-interviewing 1,394 of these participants by applying a combined CATI and CAPI strategy. The participants were again asked to give complete employment and family histories for the period since December 1989. These longitudinal data are suitable for use with methods of event-history analysis. Compared to earlier life-course studies, more detailed information was collected about organizational contexts of occupational careers within firms and subjective dimensions of developmental regulation, such as control beliefs, perceived primary and secondary control, and self-esteem. The latter information was combined with the first measurement of a postal follow-up survey carried out in 1993, thus allowing investigation of the interplay between life courses and individual development. A non-response study produced an additional 200 cases for the initial four birth cohorts. A new birth cohort was added in 1996/97, namely 610 men and women who were born in 1971. The special focus here was on the investigation of processes of labor market entry and family formation under the conditions of system transformation. The field work for the three data samples (panel study, non-response study, and 1971 birth cohort) was carried out in 1996/97, and since then a considerable amount of effort has been put into editing, completing, and documenting these complex data sets.

New Patterns of Social Inequality: The East German Labor Market since 1989

In the 1990s, the East German labor market was characterized by a mixture of upheaval and continuity with the old system. Economic transformation and the transfer of institutions from West to East Germany led to the rapid establishment of high and seemingly permanent unemployment. Job mobility increased, but most changes of job or employer did not result in enhanced career prospects or promotions. On the contrary, the tendency toward higher rates of job mobility in East Germany was mainly a result of individual attempts to avoid unemployment after firm closures or downsizing. The proportion of external job shifts (i.e., shifts between firms) grew, while the proportion of internal shifts declined (Diewald, 2000b). Older cohorts, in particular, were forced to become mobile at a point in life at which they would normally have entered stable careers within firm-internal labor markets. Individual job mobility did not only rise in comparison to the former GDR—it was also much higher than in West Ger-

many or even Poland. Rather surprisingly, the devaluation of biographical assets, breaks in occupational careers, and the risk of unemployment were much more prevalent in East Germany than in post-socialist Poland. However, the higher instability in occupational careers was compensated for by much higher wages and unemployment benefits than in Poland (see Diewald, 2000b; Mach & Solga, 1997; Diewald, Mach, & Solga, 2000).

Despite widespread discontinuity in East Germans' occupational careers, the pattern of social inequality was not completely changed. Institutional similarities between the GDR and West Germany, on the one hand, and the transfer of institutions from West to East after 1989, on the other, resulted in continuities in social status over the course of the transformation (see Mayer, 2001c). Such similarities are of special interest to us with respect to **job-shift patterns**

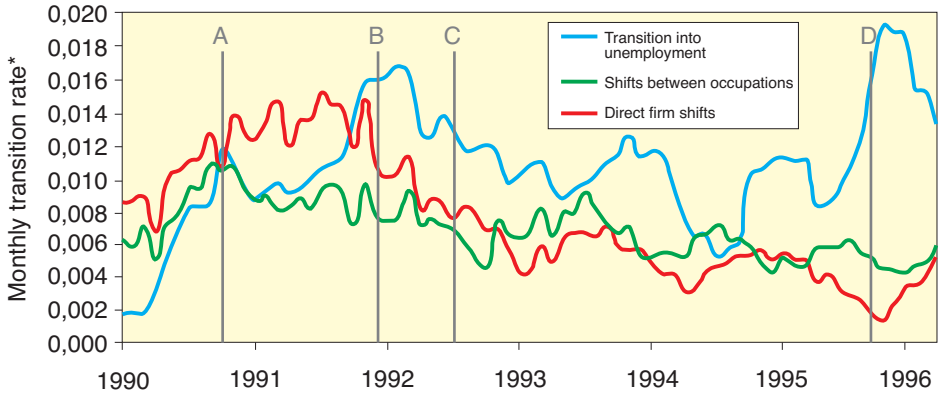


and the system of **occupational training and certification.** The determinants of job-shift rates suggest that before 1989 work-life mobility in both countries was governed in a similar way by labor-force experience and educational credentials (Solga & Konietzka, 1999), although East Germany was less segmented by gender, social class, and the industrial sector, and was instead characterized by a stronger tendency toward internal job shifts. It emerged that mechanisms operating in both East and West Germany prior to 1989, such as the German form of "occupationalized credentialism" and internal labor markets, did not lose their efficacy after the Berlin Wall came down. Yet because of the interplay with the opportunity structure, these similarities resulted in different outcomes in East and West Germany. Such findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of the regime-specific embedding of "general" institutions (Solga & Diewald, 2001).

Notable differences were observed in the **opportunity structures of different social groups.** It comes as no surprise that groups, such as women, less-qualified workers, and older employees, suffer from displacement, but the mechanisms of their exclusion are often subtle and blurred by labor market segmentation. The theoretical framework of life-course research predicts differences between birth cohorts, and our research indeed reveals remarkable differences in the post-unification labor market opportunities of different birth cohorts. Older individuals (born around 1930) were excluded from the labor market by early retirement. Of those who entered the labor market before 1989 and who were not hit by early retirement, men and women born around 1940 were most vulnerable to the risks of the changing labor market and experienced significantly more "losses" than other cohorts.

Historical time turned out to be a central factor in the distribution of labor market opportunities after 1989. In addition to the major breaks that occurred around 1989, the transformation process can be divided into historical periods characterized by different opportunity structures and mechanisms of allocating persons to jobs and other social positions. For a number of reasons, the first two years of the transformation were much more open to "irregular" occupational shifts and external job shifts than the years after 1992. After 1992, the competition for jobs again began to increase, and the chances of disadvantaged groups declined further (see Solga, Diewald, & Goedicke, 2000).

Historical rates for selected mobility types in East Germany



* Monthly transition rate = number of events occurring in a given month divided by the number of persons at risk.

A – Unification, October 3, 1990;
B – End of short-time work schedule;
C – End of first period "window of opportunity";
D – End of "bad-weather allowance" for construction workers.

The Processing of Occupational Change: Occupational Shifts and Training

Occupational qualifications continue to represent a major allocation mechanism in the East German labor market. However, East Germans have had to adapt to rapid shifts in the occupational structure and new demands for qualifications. In her doctoral thesis, Sylvia Zühlke analyzed the consequences of occupational change—that is, changes in job requirements and responsibilities (a qualitative dimension) and shifts in demand for certain qualifications (a quantitative dimension)—for individual occupational careers. She investigated processes of individual occupational reorientation between 1989 and 1996 in two professional groups: clerks and manual workers. Occupational shifts were differentiated into further qualifications and professional reorientations, and these were explored as individual (time-dependent) responses to experiences of unemployment. Furthermore, occupational shifts were analyzed in an institutional context, with reference to two settings: training provided by firms and government training schemes. The results show that the two professional groups displayed very different patterns of adaptation to the new labor market conditions. These patterns appear to be dependent on the transferability of human capital and on continuities in individual employment histories (see Zühlke, 2000).

Professions as Frames in Times of Biographical Upheaval: Bourgeois and Non-Bourgeois Intelligentsia in the GDR and after 1990

The socialist intelligentsia, or the educated class, appeared with the foundation of the GDR in 1949 and was dissolved along with the state in 1990. The original intention was for the ranks of the intelligentsia to be open to social groups hitherto unconcerned with education (workers and peasantry). But since the children of this first generation of graduates demanded the same level of education as their parents, GDR society shifted increasingly toward stratum-specific differentiation and a reproduction of societal structures. Case studies of the "socialist intelligentsia" conducted by Erika Hoerning examine the role of the profession in biographical (re-)orientation. The professional and life histories (narratives) of 31 women and men born between 1929 and 1938 (the generation that rebuilt Germany after the Second World War) and between 1950 and 1960 were recorded on repeated occasions, allowing us to describe the social character of the educated class (the new socialist intelligentsia) and the professional cultures of the former GDR, as well as the life courses of both bourgeois and non-bourgeois members of the intelligentsia. It was then possible to observe the reorientation process retrospectively by examining the transition to "new" social, cultural, and political structures, and obtaining information about how retrospective assessments change over the course of time and life. The study shows that success (or failure) in coping with the transformation process is not only a function of the individual biographical capital, but is highly dependent on the historical development of the institutions (professions) to which individuals belong. The institutional and biographical transfer to/integration into the "new" Federal Republic is being explored in case studies on a number of professional groups: medical, law, media, and science professionals, university professors, managers in industry and science, the clergy. These case studies will be discussed within the framework of current theoretical debates on professions in a **book in progress: "Intelligenz, Experten, Professionen."**

Institutions as Bridges and Traps: The Labor Market Entry of Young East Germans

A central question in the dissertation currently being prepared by Britta Matthes is how the institutions of the educational system, the system of occupational education, and the labor market overlap and connect with one another. Matthes examines the early employment careers of young East Germans under system transformation—more specifically, the process of labor market entry of those who were born in the former GDR in 1971 and, thus, experienced the fall of the Wall at the age of 18. She addresses the question of whether the specific institutional settings during system transformation have led to a more open or closed situation with respect to the impact of the social background, the reversibility of life events, occupational selection, and stigmatization. A major theoretical contribution of this study consists in the link between intergenerational and intragenerational patterns of social selection. Decisions about the level of education that were made within families in the GDR are seen as structuring training and employment opportunities after 1989. However, individual assets acquired in the GDR were devaluated by the change of regime, even if they did affect early employment careers. The training experiences and first jobs of the 1971 birth cohort are compared to those of the 1959/61 East German birth cohort, and, thus, embedded into an historical context.

Organizational Contexts of Employment Careers: Firm Development and Personnel Strategies after 1989

Formal organizations such as firms play an important role in mediating between institutions and the individual life course. The doctoral thesis prepared by Anne Goedicke studied the nexus between the restructuring of the East German industrial landscape and the individual employment trajectories of East German employees after 1989. Two organizational characteristics were assumed to be of particular importance with regard to exits from and entries into firms: the renewal of the firm population in East Germany after 1989 (including the founding, downsizing, closing, and restructuring of enterprises) and the orientation of personnel strategies toward internal or external labor markets. Different conceptions of organizations (in particular as job systems and as purposeful agents) were combined to trace the impact of these factors on individual employment histories. The study linked individual mobility to shifts in employers' demand for labor and demonstrated that individuals' employment histories have been strongly influenced by the fate of industries and single companies in East Germany. Mechanisms of discrimination against women, less-educated workers, and older employees could be attributed more specifically to selection processes at firm entry and/or exit, and it was shown that these groups of people suffered from different types of disadvantages. Time dependencies in the employment system could be attributed to organizational change (see Goedicke, 2000).

The Usefulness of Resources Acquired in the GDR before 1989

Any societal transformation challenges "normal" expectations of cumulative causal contingencies of the individual life course. Our collection of East German employment histories shows that many former "investments" (e.g., in education, firm commitments, work experience) have been devaluated, while former barriers to occupational success (e.g., "lack" of political loyalty) have disappeared. Yet continuities in occupa-

tional behavior and success can also be observed. The question thus arises of where and under which circumstances continuity as opposed to "interruption" can be found in the life courses of individuals. It is crucial for the interplay between individual characteristics (e.g., functional skills, self-esteem, etc.) and structural opportunities (e.g., job vacancies, gender segregation, age discrimination, etc.) to be considered from a **developmental perspective.** Three dimensions are especially important: first, a before-after dimension—the "legacy" of life in the GDR was not simply destroyed by the abolition of its political, economic, and social institutions, but is incorporated into individual life courses which reflect a variety of selection and adaptation processes in different phases of GDR history; second, a dimension of individual-institution interdependence, emphasizing that the interplay between personal and situational characteristics might vary between segments of the labor market; third, a time dimension, meaning that the transformation is not just a single "event," but a process divided into different developmental phases. In his habilitation thesis, Martin Diewald looked at contingencies of East German life courses before and after 1989. He conceptualized the link between structural and individual perspectives via processes of selection and adaptation in different historical and institutional contexts (see Diewald, 2000b).

While occupational qualifications and firm tenure acquired in the GDR emerged to be very important for employment stability after 1989, a surprising and somewhat perplexing empirical result is that GDR residents who showed initiative in their job seeking had a professional orientation and experience of firm and job mobility and were generally no better off in the labor market after 1989 (see Diewald, 1999c; Diewald, Goedicke, & Solga, 2000).

Research Perspectives

Over the coming years, life-course research at the Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course will continue to systematically examine patterns of social stratification under conditions of rapid social change. **Three types of research** will be central to our work:

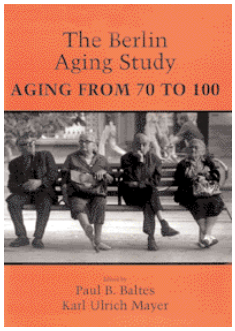
(1) comparative analyses of East and West Germany (including the labor market entry of East and West Germans born in 1971) as well as comparisons between East Germany and other post-socialist and non-post-socialist countries;
(2) further investigation of the nexus between different institutions and organizations shaping employment trajectories under conditions of rapid social change (e.g., the nexus between firms and occupations, or that between households and labor markets);
(3) longitudinal analyses that, from a life-course perspective, explore long-term developments within careers through different societal settings, thus exploiting the unique potential of our data on the GDR.

Ten years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, transformation research is slowly dissolving as a separate topic of empirical inquiry. It has to be replaced by a pan-German and international comparative perspective, as well as by a deeper theoretical understanding of the long-term causes and consequences of system change.

Further Projects and Activities

The Berlin Aging Study (BASE)—Sociology and Social Policy

Baltes, P. B., & **Mayer, K. U.** (Eds.). (1999). *The Berlin Aging Study. Aging from 70 to 100.* New York: Cambridge University Press (552 p.).



The Sociology and Social Policy Unit of the Berlin Aging Study formally concluded its main research activities with the joint publication of **the English version of the BASE monography** (Baltes & Mayer, 1999). The unit contributed to 11 of the 18 chapters of the book, not least in the area of interdisciplinary studies such as:

- Baltes, M. M., **Maas, I.,** Wilms, H.-U., Borchelt, M., & **Little, T. D.** Everyday competence in old and very old age: Theoretical considerations and empirical findings (pp. 384–402).
- Linden, M., Horgas, A. L., **Gilberg, R.,** & Steinhagen-Thiessen, E. The utilization of medical and nursing care in old age (pp. 430–474).
- **Maas, I.,** Borchelt, M., & **Mayer, K. U.** Generational experiences of old people in Berlin (pp. 83–110).
- **Marsiske, M., Delius, J., Maas, I., Lindenberger, U.,** Scherer, H., & Tesch-Römer, C. Sensory systems in old age (pp. 360–383).
- **Staudinger, U. M., Freund, A. M.,** Linden, M., & **Maas, I.** Self, personality, and life regulation: Facets of psychological resilience in old age (pp. 302–328).
- **Wagner, M.,** Schütze, Y., & **Lang, F. R.** Social relationships in old age (pp. 282–301).

Three dissertation theses have been completed:

- **Bukov, A.** (2001). *Social participation in old age.* Free University of Berlin.
- **Gilberg, R.** (2000). *Hilfe- und Pflegebedürftigkeit im höheren Alter. Eine Analyse des Bedarfs und der Inanspruchnahme von Hilfeleistungen.* Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung (Studien und Berichte, 68) (293 p.).
- **Lampert, T.** (2001). *Social inequalities, life course and health in older age.* Berlin: Free University of Berlin.

Moreover, the project's longitudinal data on the relationships between mortality, on the one hand, and socioeconomic inequalities and social support, on the other, have been analyzed as part of a postdoctoral research project by Pascale Dorenlot, who joined the Institute in the framework of the **MPG–CNRS cooperation program** in connection with the Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin.

The Unification of the Berlin Police Force: An Example of Institution Rebuilding after 1989

Another MPG-CNRS postdoctoral fellow, Fabien Jobard, has worked on a case study examining the process of integration of the West and East Berlin police forces in the years following unification (see Jobard, 2000). At the end of 1989, two coexisting police forces were charged with protecting one public order in the administratively divided city of Berlin. In October 1990, the West Berlin Police force took over its counterpart in the East of the city. From then on, police officers in the former GDR had to implement laws and regulations with which they were not familiar. Several aspects of institution building were observed, including the efforts of the East German police chiefs to shape new administrative languages and programs, the East German officers'

resistance to the loss of public legitimacy and of their institution, and various attempts made by the West Berlin police force to gain control over the process of unification of the two forces and deal with the new agenda. These observations help to explain the non-mobilization that occurred both in the ranks of the West Berlin police force, where many rank-and-file-officers simply refused to collaborate with their "colleagues" from the East, and in the ranks of the East Berlin police force, where deep and sudden uncertainty was felt, as well as individual and collective stigmatization.

Children in the Family Division of Labor

Only recently have sociologists began to analyze the kind of intergenerational relationships that are actually practiced in real family life. The division of domestic labor between children and adults in the family is an important topic in this context (Hengst & Zeiher, 2000a; Zeiher, 2000a, in press-b). The dominating social pattern of childhood as a period of development and learning has increased the care dependency of today's children. If children do not participate in domestic work serving common needs and reciprocal care, the question may arise of whether this might dissolve the links between children and adults and result in further separation of the generations. On the other hand, recent changes in the roles of the mother and the housewife and trends toward more maternal participation in the labor market may challenge these patterns. Case studies of ten-year-old children have been conducted, with each child being followed through the entire sequence of his or her activities on seven days. Analysis starts with the investigation of transitions from one activity to the next in order to reconstruct every decision in its situation-specific and biographical contexts. The results of these decision analyses form the basis of subsequent analysis on the specificity of intergenerational processes in each family. Comparisons are made in order to outline differences and similarities in individual childhoods, and to reveal general characteristics of social childhood which are apparent in the daily life of particular individuals.

Higher Education: A Comparative Study of Germany and the United States

The system of higher education has also attracted increased public attention over recent years, with reform proposals often alluding to the situation in the USA. This is the background to our comparative analysis of higher education in Germany and the United States *(Higher Education and Professionalism).* The study focuses on the institutional structures and their links to modernization in the two countries (see Lenhardt & Spear, 2000). The theoretical point of departure is provided by Parsons' theory of professionalization and Weber's theory of the "expert culture." Both are theories of social development, institutional rationalization, and socialization. It emerges that Parsons' professionalization theory is congruent in all three of these respects with Humboldt's concept of the modern research university, which is still a prominent feature in contemporary debate. Common denominators include the concepts of individualism as an institutional characteristic of the democratic society, academic freedom in higher education, and the culture of professionalism. It is general-

ly assumed that the systems of higher education in Germany and the USA are increasingly giving institutional expression to the normative concept of citizenship. Yet, the German system seems to be doing so only with some delay. The German system still bears traces of the anti-individualist "expert culture" dating back to feudal absolutism. In this project, the progress of individualism is reconstructed with regard to the relationship between higher education, the state and the civil society, the rationalization of the internal structure of universities, the distinction between "pure" and "applied" science, and the social role of students.

Higher Education in Germany: Institutional Development, Personnel Structure and Careers, and Labor Markets

Higher education in Germany has also been the focus of a number of further research activities of both basic and applied concern. Karl Ulrich Mayer joined the editors and authors of the new *Bildungsbericht*, contributing a major chapter on the structure and recent developments of the tertiary sector. This undertaking builds on his intensive committee work as chair and member of the *Wissenschaftsrat* committees on Higher Education and the Labor Market (1999) and Personnel Structures and Qualification Processes (2001), and as co-chair of the Committee for the Development of Higher Education in Saxony (2000/2001). A by-product of this kind of "fieldwork" has been a smaller study on "Science as Vocation or Career?" (Mayer, in press-a).

The Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course 2001

Left to right: Marita Jacob, Maike Reimer, Holger Seibert, Steffen Hillmert, Karl Ulrich Mayer, Michael Corsten, Erika M. Hoerning, Felix Büchel, Helga Zeiher, Matthias Pollmann-Schult, Anne Goedicke, Britta Matthes, Alessandra Rusconi; not pictured: Antje Mertens, Heike Trappe, Gero Lenhardt.

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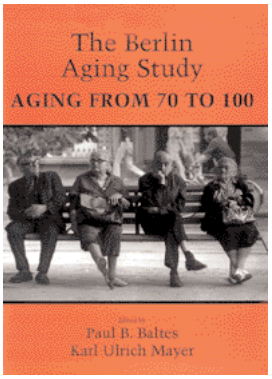

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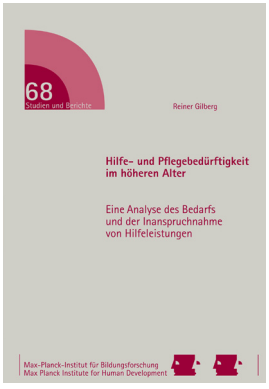

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