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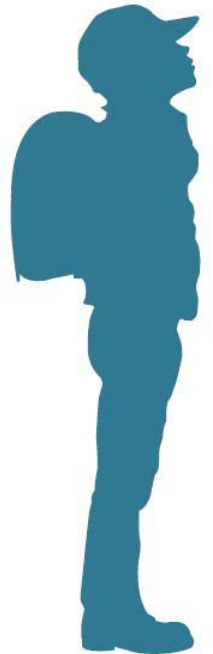
Fertility and Social Stratification Germany and Japan in Comparison

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Section 2: Fathers and Work-Life Balance

**“Are Highly Educated Fathers
Protected against Compatibility
Problems?”**

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Are Highly Educated Fathers Protected against Compatibility Problems?

Empirical Results about Work-Life Balance of Professors in Germany¹

Female university graduates with children are quite established within equalization politics and gender studies over the last decades (see Macha et al. 2000). But what is with the majority of male professors with children? How do they deal with the demands of the academic system and the *scientific community* as well as the needs of their private environment, their family and friends? Above all, what are their individual ideas/images of fatherhood? Especially in reference to the ideal of a “committed father” which also achieved success besides the myth of the “good mother” (see Pohl 2006). The question remains unanswered: Do male scientists have compatibility problems and if that is the case, what kind of problems occur in professional and private life?

Based on the diagnoses of increasing blurring boundaries between work and life within the context of flexible capitalism (see Sennett 1998), the paper discusses the question of work-life-balance by means of empirical material (qualitative interviews). Thereby, our focus is not only on (or so to say “from”) the specific male perspective, but also on a professional group that usually isn’t perceived as “problematic case” because of their economic and cultural capital (see Bourdieu 1986): male professors with children.

¹ The paper is partly congruent with the book Reuter/Vedder/Liebig (2008).

1. Work-Life Balance or blurring boundaries between work and life

It has become quite common to establish the umbrella term “work-life-balance” to cover a wide range of questions concerning quality and relation of various parts of life and work (see Resch/Bamber 2005: 171). Not only the questions, but also the terminology of “work” and “life” comprise a highly complex and not easy to delimit field. It embraces studies about family focus, compatibility management and quality of life as well as works about coping with stress, time management practices or career. Besides, there are many psychological guidebooks and instruments within the area of the business and personnel politics of companies. So, the related topics are not necessarily new, but regained more attention within the discussion of labor and value change over the last years.

The complexity of phenomenology corresponds to the diversity of the definition of the work-life-balance-concept. According to the Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth, the term stands for a “new intelligent interlocking of working and private life against the background of changed and dynamic working and living conditions” (2005).

Particularly the increasing flexibility of working time and place of work since the 1980s and the deregulation of working conditions caused atypical working hours, short or medium temporary work contracts and mobile ways of life. With Richard Sennett (1998), this new *flexible capitalism* is characterized not only by not standardized employments, a growing intensity of work and self management, but also a economization of private life that hinders (or even makes it impossible) to distinguish clearly between working life and private life in many fields of work.² Statements such as “my work is my life and my life is my work” underline the idea of work as a source of settlement of claims, recovery and self-fulfillment (Eikhof/Haunschild 2006, 2007). So, family life and individual leisure time have to fit into conditions of the job, not the other way around. It is easy to imagine that the winners of this

² Axel Haunschild suggests the terminology “Work-Life-Boundaries” instead of “Work-Life-Balance” because the first is more appropriate to underline the fact that work and life cannot be regarded as clearly separated and opposite poles that has to be balanced but rather the basic problem of identification, evaluation and demarcation of both areas (see Eikhof, Doris R./Chris Warhust/Axel Haunschild (2007)).

development of “blurring boundaries between work and life” (Gottschall/Voß 2003) can be found in the area of gainful employment and consequently economic conditions in general.

Especially for the creative class (in reference to Richard Caves characterized by the production and allocation of goods and services that are interlinked with cultural, artistically or entertaining qualities), the minor level of standardization and planning possibilities of creative and knowledge work leads to major self organization of working methods (see Heidenreich/Töpsch 1998; Heidenreich 2004). This follows the motto: If one cannot rely on the others (company, management, university or business climate in general), one has to help oneself. Günther Voß and Hans Pongratz already pictured this form of self management and self marketing in 1998 as “*entployee*” (in German “Arbeitskraftunternehmer”): “This new type is characterized by an enlarged self control of the employee, requirements of intensified economization of one’s own working capacity and performance, and an economization of life” (Voß/Pongratz 1998: 131, translation by the authors of this paper).³ This finds expression in the fact that time structures and acting logic in the means of Taylor enter private life, as American sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2001) points out in her much noticed ethnographic study “Time Bind”. Her object is the today’s young family with two working parental units, believing in the ideal of gender equality, compatibility and family-friendly working environment without being able to realize these ideals at home. What keeps the parents from relaxing (“turning off”) is not only a shortage of time and a life style that is centered on work, but also normative linking to business culture and the vision of “ideal workers”. On the contrary: Living and relaxing within the family is replaced by growing parts of organization, management, timing, instructions, argumentations and negotiations about time and gifts with the children.

³ The *entployee* does not get his profit from making use of others working potential but of his self organized and self controlled entrepreneurial marketing of his labor. So, self-economization means to find consumers for one’s own performance/output on extern markets and realizing certain performances and objectives in a given time and quality without controls or demands of supervisors. Therefore, the *entployee* acts as “employer in a company” who imports his personal contribution as “upgraded semi-finished product” into the business and adapts himself to the constantly changing conditions of time, place, function and media (see Voß/Pongratz 1998, 2003 and 2004).

These developments regard men as well as women, but they regard men and women in different ways: Although the amount of employed women is growing and they consequently contribute to families' income, the share in unpaid housework by men is much less than expected. Furthermore, women/mothers are still permanent contact persons for problems and needs of the family members and manage the compatibility of work and family (as Cornelia Behnke and Michael Meuser underline in their study about the compatibility management of double earner couples, see Behnke/Meuser 2003).

2. Men between family and profession

Despite the fact that the question of compatibility in everyday life and science still concentrates on women, there is a growing number of publications pointing out the compatibility problems of men and how they are suffering from this situation (see Gesterkamp 2003; Buchhorn 2004; Döge 2004). In reference to a time-budget-study of the German Federal Statistic Bureau, 40 percent of men with children declare that they spent too much time for their work (see Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth 2003). And according to the last comprehensive men study in Germany, approximately 20 percent of German men can be labeled as "*new men*" that would prefer a cooperative division of house- and family work and more active fatherhood (Zulehner/Volz 1998). A study about the role of fathers within families comes to the result that only one third of the interviewed men perceive themselves as "families' bread-winner" whereas 70 percent come out for the concept of "father as educator" and wish to spent more time with their children (see Fthenakis/Minsel 2002).

Besides, doubts continue to exist if fathers really indent to change their situation. Actual empirical data mainly confirms the description of modern attitude of men 20 years ago by German sociologist Ulrich Becks: "verbal open-mindedness combined with extensive behavioral numbness." Men aged between 30 and 50 years tend to work exceedingly long and thereby widely supporting traditional role attribution in their private division of labor

(Fthenakis 2001). Ten years ago, over half of German fathers were able to imagine themselves taking parental leave and spending intensive time together with their child right from the beginning (Zulehner/Volz 1998). But not five percent of these fathers realized this wish before the establishment of the new parental leave regulation in January 2007 (see Döge 2007). Although many men are open-minded with respect to a reduction of their working time, in 2004 85 percent of part-time jobs in Germany were occupied by women (see IW 2006). Referring to results of a study of the German Institute of Economic Research, nearly 46 percent of full-time employed men do not become fathers at all (see Schmitt 2004).

But all these findings about compatibility problems of fathers between family and work life cannot simply be transferred to the situation of professors. Here, we are looking at an occupational group that cannot easily be compared with other professional fields. To get some “hard facts” about this group: In 2005, there were 32.432 male professors occupied at German universities. That means a percentage of nearly 86 percent of all professorships (see www.destatis.de 2006). Up to now, there are no studies focusing on Work-Life-Balance of male professors in the German speaking countries. Relevant information has to be deduced from research about women at university (Neusel/Poppenhusen 2002; ZFG 2006), science careers in general (Krimmer et al. 2003; Lind 2004; Beaufaÿs 2003), gender based inequality in science (Neusel/Wetterer 1999; Heintz/Merz/Schumacher 2004; Vogel/Hinz 2004), about family friendly universities (HRK 2003; Vedder 2004) and on the subject of *Dual-Career-Couples* (Behnke/Meuser 2003; Solga/Rusconi 2004).

Careers in science are characterized by long periods of qualification and a high level of competitiveness for all persons involved. Whoever decides for a scientific career has to accept long lasting phases of insecurity in his professional life (see Biller-Andorno et al. 2005: 16). Within the qualification period, a high individual level of engagement, a strong orientation towards the carrier and a clear identification with the scientific community have to face very different options of promotion, often meaning less financial support, limited job offers and difficult conditions concerning compatibility of family and work (see Vogel/Hinz

2004: 103). Frequent changes of working (and living) place are also perceived as proof of quality. So, prospective professors spent their best time “on the road”: “Scientists have to develop their highest productivity exactly in the period of life time when other academics already have proofed themselves in their first professional positions, gained long-time employments and thinking about becoming parents: the time during their thirties” (see Spiewak 2006, translation by the authors of this paper). Above all, ambitious parents have to deal with the principle that scientific output is only evaluated by facts, independent of personal criteria (Heintz/ Merz/Schumacher 2004: 272) which piles on the pressure on them in contrast to the childless competitors. Parents do simply have less time for research activities, publications, conferences and scientific networking when their attention is also demanded by little children or other family members of different age. But it does not get better when one gained a professorship: Then, he usually identifies with the work quite strongly, underlines the possibilities of self-fulfillment within the scientific system, uses the freedom of time management and soon has incorporated the typical habitus of a professor (see Vogel/Hinz 2004: 124).

But even paying attention to these conditions and advantages of men within the scientific system, it cannot be inferred that male scientists (especially those with children) do not have to deal with challenges in their career and Work-Life-Balance. There are enough examples of male private assistant professors who are looking for permanent jobs but have to be happy (satisfied) with precarious employment relationships in several university towns, scratching a living. Although the traditional male role concept still does work out in professional life, it does not so in private life. Here, this role concept is on the one hand continuously replaced by the transformed self-concept and employment of women and has to deal with new expectations of partnership, equality and division of labor (see Hollstein 2004: 202f.). On the other hand, men suffer from the uni-dimensionality of male role models and the relinquishment on recreation, time for the family and hobbies. Consequently, this means that the compatibility of professional roles as scientist as well as as father still is an important and difficult task, even when (or better to say especially because) in academic circles the ideal of committed fatherhood is present more than ever

before (see Baader 2006). The “perfect father” – attention! – should be fair in partnership, open minded for taking parental leave, patient and turned towards his child (or children).

3. Compatibility problems of scientists

Despite the mentioned specific working conditions of scientists with children, they have to deal with quite similar compatibility problems as other employed fathers. We sum up some of them here:

1. Colleagues do not perceive fatherly family duties as legitimate reason for relativizing the importance (priority) of professional work (see Gesterkamp 2005: 31).
2. Often men do not see themselves in the position to reduce their working time. But simultaneously, they want to be present within the family (see Döge 2007: 30).
3. Committed fathers that stick to their own resolutions (and help with the upbringing), do so at the expense of their profession (see Buchhorn 2004: 152).
4. Finally, there are too less offers for men in organizations and companies that differ from conventional division of labor between the sexes (see Gesterkamp 2003: 14).

That is why Peter Döge defends fathers against the accusation of being an “uncaring father” or the “sluggard sex”: “Employment, the earning of the family income at a place outside the family home rather became the image of male parental care in our society” (see Döge 2000: 21). The gender-related division of labor is reproduced continuously during the socialization process of men and cannot easily being broken through (not even by professors). Here the questions occur if male professors really can rely on their partners who keep them free. In addition, if it is generally possible to interlink the areas of science and fatherhood without any compromises or if one has to accept delays in the own career based on family conditions.

These have been some of the questions that we focused on in our empirical study (see Reuter/Vedder/Liebig 2008). In this context, we realized 20 qualitative half standardized

interviews; 20 Interviews with professors from 16 different disciplines at the beginning of 2007. We interviewed persons from dissimilar academic positions (such as full professor, dean, vice president, junior professor, extraordinary professor, assistant professor as well as a professor emeritus) and diverse university places in Germany and Switzerland (like Trier, Koblenz, Heidelberg, Bern, Zürich and Neuchâtel). The interviewed persons mainly belong to the humanities, economic or social sciences (to be more precise, the subjects business administration, philosophy, law and sociology are represented twice), but there are also professors from the natural science and computer sciences. In each case, ten of the interviewees were between 38 and 52 years old (and thereby represent the younger professors) and the others between 56 and 69 years old. Three of the interviewed scientists are fathers of one child, eleven professors have two children and five had three or more children. There is one exception: one professor of Christian social sciences that has no children but has to assure the compatibility of different areas of life not only as professor, but mostly as pastor and member of a fraternity.

3.1 Sciences as life form

As suggested before, not only female academics with children do have compatibility problems. Male professors also suffer from the dominant scientific myth and work ethos mainly stamped by their cosexuals. Max Weber was one of the first who formulated the idea of science not only as profession but also as passion and mission (in his speech about “science as vocation” in 1919, published in 1922). Scientific profession demands absolute commitment, being the exclusive centre of the scientist’s life. Whoever aims at a scientific career has to accept the idea of self-exploitation (Weber had to experience that already in his own academic life that forced him to retire from the requirements of the academic system after a short time as professor). There are no part-time memberships in scientific community, but only full-time memberships (see Lind 2004; Berzbach 2006). Normative expectations concerning the scientific biography, amount and place of publications, long working hours and conference participation are required (and reinforced) by colleagues as

well as politicians. So, the problems within the scientific system are quite similar form women and men. Particularly committed fatherhood and participation in the family's everyday life seems to be contradicting with holding a chair.

Those appear as predestined for science who devote themselves (their passion, time, and social life) completely to that system (see Beaufaÿs 2006). A period of life time without science is not a real "alternative" for the interviewed professors (consequently, none of them had a time out).

Despite that strong identification with science, there still are some critical comments in the biographical reflexions, mainly referring to the wide restriction of the private life. Especially the time of qualification seems to be characterized by compatibility problems. The absence of the family (caused by the demands of mobility) and thereby the lack of participation, often in cases of emergency, presented the father with a huge challenge.

3.2 Partnership and family as a resource

Academic careers do not only demand the "whole man", but are also often carried by "one and a halve persons" (see Beck-Gernsheim 1987) or to be clearer: The traditional division of labor between men and women (see Kraus 2000). Statistic data show quite explicitly that not single and childless scientists are the most successful ones but the married men who are able to mobilize their partners as elemental resource of their success. That means that the partnership is vital to the career project of the interviewed professors. Most of them look back on a long partnership, often begun at an early age and proved in several stages of the career. Above all, it is important to mention that these female partners often are also academics who were or are employed in sophisticated jobs. Frequently, they ensured the family income during the period of qualification of their men (see Matthies 2006) and supported them also in non-material, emotional ways.

3.3 Familial arrangements and “holistic lifestyle”

Becoming parents also includes reorientation concerning inner familial division of labor and roles (see e.g. Künzler/Walter 2001): Familial biographies of the interviewed persons, especially those of the older generation of professors, followed for the most part traditional patterns, delegating main responsibility of parenting to their wives. Our field reports show that fatherhood in these cases was restricted to occasionally physical presence, bread-winning function and shared activities on weekends and holidays. Although the interviewed fathers retrospectively still subordinate family affairs under their professional orientation and career, some of them do regret not having been more present in their families in the past.

3.4 Time management between autonomy and pressure

Main privileges of science as profession – autonomy and flexibility of time management – usually contrast to blurring boundaries between work and life. This not only reflects in working times of professors (at weekends, during holidays and often all-night), but also in increasing efforts of synchronizing respectively separation of work and private life: Partners have to make deals about times of child care, organize handovers, keep an account of the family, etc. Nevertheless, the vision of a silent working atmosphere and freedom to develop scientific interests still persists in scientific community (see Heintz et al. 2004: 221).

Moreover, time autonomy seriously declines in higher administration positions at universities. Concerning professional requests in time, a president (rector) or dean of a university can easily be compared with higher positions of management in economy. Time management becomes an intractable challenge when both parents are strongly involved in their jobs. “Abundance of time, including time for themselves” (Jurczyk 2005, translation by the authors of this paper) is generally unknown to the interviewed professors. Merely some of them succeed in getting free space for shared time with their family or partner.

And hardly any of them has time or energy to volunteer one's time besides profession and family. So, being a scientist for our interviewees goes along with cutting back other areas of life essentially that may have had room before.

3.5 Structural deficits at universities

Institutional offers of child care in Germany and Switzerland are perceived as completely inadequate for nearly all of the professors. As mentioned before, academic success is often linked with distance to the regional provenance and permanent residence of the scientific elite which also means that most of them simply cannot rely on the support of grandparents, kinship or long lasting friendships. To compensate that situation, some of the professors established innovative living arrangements (shared communities), self organized child care services or different forms of neighborhood supports at their new job location. Generally, "strict discipline", enormous organizing abilities and creativity seem to be essential to balance work life and private life at the concerned universities.

Reforms in the context of Bologna did not defuse the situation. On the contrary: Those, who already have had chairs, are faced with additional demands that make compatibility of work and life even more difficult. Administrative tasks, increasing teaching obligations and examinations due to rising number of students and committee work result in growing compulsory attendance that goes along with decreasing time autonomy.

Besides structural restrictions, the collective work ethic does not support a family friendly surrounding and even scientists who are fathers, do not necessarily declare their solidarity: Following informal rules and taboos at universities, fathers do not thematize their familial duties and absence (and that more frequent than mothers). At some places, children were not even a subject at work, often it was not transparent if a colleague has children or not. It was simply not an issue. Up to today, there is no official discourse at university that would provide an adequate platform for men as well as women to adhere to their familial duties and quality of life based on their children.

3.6 Alternative masculinity as risk

Statements in the interviews also brought out another aspect: Not only patriarchal gender regimes are the basis of rationality and function of science and university, but also subordination or super order of diverse masculinities. In other words: “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 1987) within the scientific community subsist on inequality between gender and on the competition between men.

Referring to our interview partners, appeal proceedings do not take into account qualifications that are based on parenthood and educational duties. Colleagues and superiors do not sympathize with family friendly working conditions – especially if they are not parents themselves. Perfect appreciation for men who balance work and a life with their family still is relatively small. That observation is only confirmed by the fact that men are not an explicit topic within the debate about compatibility problems at German or Swizz universities.

4. Consequences for science and society

As we have shown in our paper, men also do have compatibility problems. And amongst them not only those who have a lack of money, time, options or maybe self-confidence, but even those who do have quite stable material backgrounds (enough economic capital, to speak with Pierre Bourdieu), time budget, a good know how and social networks, spoke about problems realizing the right Work-Life-Balance. Further and more intensive empirical research than our pilot study has to pay attention to these first findings. That can only be realized with the precondition that compatibility between work life and private life is definitely not just a women’s issue. Surely, this lack of perspective corresponds to the fact that male research still is not established in Germany and Switzerland (and that there hasn’t even been a comprehensive men’s movement at all that would be comparable to the women’s one).

Above all, there is a fundamental lack of alternative role models for men and fathers. Not only within the universities, but also in research and politics: Instead of just supporting images as the “tough fellow in the man” (Thomas Gesterkamp) or conservative ideas of the man as bread-winner or/and service provider, positive non-material images of fathers like the “committed or active fatherhood” (characterized by Wassilios Fthenakis) should be established: Men who give up their former uni-dimensional focus on work life in favor of their engagement in child care, for instance changing baby snappers not just for two month, but assign fundamentally new priorities for family, friendships and internal qualities such as introspection, social abilities and empathy (often with guilty conscience to superiors).

Political measures should not start with the founding of a family or later in work life, but much earlier and in a more fundamental way: In childhood and adolescence. Young men should not get the narrow minded image of themselves as dominant future bread-winner of the family (which is more and more unrealistic paying attention to the rapidly changing structure of the labor market). Vocational preparation in school should get them ready for a maybe non linear employment biography as well as demands of everyday and family life: Child care, running and organizing a household and also changed gender relations concerning women who claim for their “private part of life” (Beck-Gernsheim 1983) and an equal partnership. Do they miss these “lesions”, gender conflicts are easily foreseeable. Just ideas will not help here. In the long run, concrete and available examples are necessary: teachers in “Kindergarten” and school who actively perceive their role and communicate this role to the children and fathers who are present in their families.

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