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Hequn Wang*

Navigating Subjective Socioeconomic Insecurity in Times of Crisis

An Interplay of Social Status, Crisis Experiences and Perceptions**

Abstract: Using experiences from the financial crisis, this paper investigates the extent to which subjective socioeconomic insecurity among Germans has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war. I analyse how subjective insecurity is associated with individuals' social status and their personal crisis experiences and perceptions during the crises. I distinguish between objective and subjective social status, addressing the more crucial role of the latter in shaping subjective insecurity. Using panel data from 2020 to 2022 and additional Eurobarometer data, the results show that Germans are less concerned about their jobs and more about their economic conditions. Subjective economic insecurity experienced a substantial increase in summer 2022, potentially due to the energy crisis and inflation, which have been exacerbated by the war. The increase was primarily observed among individuals who perceive themselves at the bottom of society, indicating a crucial role of subjective social status in explaining changes in feelings of insecurity. Objective status based on income, education or occupation does not explain the changes. Overall, lower-status groups are more likely to feel insecure. During crises, this negative association is intensified by individuals' crisis experiences such as income loss and their perceptions of economic affectedness.

Keywords: Subjective Socioeconomic Insecurity; Social Status; Economic Crises; Perceptions; COVID-19; Russia-Ukraine War

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Subjektive sozioökonomische Unsicherheit in Krisenzeiten

Ein Zusammenspiel von sozialem Status, Krisenerfahrungen und Wahrnehmungen

Zusammenfassung: Der vorliegende Beitrag analysiert anhand von Erfahrungen aus der Finanzkrise, inwieweit sich die subjektive sozioökonomische Unsicherheit der Deutschen während der COVID-19-Pandemie und nach dem Russisch-Ukrainischen Krieg verändert hat. Konkret wird untersucht, inwiefern die subjektive Unsicherheit mit dem individuellen sozialen Status sowie persönlichen Krisenerfahrungen und -wahrnehmungen zusammenhängt. Dazu wird zwischen dem objektiven und subjektiven sozialen Status unterschieden, um die wichtigere Rolle des letzteren zu adressieren. Empirisch werden Paneldaten von 2020 bis 2022 sowie zusätzliche Eurobarometer-Daten verwendet. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass sich die Deutschen weniger um ihren Arbeitsplatz sorgen, jedoch mehr um ihre wirtschaftliche Lage. Ihr wirtschaftliches Unsicherheitsgefühl nahm im Sommer 2022 signifikant zu, was möglicherweise auf die Energiekrise und die Inflation zurückzuführen ist, welche durch den Krieg deutlich verschärft wurden. Der Anstieg ist insbesondere bei Individuen zu beobachten, die sich selbst am unteren Ende der Gesellschaft sehen. Dies verdeutlicht die wesentliche Bedeutung des subjektiven sozialen Status bei der Erklärung von Veränderungen des Unsicherheitsgefühls. Eine Erklärung für die Veränderungen lässt sich anhand objektiver Statusmerkmale, wie Einkommen, Bildung oder Beruf, nicht ableiten. Insgesamt wird festgestellt, dass sich Gruppen mit niedrigerem Status eher unsicher fühlen. In Krisenzeiten wird dieser Zusammenhang durch persönliche Krisenerfahrungen wie Einkommensverluste und die Wahrnehmung wirtschaftlicher Betroffenheit weiter verstärkt.

Stichworte: Subjektive sozioökonomische Unsicherheit; Sozialer Status; Ökonomische Krisen; Wahrnehmungen; COVID-19; Russisch-Ukrainischer Krieg

1 Introduction

Major crises, such as the financial crisis in 2008/09 and the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to significant economic downturns worldwide. Consequently, individuals may feel insecure about their future employment and economic circumstances. Indeed, widespread feelings of socioeconomic insecurity have emerged since the financial crisis, especially in economically hard-hit countries (Akaeda/Schöneck 2022; Chung/van Oorschot 2011; Lübke/Erlinghagen 2014). Based on the example of the financial crisis, we might also expect increasing subjective socioeconomic insecurity after the onset of the pandemic. Europeans may feel even more socioeconomically insecure as a result of the energy crisis and inflation, which have been

largely intensified by Russia's attack on Ukraine since February 2022, with the pandemic still ongoing.

Subjective socioeconomic insecurity is particularly relevant in times of crisis, as individuals may perceive themselves as vulnerable to economic and social changes in society, regardless of their actual socioeconomic circumstances. Higher subjective insecurity has further negative impacts on individuals concerning, for instance, their subjective well-being and mental health (Alcover et al. 2022; Fernandez-Urbano/Kulic 2020), institutional trust (Delhey et al. 2023; Wroe 2016) and welfare state attitudes (Marx 2014).

Economically, the pandemic hit Germany moderately compared to other European countries. The expansion of short-time work has saved a sizeable share of the German population from losing their jobs (Gehrke/Weber 2020). Relief packages have been passed to mitigate the energy crisis and inflation caused by the Russia-Ukraine war. Against this background, investigating the extent to which Germans still feel insecure about their future socioeconomic circumstances is of particular interest.

This paper analyses changes in subjective socioeconomic insecurity in Germany from 2020, after the beginning of the pandemic, to around a half year after the war outbreak in 2022. I study to what extent individuals' subjective insecurity is associated with their social status at the onset of the pandemic, their personal crisis experiences during the pandemic and their perceptions of economic affectedness due to the pandemic. Moreover, I differentiate between objective and subjective social status. Individuals' subjective social status often does not correspond to their objective status based on personal occupation or income (Evans/Valley 2004) but explicitly refers to their assessment of their relative position in society. Subjective status also reflects the socioeconomic conditions of the entire household better than objective status (Oesch/Vigna 2023). In this paper, I investigate whether subjective social status plays a more crucial role than objective status in shaping subjective insecurity in times of crisis.

For the main analysis, I use four-wave panel data collected in two research projects in Germany. The first wave took place in March 2020, the second in June and July 2020, the third in April 2021, and the last panel wave occurred in July and August 2022. The data contain three items on subjective socioeconomic insecurity asked in each wave, starting with the second panel wave. Objective and subjective measures of social status were included in the first panel wave, enabling me to investigate the relationship between individuals' initial social status and their subjective insecurity during the pandemic. Additionally, I employ data from Eurobarometer surveys to validate the results, illustrating the general trends of subjective insecurity in Germany over the past two decades.

Overall, Germans are less concerned about losing their jobs and more concerned about having financial difficulties or a much lower living standard. From summer

2020 to summer 2022, no substantial changes in insecurity regarding job loss occurred, but insecurity regarding the economic aspects clearly increased, particularly in summer 2022. Additional analysis of the Eurobarometer data reveals a small increase in subjective socioeconomic insecurity also from 2019 to 2020. Therefore, the pandemic seems to have had a limited impact on subjective insecurity among Germans. Their concerns about their economic conditions increased significantly after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. The increase is primarily observed among those with a lower subjective social position, and cannot not be traced back to objective status based on income, education or occupation. Accordingly, the increase in subjective economic insecurity is more likely to be attributed to the energy crisis and inflation resulting from the war, with a particular impact on those who perceive themselves at the lower end of the social hierarchy. The findings suggest, as expected, a more important role of subjective than objective social status in analysing changes in subjective insecurity during crises.

Across waves, individuals with a lower objective or subjective social status are more likely to feel insecure about their jobs and economic circumstances. Individuals are more likely to feel insecure when experiencing a personal crisis such as income loss or perceiving themselves to be more affected by the pandemic. Moreover, individual crisis experiences and perceptions only partly explain the negative coefficient of social status on subjective insecurity. The findings present compelling descriptive evidence of a negative association between social status and subjective socioeconomic insecurity, which is further intensified by individual crisis experiences and perceptions during crises.

2 Subjective Socioeconomic Insecurity in Germany in Times of Crisis

The two major global crises of the last two decades, namely the financial crisis in 2008/09 and the recent COVID-19 pandemic, have led to substantial economic downturns worldwide. They have caused various degrees of decreased economic growth and increased unemployment rates in different countries. Although economically less affected by both crises than other European countries, Germany still experienced a contraction of its gross domestic product (GDP) of 5.7 per cent in 2009 and 3.7 per cent in 2020 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2023). The country's GDP grew back within the two years following each crisis, suggesting a relatively short-term impact of both crises on the national economy.

The German government has enacted different policy measures in response to both crises to provide financial and social assistance to the citizens. Short-time work, among others, was largely used to cope with the financial crisis and further expanded shortly after the pandemic began. Indeed, no significant rise in unemployment took place in Germany in 2009, as the unemployment rate rose slightly by 0.3 percentage points compared to 2008 (7.8 per cent) and continued to drop over the following ten years (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2023). This suggests that the

short-time work scheme successfully buffered the negative impact of the financial crisis on the German labour market. During the pandemic, short-time work was employed with greater intensity, especially during the first pandemic wave in the spring of 2020 (Gehrke/Weber 2020). Despite the potential cushioning effect of short-time work, the unemployment rate increased from 5.0 per cent in 2019 to 5.9 per cent in 2020. In the following year, the unemployment rate dropped slightly to 5.7 per cent, and it had not yet returned to the pre-pandemic level by the end of 2022 (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2023). The pandemic appears to have had a more pronounced and longer-lasting negative impact on the labour market, compared to the financial crisis. Nevertheless, Germany's unemployment rate has remained relatively low over the last 15 years.

Against a crisis that resulted in a decreasing national economy and increasing unemployment, individuals may feel particularly insecure about their own socioeconomic circumstances. Empirical evidence shows that German citizens felt increased concern about the financial situation of their households in 2008 (Burzan/Kohrs 2013; Niehues/Stockhausen 2020) when the economic crisis had not yet hit Germany. This suggests that citizens were concerned about their country and personal circumstances as the crisis hit other countries. Interestingly, public concern began to decrease in 2009 when Germany had just been hit by the financial crisis (*ibid.*). This may be surprising at first glance, but it is consistent with the fact that Germany was economically much less hard hit than other countries and recovered quickly afterwards. Moreover, it indicates that Germans are optimistic about themselves and their country in confronting the crisis. Following this logic, one may expect similar changes in subjective socioeconomic insecurity among German citizens after the COVID-19 pandemic began. Overall, there should be a significant rise in subjective insecurity since 2020. Taking the discussed differences regarding the labour market consequences of the two crises into consideration, the pandemic may have resulted in stronger and longer-lasting insecurity feelings among Germans.

In 2022, as the pandemic continued, the Russia-Ukraine war broke out at the end of February. This triggered an acute energy crisis in Germany, having a further negative impact on the national economy. Since then, relief packages have been adopted to cope with the situation, such as discounted local transport tickets (the '9 Euro-Ticket') and the tax reduction for gas and district heating. Despite these measures, the year-on-year inflation rate in 2022 reached a historically high level (+7.9 per cent), and the monthly inflation rate exceeded the 10-per cent threshold in October (Statistische Bundesamt 2024). Under these circumstances, Germans may feel even more insecure about their own socioeconomic conditions.

Taking the changes after the financial crisis as a starting point, this paper examines changes in subjective socioeconomic insecurity among Germans over the course of the pandemic from 2020 to 2022. To analyse subjective insecurity in 2022,

the paper also considers the Russia-Ukraine war, particularly the energy crisis and inflation triggered by the war, given their potential impact on subjective insecurity. We should note that, in contrast to the financial crisis, the pandemic's health consequences and the war's life-threatening nature may have contributed to an increase in general feelings of insecurity. This paper, however, focuses on feelings of job and economic insecurity specifically, highlighting the similarity of the three different crises in terms of their labour market and economic consequences. In particular, I analyse the extent to which such subjective insecurity and its changes over time differ among individuals.

3 Social Status, Crisis Perceptions and Subjective Socioeconomic Insecurity

Subjective socioeconomic insecurity has drawn attention since the end of the last century due to globalisation and labour market flexibilisation, together with the increasing proliferation of atypical employment (Countouris 2007). The debate further expanded after the global financial crisis. Against this background, scholars – mainly conducting country-comparative analyses – have analysed how subjective socioeconomic insecurity is driven by (changing) contextual factors (e.g., Akaeda/Schöneck 2022; Chung/van Oorschot 2011; Lübke/Erlinghagen 2014; van Oorschot/Chung 2015). In contrast, this paper investigates how subjective socioeconomic insecurity is related to different individual characteristics, focusing on subjective insecurity during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. I analyse subjective insecurity in terms of concerns about future employment and economic circumstances.

Although not addressing individual-level determinants explicitly, previous research has found substantial differences regarding subjective socioeconomic insecurity among individuals with different social statuses. For instance, individuals with unemployment experiences or precarious socioeconomic circumstances (e.g., temporary contract and lower income) are more worried about losing their jobs and feel insecure about their general employment situation (Böckerman 2004; Chung 2019; Lübke/Erlinghagen 2014). In addition, lower-status groups have more concern about having financial difficulties in the near future (Akaeda/Schöneck 2022; Burgoon/Dekker 2010; Mau et al. 2012). Overall, individuals with a lower social status exhibit higher levels of subjective socioeconomic insecurity. Consequently, we could expect a comparable influence of social status on subjective insecurity after the pandemic outbreak.

As discussed in Section 2, the pandemic has led to a relatively small increase in unemployment and a much larger increase in short-time work in Germany, accompanied by decreasing incomes for affected individuals. Widely used indicators of social status, such as occupation or income, may have thus changed rapidly over the course of the pandemic, depending on individuals' own crisis experiences, such

as job changes or income loss. Accordingly, I distinguish between social status at the beginning of the pandemic and changes in employment or income during the pandemic. Individuals who have experienced job or income loss should feel more insecure about their future socioeconomic circumstances. More importantly, those with a lower social status at the onset of the pandemic tend to have higher subjective insecurity, regardless of potential subsequent changes in their employment or income. Further, individuals with a lower initial status are at higher risk of being affected in terms of shifting into short-time work or losing their jobs and income, which leads to higher subjective socioeconomic insecurity.

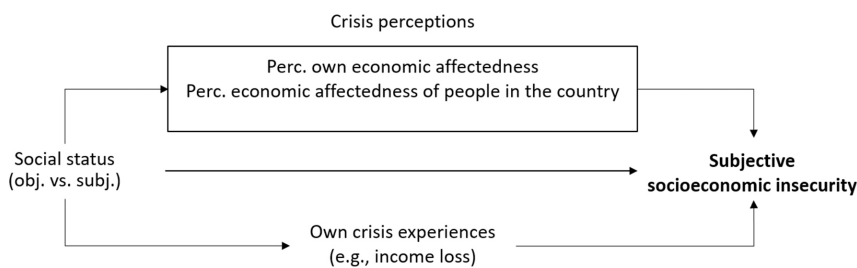
In addition to classical objective measures of social status, subjective social status is often used in empirical studies, particularly for analysing different subjective indicators of individuals, such as subjective well-being (Präg et al. 2016) and support for the radical right (Gidron/Hall 2017). Subjective social status highlights individuals' own position relative to others in society. More importantly, it addresses how individuals perceive their relative position in the social hierarchy, which may not always correspond to their objective status based on their occupation or income. Indeed, previous research has found a mismatch between objective and subjective social statuses, as individuals tend to place themselves in the middle of the social hierarchy (Evans/Kelley 2004). Accordingly, as empirically confirmed, subjective social position plays a more crucial role than objective measures in explaining subjective outcomes (e.g., Tan et al. 2020). Moreover, despite being referred to as the 'middle-class bias' (OECD 2019), the disparities between objective and subjective measures do not necessarily imply that individuals misperceive their own status. Instead, subjective social position can offer a more comprehensive assessment than a singular measure such as income, occupation or education, as individuals may consider both their own and their partners' education, occupation, income and wealth when evaluating their overall social standing. A recent study by Oesch and Vigna (2023) corroborates that subjective social status provides a more accurate reflection of income and wealth within individuals' households than the objective measure based on occupation and additional employment details. Against this background, I argue that individuals' self-perceived social position also predicts their subjective insecurity better than their objective status.

Finally, individuals' perceptions of economic affectedness due to a crisis also shape their perceived insecurity. First, individuals may feel insecure about their future circumstances when they perceive themselves as economically affected by a crisis; notably, this perception is not necessarily solely due to their actual crisis experiences, such as income loss. Second, individuals may feel insecure when they perceive others in the country suffering from a crisis. Their initial social status at the beginning of a crisis plays a role in shaping both kinds of crisis perceptions. Empirical evidence shows that lower-status groups tend to perceive their country and themselves as highly affected economically by the financial crisis (Giugni/Mexi 2018; Kiess/Lahusen 2018; Uba 2018). Similarly, lower-status groups may perceive

themselves and other people in the country as more affected by the pandemic, resulting in higher subjective insecurity regarding their own future socioeconomic circumstances.

In a nutshell, individuals’ initial social status plays a significant role in forming their subjective socioeconomic insecurity during a crisis. Their actual crisis experiences and perceptions of affectedness act as mediators that partly explain how initial status shapes subjective insecurity. Figure 1 illustrates the formation of subjective socioeconomic insecurity in times of crisis, addressing the interplay between individuals’ initial social status at the onset of a crisis, their own crisis experiences during the crisis, and their perceptions of economic affectedness due to the crisis. Given the potential disparities between objective and subjective measures of social status and that subjective social status better predicts household socioeconomic conditions, I differentiate the two measures to analyse their different impacts on subjective insecurity. First, I expect initial social status to have a negative effect on subjective insecurity during a crisis: *Individuals with a lower social status are more likely to feel insecure about their future socioeconomic circumstances* (H1). Second, I hypothesise that *subjective social status has a stronger influence on subjective socioeconomic insecurity than objective social status* (H2).

Figure 1: Formation of subjective socioeconomic insecurity in times of crisis



Note: This figure illustrates the formation of subjective socioeconomic insecurity during crises.

Source: Author's own creation.

As discussed in Section 2, subjective socioeconomic insecurity is expected to increase overall in the aftermath of a crisis. I assume that changes in subjective insecurity during a crisis, such as the financial crisis or the pandemic, differ among individuals with different social statuses. Using data from the European Social Survey fielded in 2008/2009, just after the financial crisis, Mau et al. (2012) found higher subjective insecurity in countries with increasing unemployment rates and inequality, especially among individuals with a lower social status. The authors pointed out that underprivileged groups may be generally more sensitive to crises and changing institutional contexts and are thus more likely to feel insecure. Following this argument, we could expect a particularly strong increase in subjective

insecurity for lower-status groups. In contrast to Mau et al. and previous studies that used cross-sectional data, I utilise panel data from 2020 to 2022 to analyse changes in subjective socioeconomic insecurity among Germans. The panel design enables me to additionally employ fixed effects models to investigate how individual changes in subjective insecurity during this period differ across different status groups. I hypothesise that *the probability of feeling socioeconomically insecure increases over time, especially for individuals with a lower social status* (H3). Furthermore, distinguishing between objective and subjective social status, I expect that *the increase in subjective socioeconomic insecurity over time is more strongly related to subjective social status* (H4).

During crises, individuals' initial social status – in addition to directly impacting their subjective insecurity – influences their subjective insecurity by determining their crisis experiences and perceptions. This mechanism should hold for both objective and subjective measures of social status. Lower-status groups are more prone to experiencing job changes or income loss and assessing themselves and others as negatively affected by a crisis. Consequently, they are more likely to feel socioeconomically insecure. Therefore, *the negative impact of individuals' social status on their subjective socioeconomic insecurity during a crisis should be partly explained by their crisis experiences and perceptions* (H5). Meanwhile, *individuals with their own crisis experiences (e.g., income loss) are more likely to feel insecure about their future socioeconomic circumstances* (H5a). Furthermore, *the more highly individuals perceive themselves to be economically affected by a crisis* (H5b), *or the more highly they perceive others in their country to be affected* (H5c), *the more likely they are to feel socioeconomically insecure*.

As discussed earlier and addressed within Hypotheses H5b and H5c, individuals' perceptions regarding their own and others' economic affectedness should have a similar positive influence on their subjective insecurity. This raises the question of the extent to which they feel insecure when perceiving their own affectedness as higher and others' affectedness as lower, or vice versa. Previous research has revealed that individuals base their assessments on cognitive comparisons with their past selves and with groups in their social environment (for a review, see Smith et al. 2012). In this sense, individuals feel insecure about their future socioeconomic circumstances when assessing their present employment or financial situation as worse than in pre-crisis times. Their subjective insecurity is intensified when they perceive themselves as more strongly affected by a crisis than others in their country. Building on this, I finally hypothesise that *individuals are more likely to feel socioeconomically insecure when perceiving themselves to be economically more highly affected by a crisis than others in the country* (H6).

4 Data and Methodology

I use the SOECBIAS-COVREF data containing four panel waves from 2020 to 2022, collected in two research projects at the University of Hamburg (Beblo et al. 2024). Data collection of the first panel wave took place from 6 March to 31 March 2020, as the pandemic has just begun in Germany. A quota sample alongside gender, age, education and income was drawn from an online access panel, with 1,535 participants in the first wave. The second panel wave was collected from 23 June to 12 July 2020, the third from 12 April to 28 April 2021, and the last panel wave was collected from 15 July to 10 August 2022. Eighty-five per cent of the original sample, or 1,304 respondents, participated in wave 2, 1,034 (67.5 per cent) participated in wave 3, and 896 respondents of the original sample (58.4 per cent) participated in the last wave.¹ Overall, the sample is representative of the German population in terms of gender, age, education, income, and employment status. In this paper, weights are applied in all analyses to adjust for slight sample deviations. Further details on the collection and quality of the data are provided in Lohmann et al. (2024).

The dataset includes three different measures of subjective socioeconomic insecurity. Starting with the second panel wave, respondents were asked in each wave to assess how likely they were in the next 12 months to 1) lose their job because of layoffs or company closure; 2) have difficulties paying current expenses, such as rent, utilities or loan repayments; 3) have to drastically lower their standard of living. Though lacking data for March 2020, the subsequent data allow me to capture changes in subjective insecurity from summer 2020 to summer 2022. Moreover, the three items address different dimensions of subjective insecurity, enabling me to analyse potential differences in job and economic insecurity. The last panel wave allows me to additionally investigate how the Russia-Ukraine war and the accompanying energy crisis and inflation may have influenced subjective insecurity while the pandemic was still ongoing. A further strength of the dataset is that it contains detailed information on respondents' income and employment situation and how they perceive their economic affectedness due to the pandemic and that of other people in Germany. The items were also collected in each wave, starting with the second panel wave. The first panel wave, in turn, contains different objective and subjective measures of social status. These data enable me to investigate how subjective insecurity and its changes over time are related to individuals' initial social status, objective changes in their employment and income, and their perceptions of economic affectedness.

Regarding subjective insecurity, the answers for each of the three items range from 0 to 100, and the higher the score, the higher the assessed risk. Additionally, respondents were given the option 'This has already happened'. In this case, they

1 In the third and fourth panel waves, fresh samples of 203 and 220 respondents were added, respectively. In this paper, I only analyse the original sample.

did not report their perceived future risks. For the main analysis, I recode each item into a dummy showing whether respondents feel insecure, defining it as ‘feeling insecure’ when respondents reported a perceived risk of 50 or higher or selected ‘This has already happened’.² As robustness checks, I use two alternative operationalisations of the dependent variables. In the first variant, I treat each item as a metric variable, varying from 0 to 101, whereas I recode ‘This has already happened’ with 101, denoting the highest degree of subjective insecurity. In the second variant, I operationalise the dependent variables as dummies, as in the main analysis, but exclude for each item respondents who selected ‘This has already happened’. The results are quite consistent across the different operationalisations. I discuss the results of the main analysis in detail in Section 5 and provide the results of the robustness checks in Appendix B (Tables B1–B4).

To measure individuals’ own crisis experiences, I first use the item where respondents reported how their net household income has changed. The answers range from 1 (‘strongly decreased’) to 5 (‘strongly increased’). I summarise the variable into three categories (i.e. ‘decreased’, ‘about the same’ and ‘increased’).

Another typical crisis experience during the pandemic involves a job loss or a shift to short-time work. Based on information on employment status that was asked about in all four panel waves, I build a new variable that captures changes in employment status compared to the first wave (March 2020), with four categories (‘(self-)employed, unchanged’, ‘shifted to short-time work’, ‘lost own job’ and ‘other/inactive’).³ Matching the official statistics on labour market dynamics (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2023, 2024), only about 1 per cent of the respondents lost their job, and 4 per cent shifted to short-time work in the second wave, that is, between March 2020 and June/July 2020. The changes are smaller for the subsequent waves. Moreover, a shift to short-time work also indicates a state of joblessness for the individuals concerned, though temporarily. For these reasons, I summarise the two categories, i.e., ‘shifted to short-time work’ and ‘lost own job’.

Regarding perceptions of economic affectedness due to the pandemic, respondents were asked to place themselves and people in Germany, respectively, on a vertical scale from bottom (0 – ‘no economic affectedness’) to top (100 – ‘strong economic affectedness’). I divide the items by 10 in the regression analysis. Additionally, I take respondents’ own perceived affectedness minus the perceived affectedness of

2 Respondents were asked how likely they are to lose their job only when they had reported in previous questions that they are (self-)employed or have had paid work in the last seven days. The (self-)employed respondents who chose ‘This has already happened’ must have still had their jobs at the moment of data collection, as indicated, but they may have received an announcement of layoffs or company closure. Therefore, I also categorise these respondents as ‘feeling insecure’ about their job situation.

3 Approximately 3 per cent of all respondents changed from inactivity to (self-)employment. As this is not the focus of this paper, these respondents were included in the ‘other/inactive’ category.

people in Germany to calculate their own perceived affectedness relative to others in Germany. A score above 0 refers to a higher perceived affectedness for themselves than others. I then build a new dummy variable denoting whether respondents perceived themselves as more highly affected than others.

The data contain different objective measures of social status at the onset of the pandemic. I use monthly net household income as the objective measure for the main analysis. OECD (2019) defines the middle-income group as households with an equivalent disposable income between 75 and 200 per cent of the national median. Following this definition and based on the median income in Germany in 2019, I categorise respondents with a monthly net household income between 1,500 and 4,000 euros as the middle-income group (medium status).⁴ Respondents with a monthly income of less than 1,500 euros are categorised as the lower-income group (lower status), and those with an income of more than 4,000 euros as the higher-income group (higher status). As respondents reported their income in categories, I do not calculate the equivalent income for each household but control for household size in the main analysis. For a robustness check, I employ the equivalent household income, for which only a rough calculation is possible based on the reported income categories.⁵ The results remain consistent and are provided in Appendix C (Tables C1 and C2). For additional analyses, I include education (lower, medium or higher) and occupation (manual, skilled/service or professional/clerical) as two further objective measures of social status.

Regarding subjective social position, respondents were asked to place themselves within society on a vertical scale from bottom (0) to top (100). I categorise those who put themselves below 30 as the lower-status group, between 30 and 70 as the medium-status group, and those who placed themselves at 70 or higher as the higher-status group.

I include gender, age and a dummy on whether respondents live in eastern Germany as further individual controls and use the unbalanced sample.⁶ After data cleaning, the sample consists of 2,615 observations from waves 2 to 4, with 1,052 respondents in wave 2 (June/July 2020), 837 in wave 3 (April 2021) and 726 respondents in wave 4 (July/August 2022). The sample is smaller for analysing job insecurity since unemployed respondents are excluded, leaving 1,607 observations, containing 650 respondents in wave 2, 526 in wave 3 and 431 in wave 4. Summary

4 The yearly median equivalent net household income in Germany was 23,515 euros in 2019, as documented in Eurostat (2023), that is, approximately 2,000 euros per month.

5 Respondents were provided with a total of 12 income brackets, comprising 10 brackets of 500 euros and two final brackets of '5,000–10,000 euros' and '10,000 or more'. To calculate the equivalent income, I apply the OECD weight and take the mean of each income bracket except for the last one, for which I use the value of 10,000.

6 The first panel wave contains an information treatment for a randomly chosen subsample initially designed to analyse income misperceptions, which is not the focus of this paper. For this reason, I additionally control for treatment group membership in all regressions.

statistics of the variables for the main and additional analyses are displayed in Table A1 in Appendix A.

In addition to descriptive analysis, I employ pooled OLS models with clustered robust standard errors. I estimate linear probability models for the main analysis since all three dependent variables are dichotomous. I test how individuals' objective and subjective social statuses at the onset of the pandemic relate to their subjective insecurity since then. Additionally, I use fixed effects models to check the consistency of the results regarding the changes in subjective insecurity among different status groups over time. Furthermore, I investigate the extent to which subjective insecurity is associated with changes in employment and income and perceptions of economic affectedness due to the pandemic.⁷

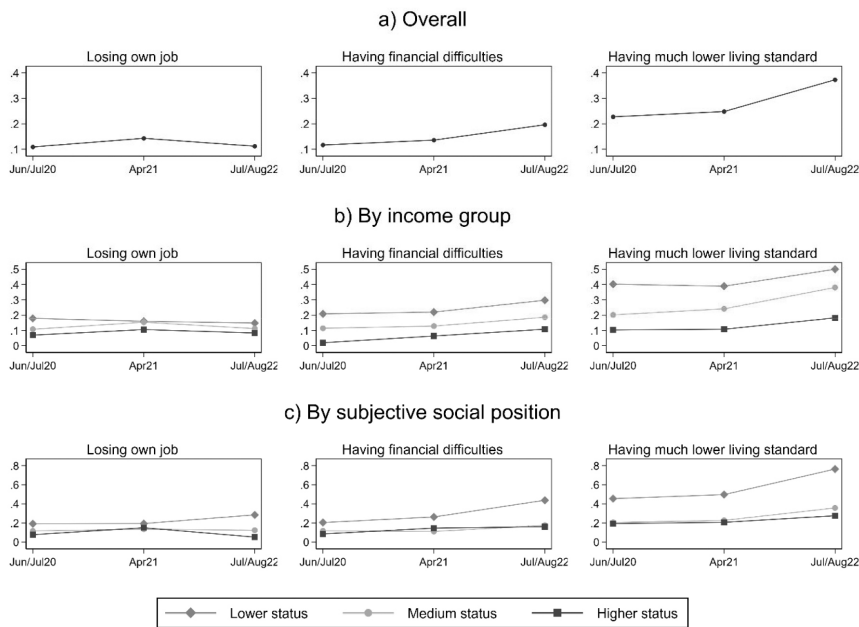
5 Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics: Changes in Subjective Insecurity by Social Status

Figure 2 shows how subjective socioeconomic insecurity in Germany has changed from June/July 2020 to July/August 2022. Figure 2a) illustrates the overall changes, and Figures 2b) and 2c) illustrate the changes by income group and subjective social position at the beginning of the pandemic, respectively. Overall, subjective job insecurity among German respondents was relatively stable over time, as shown in Figure 2a). After a small rise in April 2021, subjective job insecurity dropped in July/August 2022 back to the level of two years before. The share of respondents concerned about losing their jobs in the next 12 months remained at a low level, that is, less than 15 per cent in all three waves. Respondents were more concerned about their financial situation than their employment situation. From June/July 2020 to April 2021, no substantial change in subjective economic insecurity occurred, but a clear increase took place by July/August 2022. Moreover, German respondents were throughout more likely to worry about having a much lower living standard than about having financial difficulties. Around 20 per cent of respondents were concerned about the former in the summer of 2020, and the share increased to almost 40 per cent by the summer of 2022.

7 In the main analysis, respondents are also considered to be feeling insecure if they selected 'This has already happened' within the items on subjective insecurity, i.e., they have lost their job, had financial difficulties, or drastically lowered their standard of living. These experiences may lead them to perceive themselves to be economically affected by the pandemic. The potential reverse causality should have been excluded from the robustness check that omitted respondents who chose 'This has already happened'. The results of the robustness check remain consistent, as demonstrated in Appendix B (Tables B2 and B4).

Figure 2: Changes of subjective socioeconomic insecurity, 2020 – 2022 in Germany



Note: The figure presents the changes from June/July 2020 to July/August 2022 in the share of Germans who were worried about losing their jobs (left), having financial difficulties (middle) and having a much lower standard of living (right) in the next 12 months. Figures 2a), 2b), and 2c) show the overall changes, changes by income group and by subjective social position, respectively.

Source: SOECBIAS-COVREF data. Weights applied.

Figure 2b) demonstrates a clear pattern: the higher-income group is least likely to feel insecure about their future socioeconomic circumstances, and the lower-income group is most likely to feel insecure. In particular, about half of the lower-income group were concerned about having a much lower living standard in July/August 2022, while less than 20 per cent of the higher-income group were worried at the time. Changes in subjective insecurity from June/July 2020 to July/August 2022 were similar across different income groups. This indicates that the observed overall increase in subjective insecurity cannot be explained by income.

Figure 2c) shows that respondents who place themselves in the lower-status group are also more likely to feel insecure, applying to all three items on subjective insecurity. Notably, the situations for the medium and higher subjective status groups are very similar. Over all three panel waves, subjective insecurity for respondents with a medium or higher subjective status remained relatively stable. In contrast, a small increase in subjective job insecurity was evident in the last panel wave in

July/August 2022 for the lower subjective status group. Furthermore, a substantial increase in subjective economic insecurity appeared among this group, especially in July/August 2022. This corresponds to the overall changes across all respondents depicted in Figure 2a). In the summer of 2022, over 40 per cent of the lower subjective status group were concerned about having financial difficulties, and almost 80 per cent were worried about having a much lower standard of living. Accordingly, the overall increase in subjective economic insecurity seems to be driven by respondents with a lower subjective status.

To summarise, the descriptive statistics reveal that respondents with a lower social status at the onset of the pandemic were more likely to feel insecure, as expected. While job insecurity remained low, a substantial increase in economic insecurity took place from summer 2020 to summer 2022. The increase could possibly be traced back to respondents who perceive themselves to be at the lower end of the social hierarchy. This reveals the importance of subjective social position in addition to objective measures for analysing subjective insecurity.

5.2 Impact of Objective and Subjective Social Status

In this section, I analyse how subjective socioeconomic insecurity is related to different objective and subjective measures of social status, with a focus on individuals' initial status at the beginning of the pandemic. In addition, I investigate whether the observed increasing subjective insecurity over time is indeed driven by respondents with a lower subjective social position, as revealed by the descriptive statistics. This section presents the results of the main analysis using pooled OLS linear probability models since the dependent variables on subjective insecurity are dichotomous. The results are robust using alternative operationalisations for the dependent variables, as discussed in Section 4 (see also Tables B1 and B2 in Appendix B).

Table 1 displays the main results, controlling for individual characteristics, including gender, age, household size and place of residence. Panel a) shows the coefficients of income group and subjective social position across all waves. Compared to respondents with a lower status at the onset of the pandemic, those with a higher initial status are significantly less likely to be worried about losing their jobs, having financial difficulties and having a much lower standard of living in the next 12 months. The medium-status group is also less likely to have concerns about having financial difficulties and a much lower living standard. These patterns hold for both income group and subjective social position. Consistent with the descriptive results, the coefficients for the subjective medium- and higher-status groups are similar for all three dependent variables, indicating no substantial differences between the two groups. In contrast, higher-income respondents are less likely to feel insecure than those with a medium income.

Table 1: Social status and subjective socioeconomic insecurity

	Losing own job		Having financial difficulties		Having much lower living standard	
	(1) Inc.	(2) Subj. pos.	(3) Inc.	(4) Subj. pos.	(5) Inc.	(6) Subj. pos.
<i>Panel a) by social status</i>						
Social status (ref.: lower status)						
Medium status	-0.055 (0.031)	-0.087 (0.050)	-0.124*** (0.027)	-0.154*** (0.038)	-0.200*** (0.032)	-0.298*** (0.041)
Higher status	-0.106** (0.036)	-0.118* (0.051)	-0.218*** (0.029)	-0.163*** (0.039)	-0.359*** (0.037)	-0.336*** (0.043)
Time period (ref.: Jun/Jul20)						
Apr21	0.034* (0.017)	0.035* (0.017)	0.019 (0.013)	0.019 (0.013)	0.020 (0.017)	0.020 (0.017)
Jul/Aug22	0.000 (0.018)	0.003 (0.018)	0.079*** (0.017)	0.080*** (0.017)	0.143*** (0.020)	0.146*** (0.020)
<i>Panel b) by social status for each wave</i>						
Social status (ref.: lower status)						
Medium status	-0.087* (0.043)	-0.071 (0.062)	-0.122*** (0.031)	-0.086* (0.041)	-0.243*** (0.038)	-0.249*** (0.051)
Higher status	-0.140** (0.047)	-0.112 (0.063)	-0.231*** (0.032)	-0.124** (0.042)	-0.365*** (0.043)	-0.267*** (0.054)

	Losing own job		Having financial difficulties		Having much lower living standard	
	(1) Inc.	(2) Subj. pos.	(3) Inc.	(4) Subj. pos.	(5) Inc.	(6) Subj. pos.
Time period (ref.: Jun/Jul20)						
Apr21	-0.020 (0.050)	0.004 (0.076)	0.008 (0.032)	0.056 (0.043)	-0.019 (0.038)	0.040 (0.052)
Jul/Aug22	-0.031 (0.063)	0.090 (0.100)	0.088 (0.045)	0.232*** (0.066)	0.094 (0.049)	0.306*** (0.068)
Time period x social status (ref.: Apr21 x lower status)						
x Medium status	0.065 (0.055)	0.015 (0.079)	0.007 (0.036)	-0.063 (0.046)	0.059 (0.044)	-0.021 (0.056)
x Higher status	0.061 (0.058)	0.070 (0.082)	0.038 (0.038)	0.005 (0.051)	0.025 (0.047)	-0.028 (0.061)
(ref.: Jul/Aug22 x lower status)						
x Medium status	0.035 (0.067)	-0.083 (0.102)	-0.016 (0.050)	-0.176* (0.069)	0.087 (0.055)	-0.159* (0.073)
x Higher status	0.044 (0.071)	-0.115 (0.103)	0.002 (0.053)	-0.153* (0.073)	-0.016 (0.060)	-0.221** (0.076)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obs.	1607	1607	2615	2615	2615	2615

Note: Using linear probability models. Income group used as the measure of social status in columns (1), (3) and (5), and subjective social position used in columns (2), (4) and (6). Individual controls are gender, age, household size, place of residence (West/East Germany), and treatment group membership. Significant levels: * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

Source: SOECBIAS-COVREF data. Weights applied.

Using education and occupation as alternative objective measures of social status, I find that higher-educated individuals and white-collar individuals or those with a higher administrative position are less likely to feel economically insecure (for detailed results, see Table A2 in Appendix A). Overall, the results confirm my first hypothesis that lower-status groups are more likely to feel insecure about their future socioeconomic circumstances (H1). A significant gap in subjective insecurity exists between the lower subjective status groups and the other two groups, though no substantial gap exists between the medium- and the higher-status groups. In contrast, medium-income individuals are more likely to feel insecure about their future circumstances than higher-income ones, and lower-income individuals are most likely to feel insecure. This reveals a clearer negative association between subjective insecurity and income. The results remain highly robust when employing the measure of equivalent income, as shown in Table C1 in Appendix C. Therefore, my hypothesis that the influence of subjective social position is stronger than objective social status (H2) is not empirically supported. Nevertheless, there is also no evidence that objective measures have a stronger influence in general: Table A2 shows that neither education nor occupation plays a more important role than subjective social position in subjective insecurity. Rather, my findings suggest a stronger influence of income on subjective insecurity across different measures of social status.

After accounting for social status and individual controls, panel a) in Table 1 additionally shows that, in April 2021, respondents were slightly more likely to be concerned about losing their jobs compared to summer 2020. By the summer of 2022, the probability of feeling insecure returned to the level from two years before. Regarding subjective economic insecurity, there were no significant changes in the first year of the pandemic. Several months after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, in July/August 2022, respondents were significantly more likely to be concerned about having financial difficulties and a much lower standard of living.

Panel b) in Table 1 presents the results regarding whether lower-status groups, in particular, experience increasing subjective insecurity over time. Columns (1), (3) and (5) show no significant interaction effects between time period and income group for all three dependent variables. This indicates similar changes in subjective job and economic insecurity over time across income groups. Also, I find no substantial differences across subjective status groups regarding changes in subjective insecurity from June/July 2020 to April 2021, as displayed in columns (2), (4) and (6). However, changes in subjective economic insecurity in July/August 2022 differed significantly among respondents with different subjective social positions. In the summer of 2022, respondents with a lower subjective status were more likely to worry about having financial difficulties and a much lower living standard than in the summer of 2020. Compared to the lower subjective status group, those with a medium or higher status were significantly less likely to exhibit these worries in summer 2022. Adding the relevant coefficients, the probability of feeling insecure

about future economic circumstances did not change substantially over time for respondents with a medium or higher subjective status. Therefore, the increasing insecurity is primarily driven by respondents who perceive a lower social status for themselves, confirming the descriptive statistics. This finding remains consistent when employing fixed effects models (see Table A3 in Appendix A).

My results first reveal a small, temporary increase in subjective job insecurity from summer 2020 to spring 2021, which remained relatively consistent across different status groups. Second, there was a significant increase in subjective economic insecurity from spring 2021 to summer 2022. The increase was driven by individuals with a lower subjective social position and could not be explained by income. The results remain consistent with the use of the equivalent income (see Table C1). Additional analyses show that other objective status measures, such as education and occupation, also do not explain the observed changes in subjective insecurity (see Table A2). This indicates that subjective social status – rather than objective measures – plays a vital role in explaining increasing economic insecurity in the summer of 2022. However, the observed increase in subjective job insecurity in spring 2021 was not associated with objective or subjective social status. These findings partly support my hypotheses that subjective insecurity increases over time, particularly for those with a lower social status (H3), and that the increase is more strongly associated with subjective social status (H4).

5.3 Interplay of Social Status, Crisis Experiences and Perceived Affectedness

In the next step, I analyse how the negative relationship between social status at the onset of the pandemic and subjective socioeconomic insecurity could be explained by individuals' crisis experiences regarding changes in their employment and income during the pandemic. Moreover, I test the extent to which the role of social status is explained by respondents' perceptions of their own economic affectedness and that of others due to the pandemic. Further, I investigate how subjective insecurity is associated with the perceived own affectedness compared to others. In this section, I discuss the results of the main analysis with subjective insecurity operationalised as dummies. Robustness checks show consistent results using other operationalisations, as mentioned in Section 4 (for detailed results, see Tables B3 and B4 in Appendix B).

Table 2 depicts the results of the OLS Models, using income at the beginning of the pandemic as a measure of initial social status. Panel a) displays the coefficients for subjective job insecurity. Panels b) and c) show the results for the two items on subjective economic insecurity. All regression models include individual controls and the variable regarding time periods. Columns (1) to (4) show that the negative coefficient of income group on subjective job insecurity becomes insignificant after including changes in employment and income. The coefficients for subjective

economic insecurity decrease but remain negative and statistically significant after accounting for job and income changes and perceptions of economic affectedness. Compared to respondents with a lower initial income, those with a medium or higher income are less likely to worry about having financial difficulties and a much lower living standard in the upcoming year. Across income groups, respondents with personal crisis experiences, especially a decreased income during the pandemic, are more likely to experience feelings of job and economic insecurity. Furthermore, the higher respondents perceive themselves to be economically affected by the pandemic, the more likely they are to feel insecure. Individuals are also more likely to feel economically insecure the more strongly they perceive others in the country to be affected. However, the coefficient turns insignificant after accounting for the perceived own affectedness. Finally, Column (5) shows that respondents who perceive their own affectedness as higher than others' affectedness are more likely to be concerned about losing their jobs, regardless of the absolute levels of their perceived own affectedness. The perceived own affectedness relative to others has no significant coefficients on subjective economic insecurity.

Table 2: Social status, crisis experiences and perceptions, and subjective insecurity

<i>Panel a)</i>	Losing own job				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Social status (ref.: lower income)					
Medium income	-0.055 (0.031)	-0.026 (0.031)	-0.024 (0.031)	-0.016 (0.030)	-0.013 (0.030)
Higher income	-0.106** (0.036)	-0.058 (0.035)	-0.055 (0.035)	-0.030 (0.033)	-0.026 (0.033)
Changes in employment (ref.: (self-)employed, unchanged)					
Short-time work		0.305*** (0.074)	0.302*** (0.075)	0.257*** (0.073)	0.265*** (0.072)
Other/inactive		0.028 (0.024)	0.027 (0.024)	0.022 (0.023)	0.023 (0.022)
Changes in income (ref.: about the same)					
Decreased		0.148*** (0.026)	0.146*** (0.026)	0.081** (0.026)	0.080** (0.026)
Increased		-0.015 (0.022)	-0.014 (0.022)	-0.002 (0.022)	-0.007 (0.021)
Perceived affectedness of others			0.007 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.005)	
Perceived own affectedness				0.027*** (0.004)	0.018*** (0.004)

Perceived affectedness compared
to others
(ref.: self $\Leftarrow$ others)

Self > others

0.100**
(0.037)

Time period	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obs.	1607	1607	1607	1607	1607

Having financial difficulties

<i>Panel b)</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
-----------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Social status
(ref.: lower income)

Medium income

-0.124***
(0.027)

-0.085***
(0.025)

-0.079**
(0.025)

-0.059*
(0.023)

-0.058*
(0.023)

Higher income

-0.218***
(0.029)

-0.153***
(0.028)

-0.142***
(0.027)

-0.099***
(0.025)

-0.099***
(0.025)

Changes in employment
(ref.: (self-)employed, unchanged)

Short-time work/lost job

0.135*
(0.053)

0.128*
(0.053)

0.082
(0.050)

0.083
(0.050)

Other/inactive

0.070***
(0.017)

0.069***
(0.017)

0.069***
(0.016)

0.069***
(0.016)

Changes in income
(ref.: about the same)

Decreased

0.219***
(0.022)

0.213***
(0.022)

0.118***
(0.022)

0.117***
(0.022)

Increased

0.001
(0.022)

0.000
(0.022)

0.013
(0.021)

0.012
(0.021)

Perceived affectedness of others

0.016***
(0.004)

0.000
(0.004)

Perceived own affectedness

0.036***
(0.003)

0.035***
(0.004)

Perceived affectedness compared
to others
(ref.: self $\Leftarrow$ others)

Self > others

0.022
(0.033)

Time period	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obs.	2615	2615	2615	2615	2615

Panel c)	Having much lower living standard				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Social status (ref.: lower income)					
Medium income	-0.200*** (0.032)	-0.148*** (0.030)	-0.139*** (0.029)	-0.112*** (0.026)	-0.113*** (0.026)
Higher income	-0.359*** -0.200***	-0.269*** -0.148***	-0.252*** -0.139***	-0.194*** -0.112***	-0.196*** -0.113***
Changes in employment (ref.: (self)-employed, unchanged)					
Short-time work/lost job		0.193** (0.062)	0.182** (0.061)	0.120* (0.058)	0.122* (0.058)
Other/inactive		0.076*** (0.021)	0.074*** (0.021)	0.074*** (0.019)	0.075*** (0.019)
Changes in income (ref.: about the same)					
Decreased		0.332*** (0.025)	0.321*** (0.025)	0.196*** (0.025)	0.193*** (0.025)
Increased		-0.041 (0.027)	-0.042 (0.027)	-0.025 (0.025)	-0.025 (0.025)
Perceived affectedness of others			0.028*** (0.005)	0.006 (0.005)	
Perceived own affectedness				0.048*** (0.004)	0.047*** (0.005)
Perceived affectedness compared to others (ref.: self $\Leftarrow$ others)					
Self > others					0.025 (0.034)
Time period	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obs.	2615	2615	2615	2615	2615

Note: Using linear probability models. Income group used as the measure of social status in all models. Time period (Jun/Jul20, Apr21, Jul/Aug22) and individual controls (gender, age, household size, place of residence (West/East Germany), and treatment group membership) included in all models. Significant levels: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: SOECBIAS-COVREF data. Weights applied.

The results are robust when using equivalent income or further measures of social status, namely subjective social position, education, and occupation (see Table C2 in Appendix C and Table A4 in Appendix A). Overall, the results confirm my hypothesis that the negative impact of the initial social status on subjective

socioeconomic insecurity is partly explained by crisis experiences and perceptions of economic affectedness (H5). As expected, subjective insecurity is positively associated with personal crisis experiences (H5a) and perceptions of personal economic affectedness (H5b). The perceived affectedness of others, against my expectation (H5c), has no significant impact. In addition, the results do not fully support my final hypothesis that individuals are more likely to feel insecure when they perceive themselves as more highly affected than others (H6). The positive association holds only for subjective job insecurity. The findings reveal that perceptions of one's own affectedness play a more important role than that of others in explaining subjective socioeconomic insecurity. More importantly, after accounting for their crisis experiences and perceptions, individuals with a lower social status at the onset of the pandemic are still more likely to feel insecure about their future economic circumstances.

6 Robustness Checks Using Eurobarometer Data 2004 – 2023

The analyses have thus far examined the extent to which subjective socioeconomic insecurity has changed across different groups in Germany from 2020 to 2022. The findings provide suggestive evidence that the pandemic itself had a relatively limited impact on subjective insecurity. The short-term increase in subjective job insecurity from 2020 to 2021 could be attributed to the pandemic and its impact on unemployment and short-time work in Germany. Subjective economic insecurity did not increase solely due to the pandemic. The increase in summer 2022 should be interpreted as a joint consequence of the multiple crises at the time, including the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and, notably, the accompanying energy crisis and inflation.

However, due to the lack of data prior to 2020, the finding of the minor changes observed from 2020 to 2021 may not have fully captured the potential impact of the pandemic on subjective insecurity. To validate the findings, I conduct robustness checks using the Eurobarometer data from 2004 to 2023. The data enable me to obtain general trends in subjective insecurity across different status groups over the past two decades.⁸

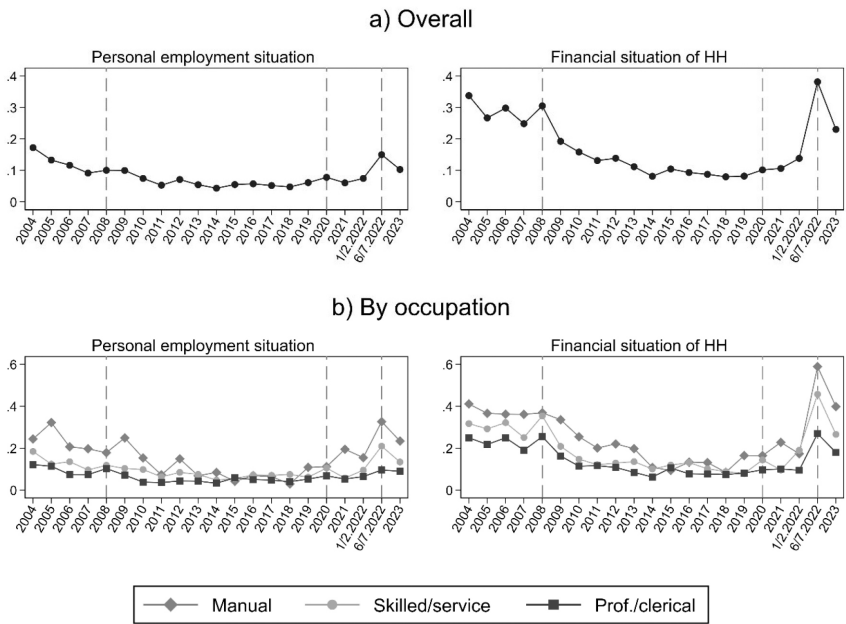
The Eurobarometer surveys did not ask respondents about their perceived risk of losing their jobs or having specific financial issues but about their general expectations regarding their future employment and financial situation. Two surveys containing these measures were conducted in 2022. The first survey (EB96.3) was conducted between 18 January and 14 February, before the outbreak of the war. The second (EB97.5) was conducted after, in June and July. I separate the data from these two specific periods to disentangle the potential impact of the war as well as the energy crisis and inflation from that of the pandemic on subjective

⁸ I use the Eurobarometer data only for robustness checks due to the absence of information on respondents' income, changes in their employment and income, and their crisis perceptions.

insecurity. For the years before 2022 and for 2023, I calculate the mean for each year that contained multiple data collections. Detailed information on data sources is provided in a technical appendix (Appendix D).

Figure 3 illustrates the changes in subjective job and economic insecurity in Germany from 2004 to 2023 using the Eurobarometer data. Figure 3a) depicts the overall changes, and Figure 3b) shows the changes by occupation. In an additional analysis, individuals are also divided by education and subjective social class, respectively (for detailed results, see Figure A1 in Appendix A). Over the past 20 years, Germans tend to be more concerned about their household’s financial situation than their personal employment situation. Figures 3b) and A1 reveal a persistent pattern over time that subjective insecurity is negatively associated with social status, which is evident during crises as well as in pre-pandemic times and before the financial crisis. This is consistent with my previous finding that individuals with a lower objective or subjective social status are generally more likely to feel socioeconomically insecure.

Figure 3: Expecting own circumstances worse next year, 2004 – 2023 in Germany



Note: The figure shows the share of Germans from 2004 to 2023 who expected their personal employment situation (left) and the financial situation of their household (right) to be worse in the upcoming year. Figures 3a) and 3b) illustrate the overall changes and changes by occupation, respectively.

Source: Eurobarometer. Own calculations, weights applied.

With respect to the period of the pandemic, Figure 3a) illustrates that there have been no substantial changes in subjective job or economic insecurity since 2020 until the summer of 2022. Furthermore, only minor increases can be observed from 2019 to 2020. In contrast, the share of Germans expecting a worse personal employment situation has exhibited a more pronounced increase by the summer of 2022. The increase is even more substantial regarding expectations for the household's financial situation. These trends are consistent across different status groups, particularly among individuals in manual occupations and those who perceive themselves as working class (see Figures 3b) and A1).⁹ In addition, those in manual occupations also tend to feel more insecure in 2021, compared to 2020 or 2019. Nevertheless, their feelings of insecurity were still much stronger by summer 2022. In 2023, both subjective job and economic insecurity decreased for all status groups but to a level that remained higher than in early 2022, before the war outbreak. This suggests that the drastic increase in subjective insecurity in the summer of 2022 primarily resulted from the war, the energy crisis, and inflation as external shocks that affected particularly lower-status groups. The pandemic itself seems to have had a relatively small impact, given that no substantial changes in subjective job or economic insecurity occurred from 2019 to early 2022. In summary, the analysis of the Eurobarometer data confirms my previous findings from Section 5.

7 Conclusion

This paper aims to gain a deeper insight into the extent to which Germans feel insecure about their future socioeconomic circumstances in times of crisis. Collecting four-wave panel data in Germany from March 2020 to July/August 2022, the study provides crucial descriptive evidence on the changes in subjective socioeconomic insecurity across different status groups. The paper addresses the role of subjective social status, in addition to objective status, in explaining subjective insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which triggered a severe energy crisis and inflation. Furthermore, the paper focuses on the interplay between individuals' social status at the onset of the crises, their personal crisis experiences in employment and income during the crises, and their perceptions of economic affectedness due to the crises.

The results confirm my overall assumption of a negative relationship between subjective insecurity and social status: across all waves from summer 2020 to 2022, lower-status groups are more likely to be worried about losing their jobs, having

⁹ This is somewhat inconsistent with the previous finding that objective social status could not explain the increase in subjective insecurity (Section 5.2). One reason could be the different measures of subjective insecurity in the two datasets. The mixed results, in turn, suggest intensified feelings of insecurity during crises regarding one's general employment and financial situation, particularly among individuals with a lower objective or subjective social status. In addition, those with a lower subjective status have increasing concerns, specifically about having financial difficulties and a much lower living standard.

financial difficulties, and a much lower standard of living in the upcoming year. In the summer of 2022, there was a substantial increase in subjective insecurity in the latter two economic aspects, primarily observed among individuals with a lower subjective social status. In contrast, objective status measures, including income, education, and occupation, could not explain the increase. The findings indicate the more important role of subjective than objective social status for analysing changes in subjective economic insecurity. This, in turn, reflects a mismatch between objective and subjective social status. During crises, individuals who perceive themselves at the lower end of the social hierarchy have increasing concerns about their future financial and living conditions.

Moreover, individuals are more likely to feel insecure about their jobs and economic situation when they have experienced short-time work, job or income loss. Irrespective of their actual crisis experiences, they are more likely to feel insecure when they perceive themselves as more affected economically during the pandemic. The results also indicate that perceptions of one's own affectedness are much more relevant than perceptions of others' affectedness for shaping subjective socioeconomic insecurity during a crisis. Furthermore, the negative association between social status and subjective economic insecurity holds after accounting for crisis experiences and perceptions. Additional analysis of the Eurobarometer data from 2004 to 2023 reveals a general trend that individuals with a lower social status are more likely to feel socioeconomically insecure, irrespective of whether a crisis occurs. During a crisis like the pandemic, the negative relationship between social status and subjective insecurity is further strengthened by individual crisis experiences and perceptions.

It is important to note that this study is subject to certain data-related limitations. First, the panel data used for the main analysis did not fully account for the changes in subjective socioeconomic insecurity since the onset of the pandemic, due to the unavailability of data prior to the pandemic. In addition, as the data were derived from an online access panel, there is a possibility of encountering issues regarding sample selectivity. To address these limitations, I employed additional data from Eurobarometer surveys to illustrate trends over the past two decades. The results are highly robust and demonstrate no substantial changes in subjective insecurity from 2019 to early 2022, validating the findings with the panel data. Finally, due to data limitations, this study does not establish causal relationships between the respective crises and subjective insecurity among different groups of individuals. For instance, data on household spending in energy-related areas, such as gas and heating, would have been beneficial in disentangling the potential impact of the energy crisis from that of inflation. Nevertheless, my findings provide valuable descriptive evidence on the changes in subjective insecurity according to their social status, which are likely to be traced back to the different crises.

In conclusion, the pandemic seems to have had a relatively limited impact on subjective socioeconomic insecurity among different status groups in Germany.

This indicates that the government's coping strategies, such as the short-time work scheme, may have buffered the negative impact of the pandemic not only on the German labour market but also on citizens' perceptions of security. Future research based on cross-national studies analysing subjective insecurity in different institutional contexts would thus be welcome. In Germany, lower-status groups, especially those who perceive themselves to have a lower social status, still feel particularly vulnerable regarding their future socioeconomic circumstances since 2022. One potential explanation is that these individuals tend to consider themselves to be particularly affected by the acute energy crisis and inflation resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war. While this is beyond the scope of this paper, future research may examine in depth the mechanisms through which lower-status groups tend to feel more insecure during crises. Overall, the findings suggest that inequality is reinforced in times of crisis, which may contribute to recent trends, such as support for the radical right and other political attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, future research could explore potential links between changes in political trust or preferences and subjective socioeconomic insecurity.

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Dennis H. Meier*, Stephan L. Thomsen** and Johannes Göhausen***

The financial situation of students during the COVID-19 pandemic

A case study from a German university****

Abstract: The majority of university students in Germany have to work to earn a living. The closure of universities and the loss of many typical student jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic particularly affected their situation. We collected data on the employment and financial situation of students at a major German university. In contrast to previous studies, we are able to analyze changes in students' income and its composition throughout the different phases of the pandemic between January 2020 and June 2021. Students' job income declined by 66% (total income by 19%), on average, during the first lockdown. There was a quick recovery during the reopening. Job income fell again during the second lockdown, but this decrease was only half as large as that in the first lockdown. In line with our expectations, students from non-academic backgrounds were particularly affected by job income losses and compensated by increasing loan financing, which widened pre-existing funding inequalities. The financial impact led to increased intentions to drop out (12%) and to extend studies (26%), both with a peak during the second lockdown. With respect to social background, we do not observe any differential changes in intentions. This is a rather unexpected result and contradicts the hypotheses derived from the theory.

Keywords: Higher Education; Student Earnings; Student Employment; Inequality

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Die finanzielle Situation von Studierenden während der COVID-19-Pandemie

Eine Fallstudie an einer deutschen Universität

Zusammenfassung: In Deutschland muss die Mehrheit der Studierenden neben dem Studium arbeiten, um ihren Lebensunterhalt zu finanzieren. Die Schließung der Hochschulen und der Verlust vieler typischer Studierendenjobs während der COVID-19-Pandemie hatten daher besondere Auswirkungen auf ihre Situation. Wir haben Daten zur Beschäftigung und zur finanziellen Situation von Studierenden an einer großen deutschen Universität erhoben. Im Gegensatz zu bisherigen Studien sind wir in der Lage, die Entwicklung des Einkommens der Studierenden und dessen Zusammensetzung während der verschiedenen Phasen der Pandemie zwischen Januar 2020 und Juni 2021 zu analysieren. Das Arbeitseinkommen der Studierenden sank während des ersten Lockdowns um durchschnittlich 66% (das Gesamteinkommen um 19%). Danach kam es zu einer raschen Erholung. Während des zweiten Lockdowns sank das Erwerbseinkommen erneut, aber nur noch halb so stark wie während des ersten Lockdowns. Erwartungsgemäß waren Studierende aus nicht-akademischen Elternhäusern von den Einkommensverlusten besonders stark betroffen und kompensierten diese vermehrt durch Kreditfinanzierung, was bestehende Ungleichheiten in der Studienfinanzierung weiter verschärft. Die wirtschaftlichen Einschränkungen führten im betrachteten Zeitraum zu einem Anstieg der Studienabbruchsabsicht (12 %) und der Studienverlängerungsabsicht (26 %), wobei in beiden Fällen während des zweiten Lockdowns ein Höchstwert erreicht wurde. Hinsichtlich des sozialen Hintergrunds konnten keine Unterschiede festgestellt werden. Dieses Ergebnis ist überraschend und steht im Kontrast zu den aus der Theorie abgeleiteten Hypothesen.

Stichworte: Hochschulbildung; Einkommen von Studierenden; Beschäftigung von Studierenden; Ungleichheit

1 Introduction

In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and the policy measures imposed to mitigate its harmful consequences changed and shaped life around the world, including the (transition to the) higher education system. On the one hand, the pandemic had an impact on high school graduates' well-being (see, e.g., Neugebauer et al. 2024) and led to changes in their postsecondary education plans (see, e.g., Liu 2021; Sandner et al. 2023). On the other hand, the closure of universities and the shift to online teaching in many countries (see, e.g., Crawford et al. 2020) had impacts on the mental and physical health of university students (see, e.g., Bohman et al. 2023; Browning et al. 2020; Hamza et al. 2021) and their study

progress and learning outcomes (see, e.g., Aucejo et al. 2020; Marczuk/Lörz 2023; Rodríguez-Planas 2022a, 2022b). The global economic crisis and the related decline in employment, especially in marginal employment, affected students' financial situation (see, e.g., Aristovnik et al. 2020; Aucejo et al. 2020; Becker/Lörz 2020; Lörz/Becker 2023; Rodríguez-Planas 2022a). Since changes in the economic situation may directly affect study progress and study success, we expect heterogeneous effects of the pandemic on aspects prone to emphasize social inequality, such as socio-economic background (see also Jaeger et al. 2021; Koopmann et al. 2023; Lörz/Becker 2023; Marczuk/Lörz 2023). Differential impacts on the financial situation may further increase existing social inequalities in higher education.

We investigate whether funding-related social inequalities in higher education in Germany increased during the pandemic and how this might affect students' decisions to continue their studies. We use different phases of the pandemic to identify students' (changing) adaptation strategies to income and employment shocks. We focus on income and its composition in terms of different sources of funding (e.g., job income, parental support, loan financing). We operationalize social background by referring to students' educational background as determined by their parents' educational attainment. To further analyze the impact of the pandemic on social inequalities in educational attainment, we consider the intention to drop out of university or to extend the duration of studies.

The financial situation of students – in particular their income situation – is crucial for at least two reasons. First, for the majority of students, studying is a period of investment in education, which means that their income is used entirely to cover subsistence-level living expenses. Accordingly, savings rates and available savings are low (Oberst et al. 2022), and generally not sufficient to bridge longer periods of income loss. Job losses therefore lead to considerable cutbacks. Opportunities to compensate (e.g., parental support, loan financing) are also directly related to social background (Heublein et al. 2021) – and can exacerbate social educational inequalities. Second, it is well documented that changes in the financial situation can have a direct negative impact on academic progress and achievement due to financial constraints and the inability to combine work and study (Heublein et al. 2017). In addition, research shows that economic hardship leads to mental stress, which in turn has a negative impact on academic progress and success (Sheldon et al. 2021). Therefore, stress and performance indicators (e.g., mental health, grades, dropout, study duration) should be independent of the financial burden to avoid disadvantaging financially vulnerable groups.

There is a broad consensus in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) on the principle of equal opportunities in education and the goal of reducing social educational inequalities (EHEA 2020). However, social reality differs, notably in Germany. There are substantial disparities by parental background: 79% of children from academic backgrounds enroll in higher education, compared to only 27% from non-

academic backgrounds (Kracke et al. 2018).¹ This results in a strong overrepresentation of students from academic backgrounds (73%), exceeding the European average of 51% (Hauschildt et al. 2021). Social educational inequalities are reflected in student funding: academic background students receive more financial support from their parents, while non-academic background students are more dependent on work besides studies and use loans more frequently (Middendorff et al. 2017).

Research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social inequalities in German higher education is therefore highly relevant. Numerous studies have already looked at different vulnerable groups of students: Zimmer et al. (2021) report that students with children and students with disabilities experience high levels of stress during the pandemic, and Lörz et al. (2021) show increased intentions to drop out for these groups. Koopmann et al. (2023), Lörz/Becker (2023), and Marczuk/Lörz (2023) examine social inequalities of traditionally disadvantaged groups and find increasing intentions to drop out among students with disabilities, with children, from non-academic backgrounds, and with a migration background as well as international students. In addition to the changed study situation and restrictions on social contact, the literature has identified the financial situation as one of the key factors in the exacerbation of social inequalities as a result of the pandemic. Becker/Lörz (2020), Heublein et al. (2021), and Lörz/Becker (2023) indicate that the financial situation of non-academic background students tended to deteriorate more than that of academic background students.

The German studies described have one thing in common: the data they use are based on the same nationwide student survey from the summer of 2020, during the first semester of the pandemic (Lörz et al. 2020). That is, the results are limited to the period around the first lockdown (March to May 2020). Since Germany had a much longer second lockdown (November 2020 to May 2021), the studies can only reflect the early effects of the pandemic. However, a longer-term analysis and quantification of the contribution of the *different phases* of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated losses for students – with a further differentiation by specific socio-economic groups – seems particularly important and can thus provide important evidence for the design of educational and social policies.

Against this background, we collected the data on our own in order to be able to examine the impact of the pandemic. The survey was conducted online in June 2021 at Leibniz University Hannover. In contrast to the above-mentioned available student survey, we chronologically differentiate the pandemic into five phases characterized by the imposed economic restrictions (1: pre-pandemic, 2: first lockdown, 3: relaxation, 4: second lockdown, and 5: expectation of future development). In total, we have complete longitudinal information on the financial situation of more than 600 students, at five points in time. The students provided retrospec-

1 Given a share of parents with a tertiary education in the population of 28% (Kracke et al. 2018).

tive information on their income and expenses (phases 1 to 4) and prospective information on their future expectations (phase 5). We use the phases to identify students' (changing) adaptation strategies to income and employment shocks. Thus, compared to the existing literature on the impact of the pandemic, the panel character of our survey (early 2020 to summer 2021) enables us to provide new insights for inequality research by quantifying the course of the financial situation and studies (intention to drop out and to extend) during the pandemic.

2 Theoretical Considerations and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Rational Choice Theory

Boudon (1974) argues that social inequalities in education result from *primary* and *secondary* effects of stratification that interact in the transition between educational institutions. *Primary effects* describe differences in social status and cultural background that affect the achievement and abilities of students and thus lead to social inequalities in educational success.² But even with similar educational achievement and abilities, social inequalities can arise due to *secondary effects*. These influence a decision-making process in which the benefits and associated (social or monetary) costs of possible educational alternatives (e.g., *stay in* or *leave* higher education) are compared. The greater the benefit and the lower the costs, the greater the utility of the choice. The consideration of the utility of the educational decision thereby depends on the social status (Boudon 1974). To understand how secondary effects occur, the literature uses theoretical models of rational choice (Müller/Pollak 2007). According to Erikson/Jonsson (1996), Breen/Goldthorpe (1997), and Esser (1999), individual (rational) educational decisions are the result of a class-specific assessment of (perceived) costs, benefits, and probability of success. Consequently, the alternative is selected on the basis of the individual's expectation of the greatest utility. According to Erikson/Jonsson (1996), the estimated utility (U) of an educational decision can be determined as:

$$U = PB - C, \quad (1)$$

where P is the probability of success, B is the estimated benefit and C is the estimated cost. The probability of success describes the subjective likelihood of educational success, the benefit describes the value that students (and families) attach to educational decisions (e.g., avoid downward social mobility) and the costs include direct costs of education and opportunity costs (earnings forgone) (Breen/Goldthorpe 1997). Since the actual and perceived parameters differ according to social class, this can lead to different cost-benefit considerations of educational decisions and thus to social inequalities (Erikson/Jonsson 1996).

- 2 Due to higher social and cultural capital of the family and targeted support, children from families with higher social status often have better access to resources that lead to better educational achievement and thus better opportunities for further education (Kracke et al. 2018).

An important assumption of the theory is that, depending on their social background, students have different amounts of resources that they can use to cover the costs of education (that higher classes have more resources) (Breen/Goldthorpe 1997). It is the economic resources that determine the actual (and perceived) costs associated with the decision to continue education (Erikson/Jonsson 1997). It can therefore be assumed that socially disadvantaged groups are more affected by (direct) education costs due to their lower financial resources (Boudon 1974). Even if the (actual) costs of higher education do not differ for the various social groups, it is more difficult for students with fewer (financial) resources to bear the costs (Müller/Pollak 2007). In Germany, students from lower social backgrounds traditionally tend to overestimate the (monetary) costs of education (in the transition to higher education) (Lörz 2012; Quast et al. 2023).

We follow Becker (2007) that, in contrast to the primary effect, the secondary effect can have a short-term and direct impact on (rational) educational decisions. Therefore, we adapt the rational choice theory – which can in principle be applied to all decisions in the educational career with regard to staying or leaving – to explain short-term and direct study-related decisions in higher education as a result of the pandemic, and analyze the impact on inequality by social background. It is quite common to apply rational choice theory or cost-benefit considerations to decisions on academic progress (dropout or study duration) in higher education (see, e.g., Beekhoven et al. 2002; Sarcletti/Müller 2011; Klein/Müller 2021; Müller/Klein 2023) and has also been used to explain the effects of changes in the financial situation on the further course of studies during the pandemic (see, e.g., Lörz/Becker 2023; Marczuk/Lörz 2023; Rußmann et al. 2023).

2.2 Expected Financial Situation of Students During the Pandemic

The theory emphasizes that (family) resources – including economic capital – are important determinants of secondary effects, and thus can lead to social inequalities in these effects. The financial situation can therefore be important for educational decisions, and changes in the financial situation can lead to educational inequalities. According to Lörz/Becker (2023), the academic success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is particularly at risk (in the sense of rational choice considerations) if they are more likely to be negatively affected financially by the pandemic, or if a more difficult employment situation for these students is associated with higher costs of continuing their studies (due to dependence on employment and lack of alternative sources of funding). This raises the question of what the financial situation of students was before the pandemic and how it changed during the pandemic.

Pre-pandemic: Student Financial Situation

Tuition-free study may be expected to be an efficient means of reducing the extent of financial inequality. However, there are substantial differences in the funding sit-

uation between students from different social backgrounds in Germany (Hauschildt et al. 2021; Middendorff et al. 2017). Since there is no comprehensive financial support system (as in other European countries)³ and only 13% of students receive BAfoeG⁴ funding (Kroher et al. 2023), the majority of student funding is provided by the family and their own employment alongside their studies (Middendorff et al. 2017). In contrast to full-time employees, students mainly generate income to cover their living expenses and therefore have a lower savings rate than the population (Oberst et al. 2022). For instance, half of working students declare that they are not able to study without income from work (Hauschildt et al. 2021). On average, students from academic backgrounds receive more financial support from their parents, while students from non-academic backgrounds use loans more frequently and are more likely to (have to) work (Middendorff et al. 2017). Despite the relatively low cost of studying in Germany, the unequal dependence on funding sources traditionally leads to financial inequalities by social background.

Phases of the COVID-19 Pandemic

However, this was the situation before the pandemic. In light of the financial disparities observed, it is pertinent to analyze whether there are differences in the resources allocated by social background during the pandemic, and if so, how these are compensated for by other sources of funding. To this end, we divided the pandemic into five different temporal phases of economic restrictions to identify the changes in students' financial situations (see Table 1). The phases cover the period from January 2020 to the time of our project in June 2021.

Job Income: Expectations

The onset of the first lockdown in March 2020 (until May 2020) had negative economic consequences for many employees (e.g., short-time work, unemployment), especially for marginally employed workers (e.g., in the hospitality sector) (Blom/Möhring 2021). After a slight recovery in the number of marginally employed after the first lockdown, the second lockdown (November 2020 to May 2021) again caused a dramatic decline in the number of people employed in the hospitality sector (Federal Statistical Office 2022). The employment shocks can be used to derive expectations for student job income (see Table 2), which are likely to have a different effect depending on social background.

3 The share of national public student funding in the total composition of student funding is below the European average; moreover, the share of non-repayable support (i.e., grants and scholarships) is also lower, and repayable support (i.e., loans, which can bear interest) is more commonly used (Hauschildt et al. 2021).

4 The BAfoeG Act regulates financial aid in Germany to increase equal opportunities in education. Students from low-income families are eligible for a BAfoeG loan. The maximum amount per month in 2021 was 861 euros.

Table 1: The five phases of the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany

Phase	Name	Time
Phase 1	Pre-Pandemic	January 1 until March 22, 2020
Phase 2	First Lockdown	March 23 until May 6, 2020
Phase 3	Relaxation	May 7 until November 1, 2020
Phase 4	Second Lockdown	November 2, 2020, until May 8, 2021
Phase 5	Expectation	May 9 until the date of the survey in June 2021

Note: A detailed description of each phase is shown in Meier et al. (2022).

Both lockdown shocks should particularly affect non-academic background students, since they are more likely to work in fields unrelated to their studies (e.g., in the hospitality sector) and rely more on their own income (Berkes et al. 2020). Even in the phase between the lockdowns, it is probable that this group experienced difficulty in finding new employment at short notice. We therefore assume that students with non-academic backgrounds will have lower incomes from their own jobs up to and including the second lockdown, and that this will return to pre-pandemic levels after the second lockdown, since they are dependent on their own job income. In contrast, students with an academic background are more frequently employed as student assistants (Kroher et al. 2023), where fewer negative consequences are to be expected in the course of the pandemic. For this reason, we expect less (or no) income losses for students with an academic background during the two lockdowns (only for students working in the affected sectors) and faster adaptability (in finding a new job) during the relaxation period. In the aftermath of the second lockdown, the income of students with academic backgrounds should also return to pre-pandemic levels (see Table 2). We therefore examine the following summarizing hypothesis:

H1.1: *Non-academic background students will experience greater income losses in terms of their own job income as a result of the two lockdowns in Germany than academic background students.*

Table 2: Expectations of changes in income compared to pre-pandemic levels (phase 1)

Phase	Job Income		Parental Support		Loan Financing	
	Academic	Non-Academic	Academic	Non-Academic	Academic	Non-Academic
First Lockdown (Phase 2)	o / –	–	o / +	o / –	o	o
Relaxation (Phase 3)	o	–	o / +	o / –	o	+
Second Lockdown (Phase 4)	o / –	–	o / +	o / –	o	+
Expectation (Phase 5)	o	o	o / +	o	o	+

Note: The symbols represent the expected change in each income source as follows: +: Higher income compared to phase 1; o: Income at the same level as in phase 1; –: Lower income compared to phase 1.

Parental Support: Expectations

The expected loss of income can theoretically be compensated by the other two main sources of funding (parental support and loan financing). In general, financial parental support increases with a higher educational background: parental support only accounts for around one-third of the income of students with a low educational background and around two-thirds for students with a high educational background (Middendorff et al. 2017). Therefore, we also expect differences in compensation through parental support (see Table 2).

The negative impact of the first lockdown on employment has also particularly affected employees with a low level of education (Blom/Möhring 2021), which has led to a deterioration in the income situation of parents of non-academic background students in particular (Becker/Lörz 2020). Therefore, it can be expected that the non-academic parents would not be able to provide any greater financial support (Berkes et al. 2020) or that funding will even decrease. As the parents can react immediately to their own situation, compensation effects can be expected in the first lockdown and could last until the second lockdown and beyond. As non-academic parents are likely to have less financial leeway, support is likely to return to pre-pandemic levels in the time after the pandemic (once their own circumstances have stabilized again). As academic background students have received higher payments from their parents before the pandemic already (since these parents possess larger financial resources, on average, see, e.g., Boudon 1974; Breen/Goldthorpe 1997), it can be assumed that these payments will continue or even be extended to secure their situation (as parents are less affected by the pandemic). This expectation is likely to extend over the entire duration of the pandemic and beyond (see Table 2).

H1.2: Non-academic background students will receive less financial parental support during and beyond the pandemic than academic background students.

Loan Financing: Expectations

Since we assume that non-academic students are more affected by the lockdowns, both in terms of their own earnings and in terms of financial support from their parents, we are interested in how this group reacts in the phases of the pandemic to compensate for the losses. One possibility is loan financing, which they use more often than their academic background fellow students anyway. After the first lockdown, the German government responded by providing financial support to students in financial need due to the pandemic, including adjustments to the BAfoeG, and further financial aid.⁵ In contrast to immediate compensation by

⁵ On the one hand, the existing “KfW Student Loan” (of up to 650 euros per month) was made interest-free for all students from May 2020 to September 2022 without any preconditions. On the other hand, all students with a proven acute pandemic-related need (for example, due to a job loss) could receive a non-repayable grant of between 100 and 500 euros per month from mid-June 2020 to September 2021, see Meier et al. (2022) for more information.

parents, the loan financing was not immediately available. This explains why no changes in loan financing are expected in the short term during the first lockdown (see Table 2).

Students with a low educational background traditionally have a greater dependency on loans: for example, BAfoeG payments account for 21% of income for students with a low educational background and only 5% for students from high educational backgrounds (Middendorff et al. 2017). One assumption is therefore that students from non-academic backgrounds will continue to rely on loan financing during and after the pandemic. Due to the time availability (time differences between application and disbursement), increasing disbursement amounts are to be expected over the course of the pandemic. The traditional differences in loan financing are – of course – also due to the fact that the higher the parents' income, the lower the entitlement to BAfoeG payments. This means that in addition to the lower use of loan financing, the greater expected parental support (and thus also access to loan financing) may also be an impediment to greater use. We therefore do not expect any increase in loan financing among academic background students.

H1.3: Non-academic background students will react with greater loan financing in the phases after the first lockdown in Germany than academic background students.

2.3 Dropout and Extension Intentions

We expect the pandemic to have a class-specific impact on income (i.e. resources). As (economic) resources are important determinants of secondary (and primary) effects, this could lead to social inequality in those effects. In contrast to the primary effects (and the resulting differences in achievement) – which we cannot measure – we can use the theoretical considerations of secondary effects, or rational educational decisions, to measure educational decisions as a consequence of the financial impact of the pandemic. We consider intentions to drop out and to extend the duration of study as possible study-related compensation measures and are thus in line with related literature (see, e.g., Lörz/Becker 2023; Marczuk/Lörz 2023).

Dropout Intention

According to the theory of the rational educational decision, dropping out would be conceivable if the estimated costs (C) exceed the estimated returns of studying (the product of B and P)⁶ and thus a negative utility (U) is expected. The literature indicates that dropping out is the result of several interacting factors (Behr et al. 2020). These include individual (e.g., social integration) and institutional (e.g., student support) factors, as well as non-institutional factors such as employment

⁶ It is plausible that the probability of success (P) may decrease as a result of the pandemic, for example, due to the switch to online teaching, or as a result of mental illness due to social isolation. In the model, we assume that this is the case for both educational background groups.

and financial situation (Isleib/Heublein 2016). These factors traditionally lead to differences between the various socio-economic groups in Germany: students with a disadvantaged background (e.g., lower income, lower education) have a higher risk of dropping out of higher education (see, e.g., Heublein 2014; Isleib 2019; Klein/Müller 2021). The relationship between financial problems (especially employment situation) and dropping out of university is widely documented in the literature (see, e.g., Heublein 2014; Isleib et al. 2019; Isphording/Wozny 2018). There are also differences by socio-economic background: students from lower backgrounds have more often financial difficulties and therefore a higher risk of dropping out (Heublein 2014; Isleib 2019). Students who drop out of university often report financial difficulties or the problem of balancing work and study (Heublein et al. 2017). The source of student funding can also influence academic success: dropouts receive less financial support from their parents and are more likely to use student loans (BAfoeG) (Heublein et al. 2010, 2017). Since we expect the financial situation of non-academic students to deteriorate more, we expect this group to perceive costs (C) as higher and to be more likely to drop out.

H2.1: Non-academic background students will experience greater increases in dropout intentions due to financial concerns than academic background students.

Extension Intention

Another possible study-related compensation action of the pandemic is the extension of study duration. Even in the early stages of the pandemic, many students in Germany report that they are very likely to have to extend their studies due to the more difficult study situation during the pandemic (Lörz et al. 2020; Traus et al. 2020). The question is to what extent an intention to extend is also possible due to financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic and for which student groups. An extension due to financial concerns seems irrational, because the extension is also accompanied by rising costs (C) (but quite conceivable due to higher time costs for job search or higher stress levels, see Marczuk/Lörz 2023). An extension could therefore be considered if a higher probability of success is expected. According to the theory, the product of the estimated benefit (B) and the estimated probability of success (P) must still be higher than the estimated costs (C) in order to extend studies.

The duration of education is influenced by whether the perceived costs exceed the available resources, with students from more privileged households able to stay longer because they generally have more resources (Breen/Goldthorpe 1997). The perceived costs of extended university studies are higher for financially less privileged households. This could be due to the fact that parents are less likely to be able to cover the costs of a loan or an additional year of study in case of dropping out (Erikson/Jonsson 1996). For this reason, it is to be expected that students with greater financial resources are more likely to expect a longer study

duration (Beekhoven et al. 2002). For students with an academic background, we expect fewer financial losses, which is why they are better able to bear the increasing costs (C) of extending their studies (and also estimate them more realistically).⁷

H2.2: Academic background students will experience greater increases in intentions to extend study duration due to financial concerns than non-academic background students.

3 Data and Methodology

3.1 Data Collection: The Survey

Since there are no administrative data on student employment, earnings, enrollment, and retention in Germany, we had to collect these data ourselves. In order to examine short-term changes and adjustment strategies of students during the different phases of the pandemic in terms of earnings and employment, this survey had to be conducted in a timely manner. For administrative and especially data protection reasons, the primary data were collected only at Leibniz University Hannover. To obtain up-to-date information on the impact of the pandemic, we conducted the survey online from June 7 until July 2, 2021 ("LUH Student Survey (2021)"). Approximately 12,400 students of Leibniz University Hannover were randomly selected and invited to participate in the survey via their official correspondence e-mail, filed with the enrollment office.⁸ In total, 1,381 students responded to the survey.⁹

We surveyed information on the financial situation (income and expenses), employment, and housing situation of students during the different phases of the pandemic. Moreover, we collected data on relevant socio-demographic and student characteristics, such as gender, age, nationality, educational background, vocational training, own apartment, semester, targeted degree, and field of study (see Table 3). These characteristics were chosen since they contain information relevant to explaining the financial situation of students (see, e.g., Hauschildt et al. 2021).

In our analysis, we use a common classification to describe student funding (see, e.g., Hauschildt et al. 2021), which distinguishes between own job income, parental

7 At the same time, it is to be expected that this group will estimate the returns (B) and prospects of success (P) higher (Quast et al. 2023), which is why we think that this group in particular should extend their studies.

8 We incentivized participation by donating one euro per complete participation to one of three charitable organizations offered for selection. The median completion time of the full questionnaire was 14.7 minutes.

9 The response rate of 11% is thus in range with the 13% of the Germany-wide student survey that was also conducted in the summer semester of 2021 (Kroher et al. 2023: 146).

Table 3: Summary statistics

	Response Sample		Analysis Sample				
	N (1)	Mean (2)	N (3)	Mean (4)	SD (5)	Min (6)	Max (7)
<i>Socio-Demographic Characteristics</i>							
Female	688	0.58	612	0.58	0.49	0	1
Age	692	24.37	610	24.46	4.51	16	55
Migration	689	0.09	604	0.07	0.26	0	1
International Student	687	0.05	603	0.04	0.21	0	1
<i>Socio-Economic Characteristics</i>							
Academic Background	690	0.53	612	0.53	0.50	0	1
Employment (Pre-Pandemic Phase)	802	0.70	611	0.71	0.45	0	1
Vocational Training	695	0.19	609	0.19	0.39	0	1
Own Apartment	732	0.69	610	0.72	0.45	0	1
<i>Semester & Target Degree</i>							
Semester	1,226	7.50	609	7.74	3.93	1	16
Bachelor	1,240	0.55	610	0.53	0.50	0	1
Master	1,240	0.37	610	0.39	0.49	0	1
University Degree	1,240	0.08	610	0.07	0.26	0	1
<i>Field of Study (Department)</i>							
Architecture, Landscape Sciences	1,244	0.07	612	0.08	0.27	0	1
Civil Engineering, Geodetic Science	1,244	0.07	612	0.07	0.26	0	1
Electrical Engineering, Computer Science	1,244	0.10	612	0.09	0.28	0	1
Law	1,244	0.08	612	0.08	0.26	0	1
Mechanical Engineering	1,244	0.10	612	0.09	0.28	0	1
Mathematics, Physics	1,244	0.06	612	0.06	0.23	0	1
Natural Sciences	1,244	0.13	612	0.15	0.35	0	1
Humanities	1,244	0.24	612	0.26	0.43	0	1
Economics, Management	1,244	0.12	612	0.10	0.30	0	1

Note: All variables are fixed for each individual and across the five phases and describe the condition in the pre-pandemic phase. The initial sample includes all observations (N: 1,381) and the final sample includes the analysis data set after data adjustment (N: 612).

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

support, loan financing, and other funding.¹⁰ Since the data from the first four phases could only be surveyed retrospectively as self-reports by students, there is a

10 Parental support implies allowances from parents, relatives, etc. Loan financing includes BAfoeG, student loans, and financial aid for students in pandemic-related financial distress. Other funding includes, e.g., scholarships, orphan’s pension. In the case of irregular income (e.g., internship or job during the semester break) or money earned earlier, students reported

risk of misperception of the financial situation due to over-/underestimation. However, we ensured a timely survey in order to reduce potential retrospective memory bias. Moreover, we assume that this information is basic and we show in Section 4 that the pre-pandemic phase and the first lockdown incomes are consistent with other data, we have good reason to believe that retrospective estimation does not lead to systematic bias.

3.2 Case Study: The University and the Sample

For the empirical analysis, some restrictions on the sample had to be imposed. Since only 630 observations contain information on income for all five phases, we removed those with missing information for any of the phases from the sample.¹¹ The missing information in our data may be attributed to the sensitivity of the income items that were surveyed.¹² We also excluded observations with missing information on socio-economic variables relevant for the heterogeneity analyses. The final sample includes 612 responses from students, leading to a balanced panel with 3,060 observations (612×5). Thus, our analysis sample represents a 44% subsample of the initial sample of the 1,381 observations.¹³ Sample selection can of course lead to bias if certain groups of students are more likely to respond than others (e.g., students with financial difficulties may or may not have felt more likely to respond). To test for possible sample selection, we provide descriptive statistics on the observations for the initial response sample (1,381 observations) and our analysis sample (612 observations) in Table 3. Since the composition of the two samples is quite similar, we assume that our analysis is not biased by systematic patterns.

Leibniz University Hannover is one of the nine leading technical universities in Germany and is characterized by a relatively high share of local students. Its student composition is typical of a German research-oriented technical university, i.e., characterized by slightly fewer females, more international, and more master's students than the average. Compared to Leibniz University Hannover, women, and master's students are slightly overrepresented in our analysis sample, while first-year students and international students are underrepresented (see Appendix Table A.1

only the average amount they received per month. This allowed us to counteract the problem of seasonality of income.

- 11 Students who reported a total income of 0 euro for each of the five phases were also excluded, and we recoded the top 1st percentile of each income source in the sample to the value of the 99th percentile of each income source to avoid outliers or implausible data.
- 12 It seems that a discrepancy between the initial sample and the number of observations on the financial situation is not uncommon in (student) surveys (see, e.g., Becker/Lörz 2020).
- 13 The share in our study is slightly lower than the share of approximately 57% in the study conducted by Becker/Lörz (2020: Figure 6).

for details).¹⁴ In order to check for a possible response bias (by gender, international students, semester, or degree), we weighted our data with the actual shares of Leibniz University Hannover (see Section 5.1). Compared to the Social Survey in Germany, our sample composition appears to yield plausible shares, and there seems to be no systematic response bias: the share of students with an academic background in our sample is 53% (see Table 3), which is comparable to the 56% reported in the nationally representative survey (Kroher et al. 2023).¹⁵

Since we use a cross-sectional survey of enrolled students, systematic dropouts before the survey period may impose a potential concern on our results.¹⁶ To check this, we compared the development of dropout rates over the three years in the pre-pandemic phase and in the period during the pandemic (see Meier et al. 2022). Since there are no significant differences between the two periods (i.e., there was no increase in dropout rates before we conducted our survey), we are confident that our sample is not biased by a systematic change in the dropout rate.

3.3 Estimation Strategy

To analyze the patterns over the different phases of economic restrictions of the pandemic in students' income and funding composition, we conduct an analysis in the sense of a time-series event study. We use the sudden economic restrictions with the beginning of the first lockdown (March 23, 2020) as an event that affected *all students* in Germany (causing an all-encompassing nationwide social shock) that divides our observation window into before and after the onset of the pandemic. Since we cannot use any variation other than the events of the economic lockdowns that affected all students at the same time, our identification of the effects of the phases follows a before-and-after logic. The identification strategy is to compare the students after the treatment with themselves before the pandemic. Thus, the control group consists of the students in phase 1 (approximated by the results before the start of the pandemic).¹⁷ This allows us to estimate changes in individual income as treatment effects by comparing income before and after the beginning of the

14 These deviations are partly expected, as the questionnaire is designed in German and women generally participate more frequently in surveys. The online survey conducted by Kroher et al. (2023: 147f.) reveals also an underrepresentation of international students and an overrepresentation of women.

15 The shares of students with their own apartment and of students who have completed vocational training are also comparable to the shares in the national survey.

16 An increase in dropouts prior to our survey date could lead to an underestimation of our results if, for example, students who were more financially affected had already dropped out prior to our survey date and were therefore not invited to participate in our survey.

17 The average monthly income of students in the first two phases of the pandemic in our sample is consistent with the results of Becker/Lörz (2020) (see Section 4). This suggests that the impact of each phase is a fundamental development of the pandemic, since the first lockdown in particular affected all students across Germany at the same time.

first lockdown (treatment). For this purpose, we estimate the following fixed effects panel regression model over the five phases:

$$\ln(y_{it}) = \alpha + \beta \text{Phase}_{it} + \delta_i + \varepsilon_{it}, \quad (2)$$

where $\ln(y_{it})$ denotes the log of income y for student i at time t . To measure the composition of student funding, we break down total income into (I) *job income*, (II) *parental support*, (III) *loan financing*, and (IV) *other income*, and estimate a separate model for each outcome in a second step. β captures the percentage change in income of the respective phase (phase 2 to phase 5) in comparison to the pre-pandemic value α ¹⁸ (phase 1). Since our estimation model is a log-level model, we convert the β coefficients for an exact interpretation.¹⁹ δ_i is the fixed individual effect. It captures all (observable and unobservable) time-invariant differences between students affecting y . Robust standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

To investigate whether existing educational inequalities have widened as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic, we conduct heterogeneity analyses by social background, similar to Aucejo et al. (2020) and Jaeger et al. (2021). We operationalize students' social background by their parents' level of education, in line with Lörz/Becker (2023) and Koopmann et al. (2023). To test whether financial inequalities change during the phases of the pandemic, we estimate a separate model for two types of parental education backgrounds (academic and non-academic). We assign an academic background if at least one parent possesses a tertiary degree.

The identification assumption is that students in phase 2 would have had on average the same income (composition) as in phase 1. The change in income (β) *can* be interpreted as a causal effect of the economic consequences of the pandemic *if* there are no systematic changes (e.g., time-varying factors or anticipation effects) in income other than the treatment over the considered period. Since the observation window is relatively short (before and after the treatment), it seems reasonable to assume that there are no further (short-term) income effects (unrelated to the treatment) besides the pandemic.²⁰ Given this reasoning on plausibility, the quanti-

18 The constant α indicates the average value of the logarithmized income (source) in phase 1 (therefore cannot be meaningfully interpreted in this form). As it serves as the baseline value for interpreting the percentage changes (β), the average values in phase 1 are given in euros (see Section 4).

19 For each of the phases (phase 2 to phase 5), income changes on average (*ceteris paribus*) by exactly $100 \times (e^\beta - 1)$ % compared to the baseline level (phase 1). We report this converted percentage change in student income compared to the baseline level of income in the pre-pandemic phase. The initial coefficients, robust standard errors, and converted percentage changes of the estimations are presented in Meier et al. (2022).

20 A possible threat of seasonality seems to be negligible, since students generally do not save their income but spend it on covering their living expenses (Kroher et al. 2023; Middendorff et al. 2017). Moreover, we collected our data in such a way that any seasonal effects (e.g., due to work during semester breaks) are offset in monthly income (see Section 3.1).

tative empirical estimates below *could* reflect a causal relationship. However, even in case of violation of any of the required assumptions and therefore potentially biased estimates, the estimated directions of the income and expense changes should correspond to the actual changes in each case. Thus, the estimates are still informative and show general patterns in the economic situation of students during the pandemic.

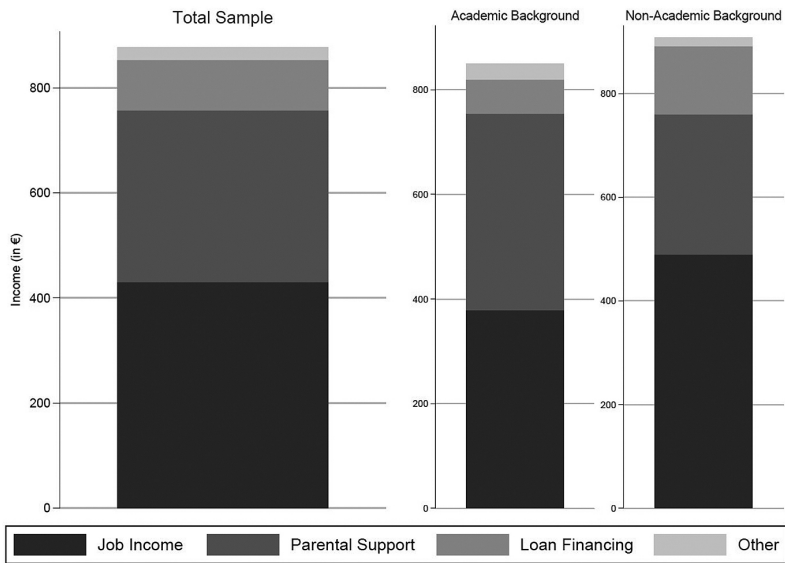
4 Students' Income in the Pre-Pandemic Phase

Figure 1 shows the average monthly income of students and its composition (job income, parental support, loan financing, and other funding) in the pre-pandemic phase (phase 1) for the total sample and differentiated by educational background. The average monthly income of students in the pre-pandemic phase is 877 euros. The great majority of students receive financial support from their parents (74%), on average 326 euros (37% of total income). 72% of students are employed during their studies. From this, students earn an average of 431 euros (49% of total income). 20% of students partly finance their studies (among other sources) through loan financing, which accounts for a share of 11% of total income (mean: 96 euros).

When examining the socio-economic subgroups, clear differences in monthly income and in the composition of students' funding become visible (see Figure 1). Students from non-academic backgrounds have a slightly higher average monthly income (908 euros) than students from academic backgrounds (850 euros) (see Appendix Table A.3), which is surprising at first glance but is in line with the literature (Kroher et al. 2023). While students from academic backgrounds receive more than 100 euros higher parental support, the value is reflected in higher own job income from students from non-academic backgrounds. The large difference in job income is partly due to the higher employment rate of students from non-academic backgrounds. It can be assumed that they also work more hours than students from academic backgrounds (Kroher et al. 2023) and/or have higher wages, since one in four of these students completed vocational training prior to their studies (among students from academic backgrounds, the share is 13%). Students from non-academic backgrounds also make more frequent use of loan financing.²¹

21 This is also consistent with earlier findings for Germany that show that students from non-academic backgrounds rely more on their job income and on loans due to lower parental support (Kroher et al. 2023; Middendorff et al. 2017).

Figure 1: Students’ monthly income and funding composition in phase 1



Note: The total sample includes 612 students. On the right, the total sample is divided by parental background into an academic (326) and a non-academic (286) background group. The academic background group includes students with at least one parent with a tertiary degree. See Appendix Table A.2 and A.3 for corresponding descriptive statistics.

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

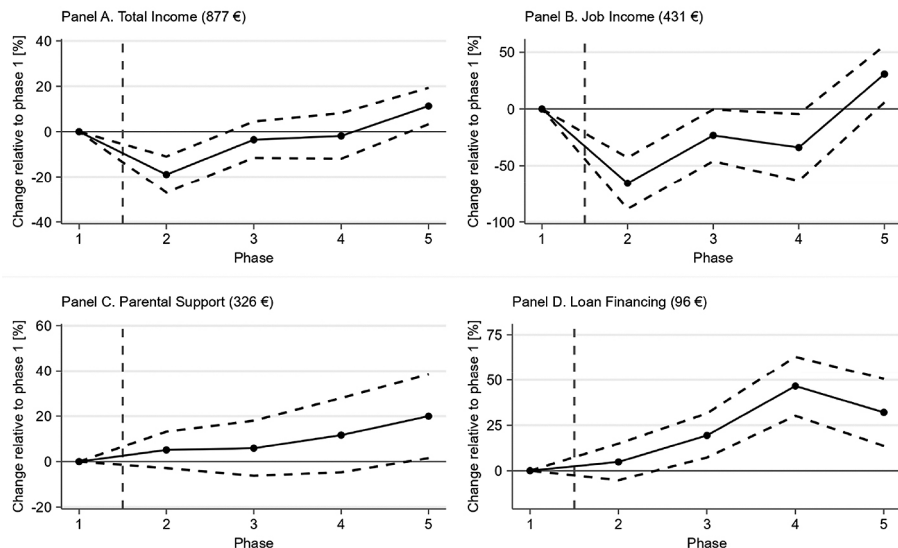
5 Main Results

5.1 Changes in Income over the Different Phases of the Pandemic

To allow for an interpretation of income changes over the different phases, we estimate students’ income using Equation 2. Figure 2 shows a decrease in *total income* during the first lockdown by 19% ($p<0.01$). There is no statistically significant change in income during the relaxation phase or the second lockdown. Thus, the income in these phases returned approximately back to the pre-pandemic baseline level. In phase 5, the expected income increases by 11% ($p<0.01$) in comparison to the pre-pandemic baseline level.²²

To decompose these changes, Figure 2 also reports the empirical results for each income source. 72% of students were employed while studying in phase 1 (see

22 Our findings are further robust to different specifications: pooled OLS regressions with and without covariates (socio-demographic and student characteristics) and with reweighting with the population shares of Leibniz University Hannover (LUH 2020) (see Meier et al. 2022).

Figure 2: Percentage change in income and its composition over the 5 phases

Note: The total sample includes 612 students. Changes are relative to the value of income in phase 1. The average income (sources) from phase 1 is shown in parentheses. The estimated coefficients, robust standard errors (clustered by individuals), and converted coefficients (percentage changes) are presented in Meier et al. (2022). 95% confidence intervals are shown.

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

Appendix Table A.2). Of these, one in two students experienced negative consequences on the job (dismissal, unpaid leave, or reduced working time) during the first lockdown (see Appendix Table A.4), resulting in a decline in the employment rate of approximately 17 percentage points (see Appendix Table A.2). As a consequence, students’ *job income* decreased by 66% ($p < 0.01$) during the first lockdown in comparison to the mean of 431 euros in the pre-pandemic phase (see Figure 2).

After the first lockdown, the student employment rate increased again and almost reached the pre-pandemic level (see Appendix Table A.2), but in the relaxation phase, students’ job income was still 23% ($p < 0.05$) lower than before the pandemic. This is reflected in the restriction of working hours during this phase (likely because some industries, such as restaurants, could not use their full capacity) (see Appendix Table A.4). During the second lockdown, the employment rate was slightly lower than the pre-pandemic rate by approximately 6 percentage points (see Appendix Table A.2). Although this decline was not as sharp as during the first lockdown, it resulted in 34% ($p < 0.01$) lower job income than the baseline level. The losses were, on average, only approximately half as large as in the first lockdown but still substantial. For phase 5, 77% of students expected to be employed (see Appendix

Table A.2) and therefore expected their job income to be higher than in the pre-pandemic phase (+30.7%, $p < 0.05$, baseline value: 431 euros).²³

In contrast to the variation in job income, *parental support* was highly stable up to phase 4 (see Figure 2). For phase 5, students expected an increase in parental support of 20% ($p < 0.05$) from the baseline level of 326 euros (phase 1). To compensate for the decline in income, students seem to make more use of *loan financing* from phase 3 onward.²⁴ The highest increase in loan financing occurred during the second lockdown (+46.5%, $p < 0.01$, baseline value: 96 euros).²⁵

5.2 Heterogeneity Analysis by Educational Background

Given educational inequality and the reasoning discussed above, we analyze heterogeneity by educational background. The decline in *total income* during the first lockdown is also statistically significant for the two subgroups (see Figure 3). Similar to the main sample, income in the subgroups (as in the overall sample) is approximately back to pre-pandemic levels in the relaxation phase and in the second lockdown. In phase 5, the expected total income increases only for students from academic backgrounds (+14.2%, $p < 0.01$, baseline value: 850 euros) in comparison to the pre-pandemic phase. At first glance, the pandemic appears to have had a relatively homogeneous impact on both groups.²⁶ However, the objective of our study is to analyze how funding-related inequalities have evolved throughout the different phases of the pandemic.

Students from academic backgrounds experienced a similar strong decline in *own job income* as students from non-academic backgrounds during the first lockdown (−62.4%, $p < 0.01$, baseline value: 379 euros, respectively −68.9%, $p < 0.01$, baseline value: 490 euros). This is a surprising finding, as we had anticipated that students

23 A robustness test serves to reinforce the conclusion that the observed changes in income are predominantly attributable to the negative impact of the pandemic on employed students (see Meier et al. 2022).

24 Another way to respond to a decline in income is to adjust expenses. Corresponding to income, students' monthly expenses also experienced a short-term temporary decline during the first lockdown: Students saved on living (slightly) and leisure (substantially), while housing expenses remained constant (see Meier et al. 2022). Except for leisure, the spending situation appears to have returned to the baseline situation in the relaxation phase and was more or less stable during the second lockdown.

25 This seems to be due to increased use of loan financing (pre-pandemic: 20%; second lockdown: 26%) (see Appendix Table A.2). The share of students receiving BAfoeG loans increased from 15% before the pandemic to 17% in phases 4 and 5, which equals an increase in expected BAfoeG payments in phase 5 of 17% compared to the pre-pandemic mean (77 euros). In contrast, pandemic financial aid was used by less than 5% of students.

26 The confidence intervals indicate that differences in the total income of each phase between the two educational background groups are not statistically significant. To test for potential differences, we furthermore regressed income on the interaction terms of phases and educational background. The coefficient estimates are not statistically significant (estimation results are not shown).

with non-academic backgrounds would be more adversely affected by the first lockdown. Differences become apparent in the further course: while the job income of students from non-academic backgrounds remained significantly lower during the relaxation phase (-28.9% , $p < 0.10$) and the second lockdown (-44.7% , $p < 0.01$), that of students with an academic background almost returned to pre-pandemic levels. This is in line with our expectations that the non-academics were more adversely affected over the course of the pandemic. Our expectation that academic background students also experienced a drop in income during the second lockdown can therefore be rejected. It is noteworthy (contrary to our expectations) that this group of students expect an increase in job income ($+49.9\%$, $p < 0.05$, baseline value: 379 euros) in the time after the second lockdown compared to the pre-pandemic phase. In contrast, the job income of non-academic background students in phase 5 appears to have reached a pre-pandemic level, in line with our expectations.²⁷

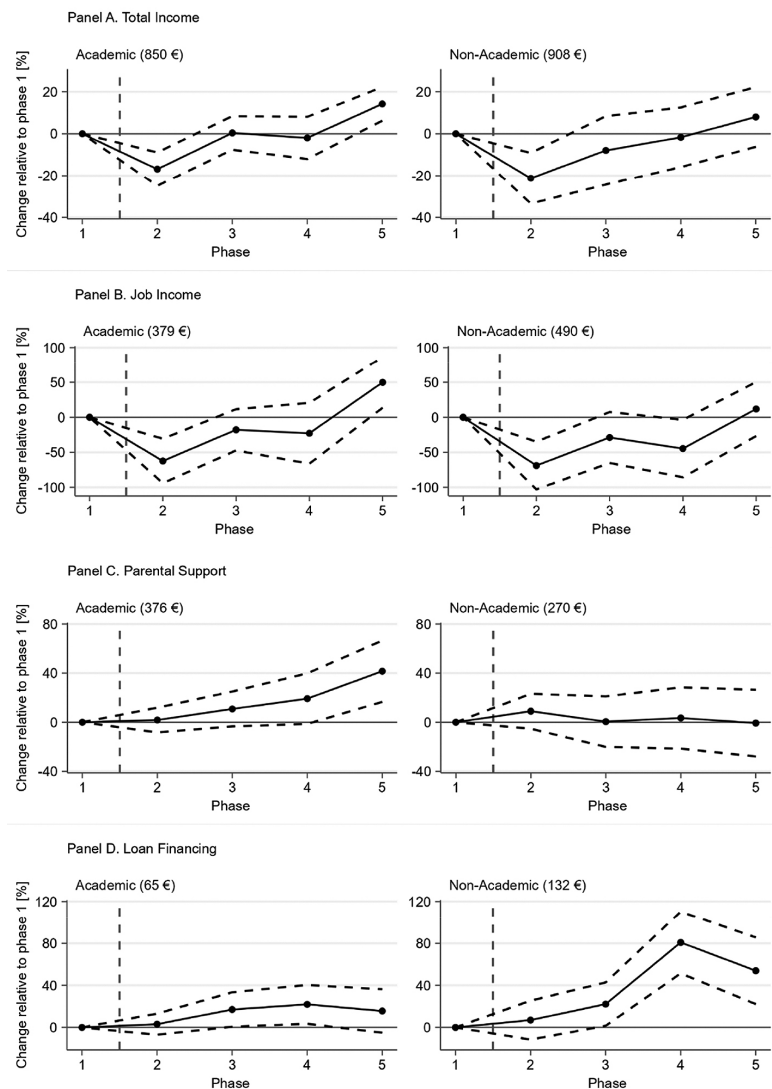
As expected, there is only an increase in *parental support* for students with an academic background. Parental support increases for this group during the second lockdown ($+19.2\%$, $p < 0.10$; baseline value: 376 euros) and they also expect higher support in phase 5 ($+41.6\%$, $p < 0.01$). This is surprising in that the parents did not compensate directly, although we expected them to be able to respond immediately. For the group of non-academic background students, there were no discernible changes in parental support, with the level of support remaining consistent throughout the pandemic. A decline in parental support was expected but did not materialize.²⁸

There are also differences between the *loan financing* of academic and non-academic background students. In the relaxation phase, the increase in loan financing is comparable for both groups ($+17.0\%$, $p < 0.05$, baseline value: 65 euros, respectively $+22.1\%$, $p < 0.05$, baseline value: 132 euros). In the second lockdown, the income from loan financing of students from non-academic backgrounds increased disproportionately by 81% ($p < 0.01$) compared to 22% ($p < 0.05$) for those from academic backgrounds.²⁹ In phase 5, only students from non-academic backgrounds expected higher loan financing than in the pre-pandemic phase ($+53.9\%$, $p < 0.01$, baseline value: 132 euros). This aligns with our anticipation that students with non-academic backgrounds are increasingly relying on loan financing and expect this to

27 As with total income, the individual differences in job income of each phase between educational background groups are not statistically significant.

28 The difference in expected parental support between academic and non-academic background students in phase 5 is statistically significant ($p = 0.040$).

29 Mainly students from non-academic backgrounds updated their BAfoeG funding (5%) and applied for the interest-free student loans (2%). The two educational groups used the non-repayable grants in phase 4 at the same rate (3% each).

Figure 3: Percentage change in income and its composition by educational background over the 5 phases

Note: In the figure, the total sample is differentiated by parental background of the students into a group with an academic background (326, on the left) and into a group with a non-academic background (286, on the right). The academic background group includes students with at least one parent with a tertiary degree. Changes are relative to the value of income in phase 1. The average income (sources) from phase 1 is shown in parentheses. The estimated coefficients, robust standard errors (clustered by individuals), and converted coefficients (percentage changes) are presented in Meier et al. (2022). 95% confidence intervals are shown.

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

persist in the future.³⁰ However, academics have also observed a slight increase during the pandemic.

6 Discussion

6.1 Impact on Students' Financial Situation

Our results show that the decline in income during the first lockdown was mainly due to decreasing earnings. Since one in two employed students experienced negative consequences on their employment, our results show that students were more affected by labor market restrictions in the form of job losses than the average population (Blom/Möhring 2021). They were also less eligible for labor market subsidies provided on a large scale for the majority of employees.

The results confirm our assumptions about the differential impact by parental educational background: here, clear differences in the impact of the pandemic become apparent. The group of students with a non-academic background was hit harder in terms of job income. Although the differences between the two educational groups in each phase are not statistically significant, it can be expected that students from non-academic backgrounds were more affected by job losses because of larger dependence on their own income (H1.1).³¹ Students expect their job income to return to pre-pandemic levels after the second lockdown. Therefore, it appears that students with non-academic backgrounds cannot expand their income from marginal employment by working more hours or earning higher wages, because they have already reached the income limit.³²

As expected, this group of students could not compensate by increasing parental support. Parental support seems to have been at its limit even before the pandemic and could not be used to offset income losses (H1.2). Therefore, non-academic background students can only compensate for the losses in income during the pandemic by expanding loan financing from phase 3 onwards (H1.3). Compared to the academic background students, they do not expect an increase in total income for the time after the pandemic. In contrast, students from academic backgrounds expected both parental support and their job income to increase. Thus, it can be expected that only this group of students will be able to respond to the price

30 The difference in income from loan financing during the second lockdown (phase 4) is statistically significant ($p=0.019$) and the difference in expected loan financing (phase 5) has a p -value of 0.117.

31 Based on a monthly income from own work of 490 euros for non-academic students, a decrease of almost 70% results in an absolute decrease of about 338 euros on average, compared to a decrease of about 235 euros for students with an academic background.

32 In Germany, there is an income limit for marginal employment (so-called mini-jobs), which is exempt from income tax. The monthly income limit for mini-jobs was 450 euros until October 2022.

increases (e.g., for housing and food) as a result of inflation since 2021.³³ For the time after the second lockdown, both academic and non-academic background students expected an increase in their expenses (see Meier et al. 2022). Hence, differences in the income situation will translate directly into financial inequalities: if expenses increase at the same rate, the financial situation will asymmetrically worsen for students whose income situation deteriorates.

In addition to rising prices, rising interest rates will worsen the situation for non-academic background students as loan liabilities continue to increase. Meanwhile, loan interest rates were well above the average of recent years.³⁴ As the loans are predominantly used by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, they also bear a higher burden in the longer term, exacerbating social inequality. Due to the repayment obligations, the varying dependence on loan financing contributes to the persistence of social inequality, which extends into working life. The financial constraints on entering the labor market could affect job choices (e.g., shorter search time) and have an impact on living standards or can lead to mental stress. The increasing use of loan financing by students from non-academic backgrounds may result in repayment liabilities in the future, which will further foster this inequality. Lower post-graduation salaries for non-academic background students (Spexard et al. 2022) then mean fewer opportunities to repay loans and grants quickly, so the burden is likely to last longer. Thus, the development of the pandemic seems to have affected students from non-academic backgrounds more strongly, which is in line with our expectations.

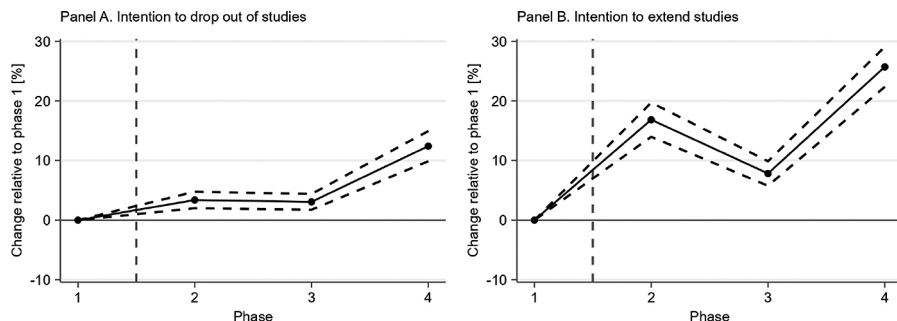
6.2 Potential Impact on Studies

To analyze the extent to which the financial impact of the pandemic translates into study decisions, we asked the students if (and when) they had thought about dropping out or extending their studies *due to financial concerns* (see Figure 4).³⁵ About 3% ($p < 0.01$) of students considered dropping out of their studies during the first lockdown and the relaxation phase. During the second lockdown, however, four times as many students (12%, $p < 0.01$) were already considering dropping out. A second adaptation possibility is the extension of study duration, which is relatively easy in a tuition-free system such as in Germany. During the first lockdown, 17% ($p < 0.01$) of students considered extending their studies due to financial concerns, but this declined to 8% ($p < 0.01$) during the relaxation phase and increased again

33 In November 2022, inflation reached a historic high of around 9% in Germany, hitting households and people with high consumption rates and few options for adjustment or avoidance in particular, including higher education students (Meier et al. 2023).

34 For example, the “KfW Student Loan”, which was interest-free during the pandemic, was raised to 9.01% in October 2023 and is currently at 6.85% in October 2024.

35 In our questionnaire, we asked about the *earliest point* in time when students thought about dropping out/extending their studies due to financial concerns. Students could indicate *one* of the phases (first lockdown; relaxation phase; second lockdown until now) or never.

Figure 4: Intention to drop out of studies or to extend studies due to financial concerns

Note: We used a different sample for the analysis of compensation actions. Here, we consider all students with complete answers from the questionnaire regarding the relevant questions. Our questions are based on Lörz et al. (2020). Coefficients are given as change in intention to drop out of studies/to extend studies due to financial concerns. Reference is phase 1 (pre-pandemic). The estimated coefficients and robust standard errors (clustered by individuals) are presented in Appendix Table A.5. 95% confidence intervals are shown.

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

to 25% ($p < 0.01$) during the second lockdown. Contrary to the theory and our initial assumption (H2.1 and H2.2), and although students from non-academic backgrounds are generally more likely to drop out (see Section 2.3), our analysis of educational background does not reveal any consistent differences in the intention to drop out or extend studies by social background (see Appendix Table A.5). This may suggest that the pandemic has affected all students equally in the short term. However, social differences emerge (with the same effects on dropouts) at the latest when it comes to reorientation after dropping out, as people with academic backgrounds are more likely to return to higher education than groups from lower social backgrounds (Kracke/Isleib 2023).

Even if no differences can be identified according to educational background, the financial situation appears to be directly related to study success, approximated by intentions to drop out or to prolong studies. The second lockdown (phase 4) shows that students who do not have or no longer have own job income and students who have an income from loan financing have a higher intention to drop out (17% each) (see Appendix Table A.6). In the relaxation phase (phase 3), students who do not receive or no longer receive parental support and those who receive income from loan financing are more likely to intend to extend the duration of their studies (13% and 11% respectively) (see Appendix Table A.7).

The previous literature by Becker/Lörz (2020), Lörz/Becker (2023), Marczuk/Lörz (2023), and Koopmann et al. (2023) report (high) dropout intentions of up to

19% (depending on the student group considered) and intentions to extend studies of up to 56%. These intentions are based on the assessments of students in the summer of 2020 (i.e. in the period between the first lockdown and the relaxation phase, in our classification) and, in contrast to our survey, no direct connection with financial difficulties was asked. This means that, according to our results, a large part of the compensation actions at the beginning of the pandemic could be due to financial difficulties.³⁶

Interestingly, however, intentions increase sharply over time. Since we asked when students first thought about dropping out/extending their studies during the pandemic (and they could only choose one of the phases), the results represent the minimum level of phases 3 and 4. It is possible that students who thought about dropping out/extending during the first lockdown may do so again or still do so during the subsequent phases.

When assessing intentions to drop out/to extend, there is a risk that these may not be correctly assigned to the different phases of the pandemic in retrospect. As we explicitly ask when students first thought about it and the available phases (first lockdown, relaxation phase, second lockdown) were drastic phases, we assume that there should be no systematic memory bias. Since we are asking about the specific effects of financial concerns, we are fairly certain that students can judge when these were present and when they led to intentions to drop out or extend their studies. Nevertheless, the results (even if we cannot conclusively determine whether there is a bias) show quite impressively how many students were thinking about dropping out or extending their studies in the first place. Since, in contrast to previous studies from Germany, we explicitly asked about the reason for financial worries, we are confident that we can make an important contribution to the literature with these results.

However, our results refer to intentions only and not to actual compensation actions. If the compensation effects (dropout and extension) result in actual changes, the economic impact of the pandemic will widen the educational inequality described. Dropping out of university implies a large sunk cost of study. As outlined by Neugebauer et al. (2019), the consequences of dropping out of university are multifaceted: on an individual level, there are economic and psychological disadvantages; and from a societal perspective, there are also negative outcomes, including lower tax revenues and shortages of academic skills.

When students extend their studies, there are increased direct and opportunity costs. The higher share of loan financing among students from non-academic backgrounds

36 We have no evidence of changes in time budgets over the course of the pandemic. Therefore, no conclusions can be made as to whether online study (in terms of quality, flexibility, and accessibility) is responsible for a worse continuation of studies (see, e.g., Branchu/Flaureau 2022; Engel et al. 2023). Since we specifically asked students about the impact of financial concerns with respect to the compensation actions, we assume that the switch to online study does not bias our results.

results in costs that will negatively affect their cost-benefit considerations regarding future higher education. The extension of studies and higher required repayment obligations also imply a lower available income later in the labor market. A total of about 2.9 million students were enrolled at German universities in the winter semester of 2020/21. They play a key role in terms of filling vacancies in the labor market in view of the shortage of skilled workers and the ongoing demographic change (the retirement of the so-called “baby boomer” cohorts in the coming years). The student cohorts affected by the pandemic will be in competition with subsequent generations of students if they extend their studies. Thus, in addition to direct short-term economic disadvantages, there may also be long-term limitations, as the extension of studies may lead to a shortening of the employment horizon.

7 Limitations and Conclusions

We conducted an online survey at a major German university to investigate the financial situation of students during different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our results show that the pandemic strongly affected students’ job income (due to the loss of many student jobs). Since dependence on work differs clearly by socio-economic status, our results further depict some notable heterogeneity. Students from non-academic backgrounds suffered particularly from the pandemic. In contrast, the financial situation of students from academic backgrounds seems to have relaxed or even improved after the end of the second lockdown (due to intensified support from parents) compared to the situation before the pandemic. These findings imply a widening of existing financial inequalities across different socio-economic groups. The financial situation of students is further exacerbated by rising prices for housing and food. This particularly affects non-academic students, whose income has already been negatively impacted by the pandemic. The rising prices could potentially exacerbate educational inequality in Germany in the future.

Furthermore, the financial impact of the pandemic appears to be impeding the progress of studies. Our results show that the intention to drop out and to extend studies due to financial concerns increases with the duration of the pandemic. As an implication of the fact that we only surveyed enrolled students and that we did not detect increased dropouts, it suggests that the ways in which students adapted to the drop in income (e.g., reduction in leisure spending and increase in loans) may have protected their continued enrollment.

It is important to consider the following when interpreting our results: 1) The students’ self-assessment of their financial situation is based on retrospective information, which may lead to over-/underestimation due to possible *memory bias*. However, we argue that this is unlikely to be the case in this study. The classification of students’ income sources that we use is common in the literature and is also limited to the three main types of financing (job income, parental support, and loan financing). We assume that students can provide detailed information about each

source (whether they earned more or less from it) and that there is therefore no systematic memory bias. Accordingly, it should be possible to interpret the direction of the income reactions shown, even if they cannot be interpreted precisely. 2) Whether there is a *response bias* cannot be conclusively determined. However, there are reasons to expect certain biases in the student population (more women, fewer international students). In total, the composition of our sample is comparable to other samples in the literature, for example in terms of the educational background of the students. For this reason, we assume that the response bias is typical for an online survey and is not systematic in nature. 3) Due to the sensitive nature of the survey topic (financial situation), there may be a *sample selection*. We tested this by comparing our analysis sample to the response sample: no evidence was found that the responses were systematically biased. 4) We cannot say anything about actual compensation actions, as we only looked at *intentions* to drop out or extend. However, behavioral intentions are a strong predictor for explaining actual educational decisions and dropout risks (Klein et al. 2019; Koopmann et al. 2023). There is a risk in recording assessments of compensation measures that they may not be correctly assigned to the different phases of the pandemic in retrospect. As we asked about financial concerns as a cause of compensation intentions, this should help to counteract a memory bias. Given that the overall figures are consistent with other literature, it can be assumed that financial concerns can contribute to the explanatory content of dropout and extension intentions. 5) As a case study at Leibniz University Hannover, our findings cannot be generalized to the German student body and must be considered in the context of the institution (as the composition of students is specific) and the region (as a major German city, Hannover has specific local factors that can play a role).

In Germany, data on higher education students is typically collected in a cross-sectional manner (Kroher et al. 2023; Middendorff et al. 2017). Additionally, research on the effects of the pandemic is largely limited to the initial stages of the pandemic (Lörz et al. 2020). Our results can therefore provide important new insights into how students react to crises, as we retrospectively record the different financial situations of students. We are therefore confident that this (innovative) value outweighs the limitations of the data.

Since we cannot claim that the findings are causally related to the phases of the pandemic (although we provide reasons why this might be the case), we argue for future causal impact analyses. As we can only measure the intention to continue studying, causal analyses that capture the actual course of study are needed. It remains to be seen to what extent the inequalities and economic losses described above also affect social inequalities in transition rates to higher education, or whether there are other consequences in terms of educational achievement, study duration, study success, student mobility, or the choice of study field or type of university. An important question for educational success that can be derived from

the changing financial situation of students is how financial health affects students' mental health. These issues need to be addressed causally in further research.

The heterogeneous impacts of the pandemic threaten the objective of equal chances and may renew the emphasis on the role of social origin. The identified negative impact of the pandemic should be taken seriously by policymakers. Public financial aid systems could be adjusted in response to the identified widening financial gaps in order to make higher education affordable for all students. In order to ensure needs-based financial support in times of crisis and an appropriate adjustment of BAfoeG rates by policymakers, it is recommended that the economic situation of students be analyzed regularly and at short notice in order to improve the basis for evidence-based policy decisions. This requires repeated surveys (panel data) that record changes in the income and expense structure of students. At present, the economic and social situation of students is surveyed every four years as part of the Social Survey (cross-sectional data); on this basis, the dynamic developments can only be described and analyzed with great limitations.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Summary statistics in comparison to the population

	N (Sample) (1)	Mean (Sample) (2)	Mean (LUH) (3)	Difference (2) – (3) (4)	Mean (Germany) (5)	Difference (2) – (5) (6)
Female	612	58.17%	40.93%	17.24***	49.00%	9.17***
International Students	603	4.48%	15.26%	-10.78***	11.10%	-6.62***
Age (Median)	610	24	21	3	23	1
First-Year Students	612	21.24%	28.24%	-7.00***	-	-
Bachelor	610	53.44%	60.15%	-6.71***	69.81%	-16.37***
Master	610	39.18%	31.67%	7.50***	20.32%	18.86***
University Degree	610	7.21%	7.53%	-0.31	9.87%	-2.65***
Population			30,196	-	2,709,197	-

Note: Column (4) and (6) show the difference in means of column (2)-(3) respectively column (2)-(5) and the respective significance value from a difference in means test. University degree includes state certificate and excludes teaching degree, bachelor’s and master’s degree. Type of degree without other and promotion. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$.

Source: Own calculations. Data in column (2) is taken from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”. Data in column (3) is taken from LUH (2020). Data in column (5) is taken from Federal Statistical Office (2020).

Table A.2: Use of each funding source

	%	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
<i>Total Income</i>						
Phase 1 (Pre-Pandemic)	-	877.17	509.36	800	0	3,000
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	-	771.76	486.65	730	0	2,600
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	-	881.27	590.10	800	0	3,930
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	-	891.23	553.93	813	0	3,800
Phase 5 (Expectation)	-	924.94	510.57	850	0	4,500
<i>Job Income</i>						
Phase 1 (Pre-Pandemic)	71.73	431.05	514.13	378	0	3,000
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	54.74	324.91	480.35	150	0	2,600
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	68.79	391.04	521.86	275	0	3,000
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	65.68	378.46	484.23	275	0	2,800
Phase 5 (Expectation)	76.63	433.31	481.01	400	0	2,800
<i>Parental Support</i>						
Phase 1 (Pre-Pandemic)	73.69	326.05	313.86	250	0	1,500
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	75.16	323.25	308.76	250	0	1,400
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	74.67	347.22	385.29	250	0	2,700
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	75.33	347.87	359.00	250	0	2,500
Phase 5 (Expectation)	76.96	341.90	339.87	250	0	2,000
<i>Loan Financing</i>						
Phase 1 (Pre-Pandemic)	19.61	96.33	222.67	0	0	900
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	20.26	100.80	225.91	0	0	900
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	22.39	116.33	253.54	0	0	1,691
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	25.65	136.80	268.15	0	0	1,150
Phase 5 (Expectation)	24.18	118.99	243.75	0	0	1,350
<i>Other</i>						
Phase 1 (Pre-Pandemic)	8.50	23.74	89.96	0	0	600
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	8.01	22.80	88.60	0	0	600
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	9.48	26.68	96.45	0	0	600
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	9.48	28.10	102.24	0	0	706
Phase 5 (Expectation)	10.13	30.74	105.75	0	0	650

Note: % given as the share of students that have income from the individual income source (> 0 euro) of the total observations (N=612). Mean, SD, Median, Min and Max given in euros.

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

Table A.3: Use of each funding source by educational background in phase 1

	% Non- Academic (1)	% Academic (2)	Difference (1) – (2) (3)	Mean Non- Academic (4)	Mean Academic (5)	Difference (4) – (5) (6)
Total Income	-	-	-	908.02	850.10	57.92 [*]
Job Income	74.48	69.33	5.15 [*]	490.24	379.12	111.12 ^{***}
Parental Support	67.13	79.45	-12.31 ^{***}	269.62	375.56	-105.93 ^{***}
Loan Financing	26.22	13.80	12.42 ^{***}	132.06	64.98	67.08 ^{***}
Other	6.64	10.12	-3.48 ^{**}	16.10	30.44	-14.34 ^{**}

Note: % given as the share of students that have income from the individual income source (> 0 euro) of the total observations (N=612, non-academic: 286, academic: 326). Mean given in euros. Column (3) and (6) show the difference in means of column (1)-(2) respectively column (4)-(5) and the respective significance value from a difference in means test. ^{*} $p < 0.10$, ^{**} $p < 0.05$, ^{***} $p < 0.01$.

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

Table A.4: Negative consequences on the job for employed students

	Dismissal		Unpaid Leave		Reduced Working Time		None	
	Quan- tity (1)	% (2)	Quan- tity (3)	% (4)	Quan- tity (5)	% (6)	Quan- tity (7)	% (8)
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	60	13.92	81	18.79	77	17.87	213	49.42
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	38	9.20	17	4.12	99	23.97	259	62.71
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	39	9.44	51	12.35	51	12.35	272	65.86

Note: N=413.

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

Table A.5: Intention to drop out or to extend studies due to financial concerns

	Total Sample		Educational Background		Total Sample		Educational Background	
	Drop Out	Diff ¹	Academic	Non-Academic	Drop Out	Diff ¹	Academic	Non-Academic
	(1)	(4)	(2)	(3)	(5)	(8)	(6)	(7)
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.17*** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.16*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.02)
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	0.12*** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.12*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.26*** (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.24*** (0.02)	0.28*** (0.03)
Observations	2,612	2,612	1,388	1,224	2,612	2,612	1,388	1,224
R ²	0.061	0.061	0.059	0.063	0.098	0.099	0.087	0.112

Note: ¹The difference in columns (4) and (8) are the interaction terms from the regression of drop out/extension on the interaction of phases and educational background (the separate coefficients for phases and educational background are not shown). We used a different sample for the analysis of compensation actions. Here, we consider all students with complete answers from the questionnaire regarding the relevant questions. Coefficients given as change in intention to drop out of studies/to extend studies due to financial concerns. Reference is phase 1 (pre-pandemic). Robust standard errors (clustered by individuals) in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$.

Source: Own calculations with data from "LUH Student Survey (2021)".

Table A.6: Intention to drop out due to financial concerns by funding source

	Job Income			Parental Support			Loan Financing		
	Yes	No	Diff ¹	Yes	No	Diff ¹	Yes	No	Diff ¹
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Drop Out	Drop Out	Drop Out	Drop Out	Drop Out	Drop Out	Drop Out	Drop Out	Drop Out
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03* (0.02)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.04** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.03* (0.02)	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.00 (0.02)
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.17*** (0.03)	-0.08*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.01)	0.14*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.11*** (0.01)	0.06* (0.04)
Observations	1,629	840	2,469	1,833	636	2,469	524	1,945	2,469
R ²	0.032	0.107	0.076	0.065	0.058	0.064	0.106	0.047	0.065

Note: Job income, parental support and loan financing were regarded as binary variables, which are 1 if income was generated from the individual source during the phase and 0 otherwise. ¹The difference is the coefficient of the regression of drop out on the interaction of phases and the source of funding (job income, parental support, loan financing) (the separate coefficients for phases and source of funding are not shown). We used a different sample for the analysis of compensation actions. Here, we consider all students with complete answers from the questionnaire regarding the relevant questions. Coefficients given as change in intention to drop out of studies/to extend studies due to financial concerns. Reference is phase 1 (pre-pandemic). Robust standard errors (clustered by individuals) in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$.

Source: Own calculations with data from “LUH Student Survey (2021)”.

Table A.7: Intention to extend studies due to financial concerns by funding source

	Job Income				Parental Support				Loan Financing			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend	Extend
Phase 2 (First Lockdown)	0.15*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.16*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.22*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.02)				
Phase 3 (Relaxation)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.05* (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.03)	-0.08*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.06*** (0.01)				
Phase 4 (Second Lockdown)	0.24*** (0.01)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	0.25*** (0.02)	0.23*** (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	0.24*** (0.04)	0.26*** (0.02)				
Observations	1,629	840	2,469	1,833	636	2,469	524	1,945	2,469			
R ²	0.093	0.053	0.105	0.105	0.073	0.103	0.080	0.105	0.101			

Note: Job income, parental support and loan financing were regarded as binary variables, which are 1 if income was generated from the individual source during the phase and 0 otherwise. The difference is the coefficient of the regression of extension on the interaction of phases and the source of funding (job income, parental support, loan financing) (the separate coefficients for phases and source of funding are not shown). We used a different sample for the analysis of compensation actions. Here, we consider all students with complete answers from the questionnaire regarding the relevant questions. Coefficients given as change in intention to drop out of studies/to extend studies due to financial concerns. Reference is phase 1 (pre-pandemic). Robust standard errors (clustered by individuals) in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$.

Source: Own calculations with data from "LUH Student Survey (2021)".

Leitbild „Intensivierte Elternschaft“ und Kinderwunsch von Kinderlosen** ***

Zusammenfassung: Die Vorstellungen, die Kinderlose von der Ausgestaltung der Elternrolle haben, sind durch ihre Außenperspektive geprägt und können die Entscheidung für oder gegen Kinder mit beeinflussen. Im Beitrag soll deshalb untersucht werden, wie Kinderlose Elternschaft wahrnehmen und ob sich Kinderlose mit und ohne Kinderwunsch in ihrer Wahrnehmung von Elternschaftsanforderungen unterscheiden. Die untersuchten Aspekte stellen auf den Erziehungsstil der „Intensivierten Elternschaft“ ab, der auch in Deutschland weit verbreitet ist. In Anlehnung an dieses Konzept werden vier Dimensionen ermittelt: finanzielle Vorsorge, informierte Elternschaft, Kindzentriertheit und engagierte Vaterschaft. Es kann festgehalten werden, dass Kinderlose ein relativ einheitliches Bild von den Anforderungen an Eltern in Deutschland haben, das vor allem durch informierte Elternschaft und finanzielle Vorsorge geprägt ist und in dem sie sich mit der Gesellschaft in Übereinstimmung sehen. Für den Zusammenhang von Leitbild und Kinderwunsch ist zwischen einem sicheren Kinderwunsch und unsicheren oder nicht vorhandenen Kinderwünschen zu unterscheiden. Finanzielle Anforderungen erhöhen die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines unsicheren oder negativen Kinderwunsches. Ist der Kinderwunsch sicher, dann scheinen informierte Elternschaft, Kindzentriertheit und engagierte Vaterschaft in einer Art „Nestbaubereitschaft“ akzeptiert zu werden.

Die Auswertungen erfolgen auf Basis des Familienleitbildsurveys 2012 und 2016 des Bundesinstitutes für Bevölkerungsforschung.

Stichworte: Elternschaftsleitbild; Kinderlose; Kinderwunsch; Intensivierte Elternschaft

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*** Daten und Codes zur Replikation der hier berichteten Analysen sind über <https://osf.io/289db/> zugänglich.

Conceptions of Intensive Parenthood and Fertility Desire of Childless Individuals

Abstract: The ideas that childless people have about the role of parents are characterised by their external perspective and can influence the decision for or against having children. Therefore, this article examines how childless people perceive parenthood, and whether people with and without the desire to have children differ in their perception of parenting responsibilities. The aspects examined are based on the parenting style of “intensive parenting”, which is widespread in Germany. Based on this concept, four dimensions are identified: financial provision, informed parenting, child centeredness, and committed fatherhood. It can be stated that childless people have a relatively uniform idea of the demands placed on parents in Germany, which is characterized above all by informed parenthood and financial provision, and in which they see themselves in agreement with society. When it comes to the association between the parenting ideal and the desire to have children, a distinction must be made between a positive desire to have children and an uncertain or non-existent one. Financial demands increase the probability of an uncertain or negative desire to have children. If the desire to have children is positive, informed parenthood, child-centeredness, and committed fatherhood seem to be accepted in a kind of “nest-building readiness.”

The analyses are based on the Familienleitbild Survey (Concepts of Family Survey) 2012 and 2016 of the Federal Institute for Population Research.

Keywords: Role Model of Parenthood; Childlessness; Fertility Desire; Intensive Parenting

1 Einleitung

Das Bild, das sich Kinderlose vom Elternsein machen, prägt ihre Entscheidung für oder gegen Kinder. Als Faktoren, die den Kinderwunsch beeinflussen, sind neben soziodemografischen und antizipierten ökonomischen Anforderungen (Kuhnt et al. 2017; Kuhnt et al. 2021; Engelhardt 2004; Wagner et al. 2019; Ruckdeschel 2004) in letzter Zeit auch nicht-ökonomische Aspekte wie soziales Vertrauen (Aassve et al. 2021), Unsicherheitsempfinden (Neyer et al. 2022; Gortfelder/Neyer 2024; Bujard/Andersson 2024) oder subjektive Werthaltungen (Philipov/Berghammer 2007; Ruckdeschel 2007; Wagner et al. 2019) stärker in den Fokus der Forschung gerückt. Einen weiteren Baustein stellen erwartete Anforderungen an die Ausgestaltung der Elternrolle dar (Mynarska/Rytel 2020). Diese sind in modernen Gegenwartsgesellschaften mit hohen Ansprüchen verbunden, die das Aufziehen von Kindern zu einem aktiv zu gestaltenden und zu verantwortenden Projekt machen (Jergus et al. 2017). Da Elternschaft als eine bewusste Entscheidung für die damit einhergehenden Anforderungen wahrgenommen wird (Kaufmann 1981),

wird sowohl die Ausgestaltung als auch die Verantwortung für ein gelungenes Aufwachsen der Kinder überwiegend den Eltern zugeschrieben und setzt diese unter einen gewissen Erfolgsdruck (Furedi 2002; Hartas 2014).

Im Zuge dieser Erwartungen an Eltern begann sich bereits in den 1970er Jahren im Englischen der Begriff „parenting“ zu etablieren, der Elternschaft weniger als eine emotionale Beziehung zum Kind, sondern vielmehr als eine Leistung definiert, die Fachwissen und Kompetenz erfordert (Lee 2014; Daly 2017). In Anlehnung an Hays' (1996) Konzept des „intensive mothering“ entwickelte sich daraus schließlich der Begriff des „intensive parenting“ für einen Erziehungsstil, der hohe emotionale, zeitliche und finanzielle Investitionen in die Kindererziehung erfordert. Von Eltern wird erwartet, ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse und Interessen zugunsten der Betreuung, Förderung und emotionalen Bindung ihrer Kinder zurückzustellen (Faircloth 2014; Oláh et al. 2018; Nomaguchi/Milkie 2020). Gesellschaftliche Institutionen wie z. B. Kindergärten und Schulen unterstützen diese Entwicklung und prägen so das gesellschaftliche Bild vom Elternsein (Jergus et al. 2017; Beck-Gernsheim 1991).

Im folgenden Beitrag liegt der Schwerpunkt auf kinderlosen Personen, die eine Art Außenperspektive auf die Anforderungen an Elternschaft haben. Kinderlose sind, anders als Eltern selbst, nicht unmittelbar betroffen und auch Erfahrungen im eigenen Umfeld werden in Deutschland aufgrund eines hohen Durchschnittsalters bei Geburt und niedriger Kinderzahlen seltener. Elternschaft kann im Alltag nicht mehr selbstverständlich miterlebt und im Geschwisterverbund nebenbei erlernt werden (Nave-Herz 2012; Quaiser-Pohl 2001). Der Kinderwunsch von Kinderlosen ist in Bezug auf die Erwartungen an die Ausgestaltung der Elternrolle insofern qualitativ von demjenigen von Eltern selbst zu unterscheiden, da nur gesellschaftlich geprägte Vorstellungen, aber keine eigenen, unmittelbaren Erfahrungen eine Rolle spielen. In der Forschungsliteratur wird vermutet, dass die hohen Anforderungen an Eltern von Kinderlosen negativ wahrgenommen werden und einen Kinderwunsch hemmen oder verzögern können (Seiffge-Krenke/Schneider 2012; Peuckert 2008: 120; Nave-Herz 2012; Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1990: 142). Empirische Belege für diese Behauptungen sind allerdings nur begrenzt vorhanden. Daher wird im Folgenden untersucht, wie Kinderlose die Anforderungen des Elternseins wahrnehmen und ob diese Wahrnehmung mit einem vorhandenen oder fehlenden Kinderwunsch zusammenhängt.

Zunächst wird der Forschungsstand zu „intensive parenting“, das im Deutschen auch als „intensivierte Elternschaft“ bezeichnet wird, dargestellt und in Anlehnung an das Leitbildkonzept von Schneider et al. (2015) operationalisiert, um daraus Forschungsfragen ableiten zu können. Nach der Vorstellung der verwendeten Daten werden im Ergebnisteil mittels latenter Klassenanalysen unterschiedliche Elternleitbilder von Kinderlosen ermittelt und mit Hilfe logistischer Regressionsmodelle nach sozialstrukturellen Unterschieden charakterisiert. Abschließend wird geprüft,

ob Kinderlose mit und ohne Kinderwunsch diese Anforderungen unterschiedlich wahrnehmen. Der Beitrag schließt mit einer Diskussion der Ergebnisse ab.

2 Theorie

2.1 „Intensive Parenting“ als Leitbild

Der Ansatz des „intensive parenting“ hat sich, ausgehend von den USA, inzwischen zu einem der wichtigsten Erziehungsstile in westlich geprägten, wohlhabenden Ländern entwickelt (Mollborn/Billingsley 2024; Gauthier et al. 2021). Ausgehend von Hays' (1996) „Intensive mothering“ Ansatz wird dieser Erziehungsstil als kindzentriert, auf Expertenwissen vertrauend, ressourcenintensiv und emotional absorbierend definiert (Faircloth 2014; Gauthier et al. 2021; Yerkes et al. 2021). Konkret bedeutet dies, dass sich Eltern intensiv um ihre Kinder kümmern, Zeit und Geld in die Erziehung und Bildung investieren und die Bedürfnisse der Kinder konsequent über ihre eigenen stellen sollten. Eine weitere wichtige Komponente stellt die Betonung von Expertenwissen für gelingendes Erziehen dar (Ramaekers/Suissa 2011). Von Müttern wird dieses Engagement noch stärker erwartet als von Vätern, da ihnen die größere Kompetenz in der Kindererziehung zugesprochen wird (Diabaté/Beringer 2018).

Um die Mehrdimensionalität des Erziehungsstils angemessen abzubilden, können diese Anforderungen in Form von Familienleitbildern operationalisiert werden (Schneider/Diabaté/Ruckdeschel 2015; Schneider/Diabaté 2020; Diabaté/Lück 2014). Leitbilder bündeln Normalitätsvorstellungen sowie Rollenvorstellungen, Normen und Werthaltungen, die einen Themenkomplex prägen – etwa die Gestaltung der Elternrolle und das damit verbundene elterliche Engagement (Giesel 2007) und setzen sie miteinander in Beziehung (Mühling et al. 2006). Es geht also nicht nur um einzelne Aspekte, wie z. B. intuitive versus expertengeleitete Erziehung, sondern um das Zusammenspiel mit weiteren Faktoren wie dem finanziellen Engagement und dem Ausmaß der Kindzentriertheit. Die Merkmale intensivierter Elternschaft können als Komponenten eines Leitbildes verstanden werden, das Kindzentriertheit, sowohl zeitliche als auch finanzielle Investitionsbereitschaft, Aufopferungsbereitschaft und die Anerkennung und Nutzung von Expertenwissen zusammenführt.

2.2 Leitbild und Kinderwunsch

Leitbilder beeinflussen den Kinderwunsch, indem sie Orientierung für individuelles Handeln bieten und gleichzeitig als normative Rahmenbedingungen wirken, die persönliche Überzeugungen und gesellschaftliche Erwartungen miteinander verbinden. Sie wirken in dreifacher Hinsicht auf individuelles Handeln: 1) als bewährtes Handlungsmodell, das unreflektiert übernommen werden kann, 2) als intrinsische Motivation, da sie meist eine subjektive Überzeugung widerspiegeln und 3) als soziale Kontrolle, da Leitbilder überwiegend mit Handlungserwartungen an das

soziale Kollektiv verknüpft sind (Diabaté/Lück 2014; Lück/Diabaté 2015). Sie zeigen – im sozialen Umfeld und medial vermittelt – sozial anerkannte Möglichkeiten auf, wie Elternschaft gelebt werden kann und beeinflussen so auch die Erwartungen, die Individuen an sich selbst als Eltern stellen. In Bezug auf das Leitbild der „Intensivierten Elternschaft“ bedeutet dies, dass mit der Elternschaft ein kulturelles Set von Handlungsroutinen vorliegt, die definieren, wie sich „gute“ Eltern verhalten, um das Wohl des Kindes bestmöglich zu fördern. Spätestens mit der Schwangerschaft setzt ein Automatismus ein, der z. B. regelmäßige Gesundheitskontrollen, die Inanspruchnahme professioneller Unterstützung bei Problemen sowie die schulische und nachschulische Förderung des Kindes umfasst. Vermittelt über das soziale Umfeld und die Medien, orientieren sich Individuen in der Elternrolle an vorgegebenen Handlungsschemata, etwa im Erziehungs- oder Freizeitverhalten. Das soziale Umfeld bestimmt dabei mit, wie stark dieses Leitbild ausgeprägt ist und beeinflusst die subjektive Wahrnehmung sozialer Erwartungen (Lareau 2002; Lareau 2003).

Leitbilder sind sowohl auf der Makro- wie auf der Mikroebene angesiedelt, wobei gesellschaftliche Leitbilder nicht als Summe aller individuellen Leitbilder zu verstehen sind, sondern durch Institutionalisierung und soziale Reproduktion eine eigenständige Realität erhalten (Schneider/Diabaté 2020). Individuelle und gesellschaftliche Leitbilder können voneinander abweichen und dadurch die individuelle Ausgestaltung der Elternschaft beeinträchtigen oder umgekehrt können sich beide Ebenen bei Übereinstimmung gegenseitig bestärken. So können sich Eltern in einem gesellschaftlichen Umfeld, in dem ihr Erziehungsverhalten nicht der Norm entspricht, Kritik und Schuldzuweisungen ausgesetzt sehen. Auch die Erwartungen, die Kinderlose an Elternschaft haben, werden durch gesellschaftliche Leitbilder in dieser Weise geprägt.

Die Entscheidung für Kinder bedeutet eine auf Dauer angelegte, biografische Bindung und stellt eine anspruchsvolle Planungs- und Herstellungsaufgabe dar (Huinink 1997; Huinink et al. 2008). Sie impliziert eine Abschätzung der eigenen Situation in Bezug auf die Frage, ob die für eine Elternschaft notwendigen Ressourcen vorhanden sind oder in Zukunft aufgebracht werden können: Dieses „Ressourcenproblem“ (Huinink 1995) bezieht sich dabei sowohl auf die materielle Absicherung der Familie als auch auf immaterielle Aspekte, wie die Ausgestaltung der Elternrolle, die im Leitbild konkret wird. Leitbilder können demnach den Kinderwunsch von Kinderlosen beeinflussen, indem sie Voraussetzungen definieren, die erfüllt sein müssen, damit Kinder als individuelle biografische Option in Betracht gezogen werden. Dazu zählen unter anderem das Vertrauen in die eigenen Fähigkeiten, Kinder einem Leitbild, wie dem der intensivierten Elternschaft entsprechend, zu erziehen.

Elternschaftsnormen, die auf intensivierte Elternschaft abstellen, finden in Deutschland eine breite Akzeptanz, insbesondere was die Bedeutung von Expertenwissen

und finanziellen Investitionen in Kinder anbelangt (Ruckdeschel 2015). Ein weiterer Aspekt ist die Betonung der Mutterrolle, verbunden mit einer Ablehnung externer Kleinkindbetreuung, die in Deutschland von gut einem Fünftel der jungen Erwachsenen befürwortet wird (Diabaté et al. 2023). Diese Erwartungen und Anforderungen erhöhen die Gesamtkosten für Kinder (Gauthier et al. 2021), mit möglichen negativen Folgen für Eltern (Nomaguchi/Milkie 2020; Walper/Kreyenfeld 2022). So untersuchen Walper/Kreyenfeld (2022) die Intensivierung von Elternschaft in Deutschland unter den Aspekten des zeitlichen und finanziellen Aufwandes und des durch das Bildungssystem verursachten Drucks auf Eltern und kommen zu dem Schluss, dass die Anforderungen dieses Erziehungsstils die Mehrheit der Eltern mindestens in einem dieser Bereiche überfordern. Während die Folgen dieses Erziehungsstils für Kinder uneindeutig sind (Schiffrin et al. 2015; Egami 2024), scheinen sie für Eltern eher negative Auswirkungen zu haben, da sie zu Schuldgefühlen, vermehrtem Stress und gesundheitlichen Problemen führen können (Rizzo et al. 2013; Novoa et al. 2022). Dass bei Kinderlosen die Sorgen vor einem Übermaß an emotionalen, finanziellen und zeitlichen Investitionen in der Kinderbetreuung den Kinderwunsch tatsächlich negativ beeinflussen können, konnten Buhr/Huinink (2017) für Deutschland und Mynarska/Rytel (2020) für Polen zeigen. Allerdings finden sich für Polen wider Erwarten auch positive Effekte, insofern als höhere Ängste zum Teil mit einem positiven Kinderwunsch korrelieren. In Anlehnung an Miller (2015) interpretieren Mynarska/Rytel (2020) dies als Bereitschaft, sich auf die erwarteten Anforderungen einer Elternschaft einzulassen und sich damit auseinanderzusetzen (s.a. Ruckdeschel 2024).

Da es bislang nur begrenzte empirische Erkenntnisse zu diesen Überlegungen gibt, verfolgt die vorliegende Studie einen weitgehend explorativen Ansatz und konzentriert sich auf die Beantwortung von zwei forschungsleitenden Fragen anstelle der Formulierung spezifischer Hypothesen:

1. Gibt es unter Kinderlosen ein Leitbild der „Intensivierten Elternschaft“ und ist es bei verschiedenen Gruppen unterschiedlich ausgeprägt?
2. Wie korrelieren Kinderwunsch und ein Leitbild „Intensivierter Elternschaft“ bei Kinderlosen?

3 Daten und Methode

3.1 Daten

Für die Studie wird der Familienleitbildsurvey (FLB) verwendet, der in den Jahren 2012 und 2016 vom Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung als Panelstudie durchgeführt wurde, mit dem Ziel, kulturelle Leitbilder zu Familie und Partnerschaft zu erfassen (Schneider et al. 2016). Grundgesamtheit für die repräsentative Studie war die Wohnbevölkerung Deutschlands zwischen 20 und 39 Jahren. Die erste Welle des Familienleitbildsurveys aus dem Jahr 2012 umfasst 5.000 Personen

(Lück et al. 2013; Schneider et al. 2016), für die zweite Welle wurden vier Jahre später 1.858 Personen wiederbefragt (Wolfert et al. 2017). Die Analysen basieren überwiegend auf der ersten Welle. Zur Erhöhung der Teststärke wird für einen multivariaten Vergleich einmalig die zweite Welle mit einbezogen, unter Berücksichtigung der panelbedingten Autokorrelation. Obwohl die Daten bereits aus dem Jahr 2012 stammen, bietet das Frageprogramm Vorteile, die mit anderen Datensätzen nicht realisiert werden können.¹

Der Familienleitbildsurvey enthält Fragen, die sich dem Themenbereich der intensivierte Elternschaft zuordnen lassen, sowie Fragen zum Kinderwunsch. Die in der Literatur gängige Definition von intensivierter Elternschaft als kindzentriert, auf Expertenwissen vertrauend, ressourcenintensiv und emotional absorbierend (Hays 1996; Gauthier et al. 2021; Mollborn/Billingsley 2024; Faircloth 2014; Nomaguchi/Milkie 2020) lässt sich mit den folgenden Items des Surveys abbilden:

- *Kindzentriertheit und emotionales Investment*: „Eltern sollten eigene Bedürfnisse zugunsten ihrer Kinder zurückstellen“, „Kleinkinder sollten nur von eigener Mutter betreut werden“, „Väter sollten für ihre Kinder beruflich kürzertreten“ und „vor einer Familiengründung muss das Paar verheiratet sein“, im Sinne einer kindorientierten Eheschließung.
- *Finanzielles Investment*: „Bevor man überhaupt daran denken kann, Kinder zu bekommen,...“ „muss genügend Geld da sein“ und „muss die Frau fest im Berufsleben stehen“.
- *Anerkennung von Expertenwissen*: „Eltern können bei der Erziehung vieles falsch machen, daher sollten sie sich gut informieren“, „Kinder werden auch von alleine groß, da muss man sich nicht so viele Gedanken machen“.

Die Einstellungen und Werthaltungen wurden jeweils auf einer 4-stufigen Likert-Skala abgefragt mit den Antwortmöglichkeiten 1 „stimme überhaupt nicht zu“, 2 „stimme eher nicht zu“, 3 „stimme eher zu“ und 4 „stimme voll und ganz zu“. Bei den Fragen wird zwischen zwei Ebenen unterschieden, der individuellen und der vom Befragten individuell wahrgenommenen gesellschaftlichen Meinung (Lück et al. 2015; Lück et al. 2017).

Der Kinderwunsch wurde für einen unbestimmten Zeithorizont erhoben, d. h. Kinderlose wurden gefragt, ob sie generell Kinder möchten, mit den Antwortmöglichkeiten „ja, auf jeden Fall“, „eher schon“, „eher nicht“ und „sicher nicht“. Diese Art der Frageformulierung bildet, im Gegensatz zum idealen oder realistischen Kinderwunsch, eher eine „latente Bereitschaft“ (Klein 2006) ab. Der Kinderwunsch ist von verschiedenen Faktoren abhängig, die sich im Lebensverlauf ändern kön-

1 Das Thema „intensivierte Elternschaft“ wurde bislang in Deutschland in dieser Form nicht erhoben. Ein ähnlicher Frageblock in Pairfam (Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics) zum Beispiel, ist wesentlich allgemeiner gehalten, so dass die vorliegende Fragestellung nicht zu bearbeiten wäre.

nen, und damit zurückwirken auf den Kinderwunsch selbst. Zu nennen wären hier z. B. das Vorhandensein einer Partnerschaft, ökonomische Gegebenheiten, die Zahl bereits geborener Kinder und das Alter, da mit zunehmendem Alter ein Selektionseffekt eintritt (zusammenfassend z.B. Klein 2006). Im Lebensverlauf werden Kinderwünsche erfüllt und diejenigen, die kinderlos bleiben, stellen eine selektive Gruppe dar, die durch spezifische demografische, soziale und persönliche Merkmale gekennzeichnet ist. Um für diese Effekte zu kontrollieren, wurden Alter, Geschlecht, das Vorhandensein einer Partnerschaft, Bildung in Form des höchsten Schulabschlusses und die Sozialisation in den alten oder den neuen Bundesländern, d. h. wo man den Großteil seiner Kindheit bis zum Alter 15 verbracht hat, in das Modell einbezogen. Gleichzeitig lässt der Kinderwunsch durch seine Abhängigkeit von aktuellen gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen Rückschlüsse auf die Bewertung ebendieser zu. Tatsächlich unterscheiden sich Kinderlose mit und ohne Kinderwunsch z. B. signifikant bei den Bewertungen von familienpolitischen Rahmenbedingungen für Familien (Ruckdeschel 2007). Aus der zweiten Welle werden 731 Kinderlose einbezogen.

Insgesamt verbleiben aus der ersten Welle 2.574 kinderlose Befragte, von denen 54,4 % einen sicheren Kinderwunsch haben, 29,9 % möchten „eher schon“ Kinder, 10,5 % „eher nicht“ und 5,2 % „sicher nicht“ (vgl. Tab. 1). Mit 57,8 % ist über die Hälfte der Befragten männlich, das Durchschnittsalter liegt bei 27,3 Jahren und etwas mehr als die Hälfte der Befragten (52,5 %) hat eine Partnerin oder einen Partner. Insgesamt 14,7 % der Befragten wurden in den neuen Bundesländern sozialisiert. Die Bildung, die in „niedrig“ – alle Abschlüsse bis Abitur – und „hoch“ – alle höheren Abschlüsse – differenziert wurde (Schroedter et al. 2006) weist 27,3 % der Befragten als hoch gebildet aus.

3.2 Methode

Dem explorativen Charakter der Studie entsprechend werden verschiedene methodische Ansätze kombiniert, um die Daten auf unterschiedlichen analytischen Ebenen zu interpretieren. Um die Vielfalt an Leitbildern zu intensivierter Elternschaft zu bestimmen, wird zunächst eine latente Klassenanalyse (LCA) durchgeführt, die individuelle Einstellungen gruppiert. Im Anschluss daran wird eine multinomiale logistische Regression angewandt, um sozialstrukturelle Unterschiede zwischen den identifizierten Klassen zu analysieren. Diese Auswertungsstrategie wird in den Themenbereichen „intensive parenting“ und „intensive mothering“ häufiger verwendet, um Gruppen mit unterschiedlichen Erziehungsstilen zu identifizieren (Lankes 2022; Mollborn/Billingsley 2024). Die LCA ist eine Methode, mit der beobachtete diskrete Variablen genutzt werden, um eine zugrunde liegende, nicht direkt messbare latente Struktur zu identifizieren und in Klassen zu gruppieren. (Lazarsfeld/Henry 1968; Collins/Lanza 2009; Andreß et al. 1997). Der Ansatz ist personenzentriert und erlaubt eine Einteilung der Befragten in Klassen auf der

Tabelle 1: Verteilung der Modellvariablen in der Stichprobe

	Anteil in %	N
Kinderwunsch		
Ja, auf jeden Fall	54,4	1.400
Eher schon	29,9	769
Eher nicht	10,5	271
Sicher nicht	5,2	133
Kontrollvariable		
Geschlecht		
männlich	57,8	1.501
weiblich	42,2	1.073
Partnerschaft		
ja	52,5	1.344
nein	47,5	1.230
Bildung		
niedrig/mittel	72,1	1.879
hoch	27,3	695
Sozialisation		
Westdt. Bundesländer	85,3	2.073
Ostdt. Bundesländer	14,7	501
Alter (Mittelwert, Std.abw.)	27,2 (0,01)	2.574
N	2.574	2.574

Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen; Bildung wurde als Kombination von Schul- und Berufsbildungsabschluss kodiert (Schroedter et al. 2006) und binär zusammengefasst: hoch = Meisterabschluss und akademische Bildungsgrade, niedrig = alle anderen Schul- und Ausbildungsgrade.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648), gewichtet.

Grundlage ihrer individuellen Antworten, mit einem Ergebnis ähnlich einer Clusteranalyse. Um die Information, die ordinale Merkmale bieten, voll auszuschöpfen, wurde auf die sonst übliche Dichotomisierung der Items verzichtet und Modelle für ordinale Merkmale geschätzt. Die angemessene Anzahl an Klassen wird durch statistische Kriterien des Modellfit sowie durch theoretische Überlegungen, einschließlich der Interpretierbarkeit der Klassen, bestimmt. Es wurden Modelle mit bis zu sechs Klassenlösungen geschätzt (vgl. Tab. A1). Aufgrund des Akaike (AIC) und des Bayes'schen Informationskriteriums (BIC) und inhaltlichen Vergleichen mit dem Zwei-Klassen- und dem Vier-Klassen-Modell wurde ein Drei-Klassen-Modell ausgewählt.

Die gesellschaftliche Ebene soll als erklärende Variable bei der Analyse des Kinderwunsches mit in das Modell einbezogen werden. Dafür werden für die einzelnen Items Übereinstimmungsindizes berechnet, indem Unterschiede zwischen der individuellen und der wahrgenommenen gesellschaftlichen Ebene ermittelt werden. Als Übereinstimmung werden eine tatsächliche Übereinstimmung oder eine Abweichung von nicht mehr als einer Antwortkategorie gewertet. Die Abgrenzung der einzelnen Klassen voneinander wird mittels einer multinomialen logistischen Regression ermittelt.

Um die Vielfalt der Leitbilder zur intensivierten Elternschaft auf mehreren Ebenen zu untersuchen, wird die LCA durch eine anschließende Faktorenanalyse ergänzt. Während die LCA Gruppen von Individuen basierend auf ihren Einstellungen identifiziert, dient die Faktorenanalyse dazu, zugrunde liegende Dimensionen der Einstellungen zu extrahieren und die Struktur der Daten weiter zu verdichten. Dies ermöglicht sowohl eine Validierung der LCA-Ergebnisse als auch die Identifikation klassenübergreifender Muster, die die Vielfalt der Leitbilder theoretisch fundiert beschreiben. Alle Items können für eine Faktorenanalyse als gerade noch ausreichend geeignet bewertet werden, mit Ausnahme des Items zur Väterbeteiligung, das in weiteren Analysen deshalb als Einzelitem eingehen wird. Die Faktorenanalyse wurde mit der Hauptkomponentenmethode mit Varimax-Rotation durchgeführt, deren resultierende Dimensionen als zusammengefasste Summenindizes in eine logistische Regression einfließen. Mit dieser wird der Zusammenhang zwischen Leitbild und Kinderwunsch untersucht.

Da der Kinderwunsch ordinal erhoben wurde, wird für den Vergleich von Kinderlosen mit und ohne Kinderwunsch eine Ordered-Probit-Regression für ordinale abhängige Variable gerechnet. Dem Modell liegt die Annahme zugrunde, dass eine latente kontinuierliche Variable durch Schwellenwerte in beobachtbare Kategorien unterteilt wird. Regressionskoeffizienten zeigen die Richtung und Stärke eines Effekts, wobei ein signifikanter Koeffizient bedeutet, dass eine Veränderung eines Items die latente Variable beeinflusst und damit die Wahrscheinlichkeit erhöht, dass die abhängige Variable – hier der Kinderwunsch – die Kategorie wechselt (Andreß et al. 1997). Neben den Regressionskoeffizienten werden auch die Average Marginal Effects dargestellt, die einen spezifischen Fokus auf die einzelnen Kategorien der abhängigen Variablen legen. Sie quantifizieren, wie sich eine einheitliche Änderung einer unabhängigen Variablen direkt auf die Wahrscheinlichkeit beeinflusst, dass die abhängige Variable in eine bestimmte Kategorie fällt (Brüderl 2018). Zur Erhöhung der Teststärke werden die beiden Wellen des Datensatzes gepoolt und im Anschluss das Regressionsmodell mit panel-robusten Standardfehlern gerechnet, die für die intra-individuelle Korrelation der Daten kontrollieren.²

2 Die Berechnungen erfolgen mit dem Statistikprogramm STATA 18, für die LCA wurde das Paket „gsem“ genutzt.

4 Ergebnisse

4.1 Leitbild „Intensivierte Elternschaft“

Zunächst sollen das Ausmaß und die Verbreitung von Leitbildkomponenten der intensivierten Elternschaft unter jungen Kinderlosen in Deutschland untersucht werden. Dazu werden die Mittelwerte (MW) der Zustimmung zu den einzelnen Items berichtet, wobei „4“ maximale Zustimmung und „1“ maximale Ablehnung repräsentiert. Der Grad an Übereinstimmung ist etwas weiter gefasst, da auch eine Abweichung um eine Kategorie noch als Übereinstimmung gewertet wurde (siehe Abschnitt „Methode“). Um einordnen zu können, inwieweit die Einstellungen von Kinderlosen mit dem gesellschaftlichen Leitbild übereinstimmen, werden sowohl die wahrgenommene gesellschaftliche Meinung als auch die Abweichung zur individuellen Einstellung dargestellt.

Was die Vorbedingungen betrifft, die für eine Familiengründung gegeben sein sollten, herrscht ein breiter Konsens hinsichtlich der Notwendigkeit einer gesicherten finanziellen Basis. Dieser umfasst sowohl die individuellen Überzeugungen (MW 3,81) als auch das wahrgenommene gesellschaftliche Leitbild (MW 3,23) und führt entsprechend zu einer Übereinstimmung zwischen der eigenen Überzeugung und der gesellschaftlich wahrgenommenen von fast 90 % (vgl. Tab. 2). Anders sieht es bei der Frage aus, ob ein Paar verheiratet sein muss, wenn es an eine Familiengründung denkt: Während auf individueller Ebene diese Forderung überwiegend abgelehnt wird (MW 1,72), wird sie als Anforderung der Allgemeinheit durchaus verstärkt wahrgenommen (MW 2,53) und spiegelt sich in einer relativ geringen Übereinstimmung von eigener und gesellschaftlich wahrgenommener Meinung von 62,5 % wider. Auch die Frage, ob eine Frau im Beruf Fuß gefasst haben muss, unabhängig von der Situation des Partners, wird auf individueller Ebene etwas stärker bejaht (MW 2,81) als auf gesellschaftlicher (MW 2,51), weist aber eine vergleichsweise hohe Übereinstimmung von 81,2 % auf.

Zwischen dem gesellschaftlichen und dem individuellen Leitbildaspekt zum Leben mit Kindern zeigen sich ebenfalls Diskrepanzen. Während kaum jemand zustimmt, dass Eltern ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse für ihre Kinder komplett zurückstellen sollten (MW 2,17), wird dies als gesellschaftliche Erwartung häufiger wahrgenommen (MW 2,51) bei einer Übereinstimmung von 85,4 %. Dass man sich als Eltern gut informieren müsse, weil man in der Erziehung vieles falsch machen könne, findet dagegen auf beiden Ebenen Zustimmung, auf der individuellen (MW 3,32) noch stärker als auf der gesellschaftlichen (MW 3,13). Entsprechend wird die gegensätzlich codierte und nur auf der individuellen Ebene erhobene Aussage, dass Kinder auch von alleine groß werden würden und man sich nicht so viele Gedanken machen müsse, stark abgelehnt (MW 1,67). Zum Leben mit Kindern gehört schließlich auch die Ausgestaltung der Mutter- und Vaterrolle, für die jeweils ein Item ausgewählt wurde, das in Richtung Verfügbarkeit für die Familie weist. In beiden Fällen reichen die individuellen Meinungen und die wahrgenommene gesell-

Tabelle 2: Einstellungen zu Aspekten intensivierter Elternschaft auf individueller und wahrgenommener gesellschaftlicher Ebene

	Individuelle Ebene	Allgemeine Ebene	Diff.	Übereinstimmung (%)
Bedingungen, die erfüllt sein müssen, bevor man Kinder bekommt.				
Das Paar muss verheiratet sein.	1,72 (0,89)	2,53 (0,81)	***	62,5
Es muss genügend Geld da sein.	3,18 (0,73)	3,23 (0,69)	**	89,7
Die Frau muss im Beruf Fuß gefasst haben, unabhängig davon, ob ihr Partner arbeiten geht.	2,81 (0,88)	2,51 (0,73)	***	81,2
Alltägliches Leben mit Kindern.				
Eltern sollten ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse für ihre Kinder komplett zurückstellen.	2,17 (0,77)	2,51 (0,77)	***	85,4
Kinder werden sowieso groß, da muss man sich nicht so viele Gedanken machen.	1,67 (0,71)	-		
Eltern können bei der Erziehung vieles falsch machen, daher müssen sie sich gut informieren.	3,32 (0,71)	3,13 (0,70)	***	89,2
Für ein Kind zwischen 1 und 3 Jahren ist es das Beste, wenn es nur von der Mutter betreut wird.	1,71 (0,78)	2,68 (0,80)	***	67,9
Väter sollten für ihre Kinder beruflich kürzertreten.	2,70 (0,74)	2,35 (0,75)	***	86,4
N	2.574	2.574		

Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen; bei Mittelwerten Standardabweichung in Klammern; Einstellungssitems immer: 1 ‚stimme überhaupt nicht zu‘ bis 4 ‚stimme voll u. ganz zu‘, d. h. je höher, desto stärker die Zustimmung; Übereinstimmung = Abweichung der Zustimmung individuelle Meinung – wahrgenommene gesellschaftliche Meinung max. 1 Antwortkategorie; Individuelle Ebene: „Stimmen Sie persönlich zu?“, Gesellschaftliche Ebene: „Wie sieht das die Allgemeinheit?“.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648), gewichtet.

schaftliche Meinung auseinander: Die Forderung, dass Mütter ihre kleinen Kinder selbst betreuen müssten, wird individuell stark abgelehnt (MW 1,71) und die For-

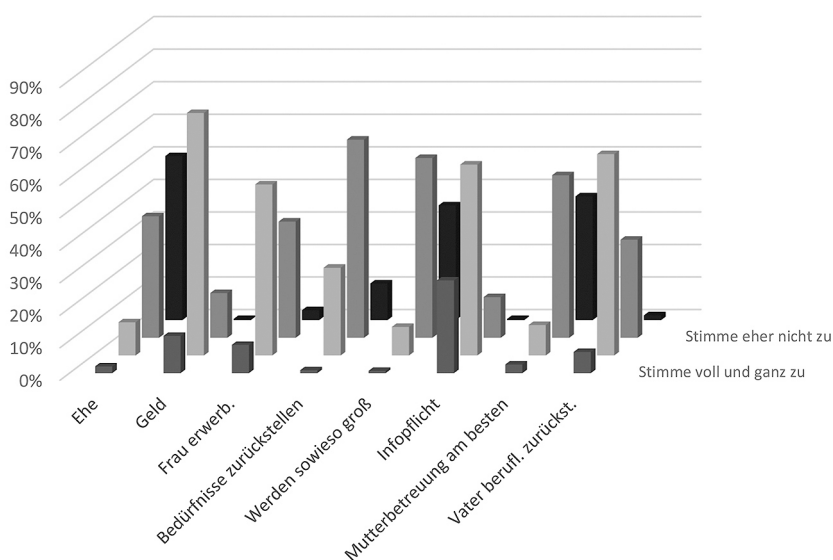
derung, dass Väter für ihre Kinder beruflich kürzertreten sollten, eher befürwortet (MW 2,70). Auf gesellschaftlicher Ebene wird jeweils eher das Gegenteil wahrgenommen, wobei die Abweichung vor allem für die Aussage zur Mutterbetreuung besonders stark ist (MW 2,68). Statistisch sind alle diese berichteten Unterschiede signifikant, was zum Teil auch der Größe der Stichprobe zugerechnet werden kann. Zwei der Aussagen finden auf beiden Ebenen Zustimmung, die Grundbedingung einer soliden finanziellen Basis für eine Familiengründung und die Einschätzung, dass die Elternrolle erst nach ausreichend Informationsarbeit gut ausgefüllt werden könne. Hier kann man von breit wirksamen Leitbildkomponenten sprechen. Die anderen betrachteten Aspekte – sofern auf beiden Ebenen erhoben – lassen dagegen eine mehr oder weniger große Diskrepanz zwischen individuellem und gesellschaftlichem Leitbild erkennen, wobei das wahrgenommene gesellschaftliche Leitbild als traditioneller eingestuft werden kann. Teilweise ist dieser Effekt allerdings auch auf Altersunterschiede zwischen der Gruppe der Befragten mit 20 bis 39 Jahren und der Allgemeinheit zurückzuführen, die die Bevölkerung in ihrem gesamten Altersspektrum umfasst und deshalb möglicherweise als konservativer wahrgenommen wird (Lück et al. 2015: 40).

Die latente Klassenanalyse bestätigt und differenziert dieses Bild auf der individuellen Ebene weiter. Es wurden drei Klassen mit einer Prävalenz von jeweils 55 %, 23 % und 22 % unter den Kinderlosen ermittelt. Für jede Klasse werden die bedingten Antwortwahrscheinlichkeiten der Befragten für die einzelnen Items grafisch dargestellt (vgl. Abb.1 bis 3). Sie geben an, mit welcher Wahrscheinlichkeit ein Individuum eine Aussage in einer bestimmten Weise beantwortet, in unserem Fall, wie stark zugestimmt oder abgelehnt wird, vorausgesetzt, dass es der entsprechenden latenten Klasse angehört. Diese Wahrscheinlichkeiten sind zentral für die LCA, da sie die Verteilung der beobachteten Antworten in den verschiedenen latenten Klassen beschreiben. Die Benennung der Klassen erfolgt aufgrund inhaltlicher Überlegungen und konzentriert sich auf die Items, in denen sich die jeweilige Klasse am stärksten von den anderen beiden Klassen unterscheidet (Bacher/Vermunt 2010).

Das Leitbild der größten Klasse kann als *gemäßigt-modernes* Elternbild bezeichnet werden. Die bedingten Antwortwahrscheinlichkeiten sind bis auf eine Ausnahme jeweils am häufigsten die Mittelkategorien der einzelnen Items, d. h. *stimme zu* bzw. *stimme nicht zu*, ohne den Zusatz *sehr* bzw. *überhaupt* (vgl. Abb.1 u. Tab. A3). Eine Ausnahme stellt die Bedeutung der Ehe als Voraussetzung für den Übergang in die Elternschaft dar. Hier stimmt die Hälfte (50,4 %) der Klassenangehörigen *überhaupt nicht* zu. Einer ausreichenden finanziellen Basis (74,5 % „stimme eher zu“) und einer gesicherten Erwerbstätigkeit der Frau (52,6 % „stimme eher zu“) dagegen schon. Dass Eltern ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse komplett zurückstellen sollten, wird nicht befürwortet (60,9 % „stimme eher nicht zu“). Es wird verneint, dass Kinder von alleine groß werden (55,3 % „stimme eher nicht zu“), sondern man sieht Eltern in der Informationspflicht (58,7 % „stimme eher zu“). Eine ausschließliche Mutterbe-

treuung für Kleinkinder wird abgelehnt (50,0 % „stimme eher nicht zu“) und anders als bei den anderen beiden Klassen wird von Vätern ein relativ starkes Engagement erwartet, das auch auf Kosten des Berufes gehen darf (61,9 % „stimme eher zu“).

Abbildung 1: Gemäßig-moderne Klasse (55 %)



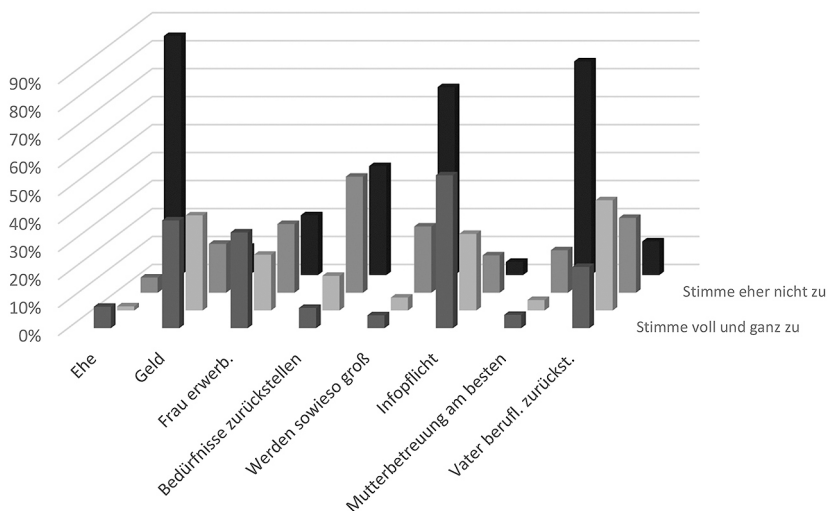
Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen, LCA Itemprofile, bedingte Antwortwahrscheinlichkeiten.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648).

Die nächstgrößte Klasse, deren Elternbild als *modern-informiert* bezeichnet werden kann, hebt sich vor allem durch die wesentlich stärkere Ablehnung der Ehe (85,5 % „stimme überhaupt nicht zu“) und der Mutterbetreuung (76,4 % „stimme überhaupt nicht zu“) von den anderen beiden Klassen ab (vgl. Abb.2 u. Tab. A3). Auch die beiden Items zur Informationspflicht dominieren hier stärker, d. h. bei diesen ist die bedingte Antwortwahrscheinlichkeit jeweils in den Extremkategorien am höchsten (Eltern müssen sich informieren: 54,6 % „stimme sehr zu“; Kinder werden von alleine groß: 67,2 % „stimme überhaupt nicht zu“). Im Gegensatz zu den anderen beiden Klassen weisen die restlichen Einstellungen keine besonderen Verteilungen auf. Die bedingten Antwortwahrscheinlichkeiten sind relativ gleich verteilt, folgen aber der bereits beschriebenen allgemeinen Tendenz, die auch in der Klasse mit dem *gemäßigt-modernen* Elternbild zu finden ist. Zum Beispiel beträgt die Wahrscheinlichkeit einer Zustimmung zur Aussage „Es muss genügend Geld da sein“

38,5 % für „stimme sehr zu“ und 33,9 % für „stimme eher zu“. Diese Werte liegen unter denjenigen der *gemäßigt-modernen* Gruppe, stellen jedoch auch bei diesem Item die Mehrheit der Klasse dar.

Abbildung 2: Modern-informierte Klasse (23 %)



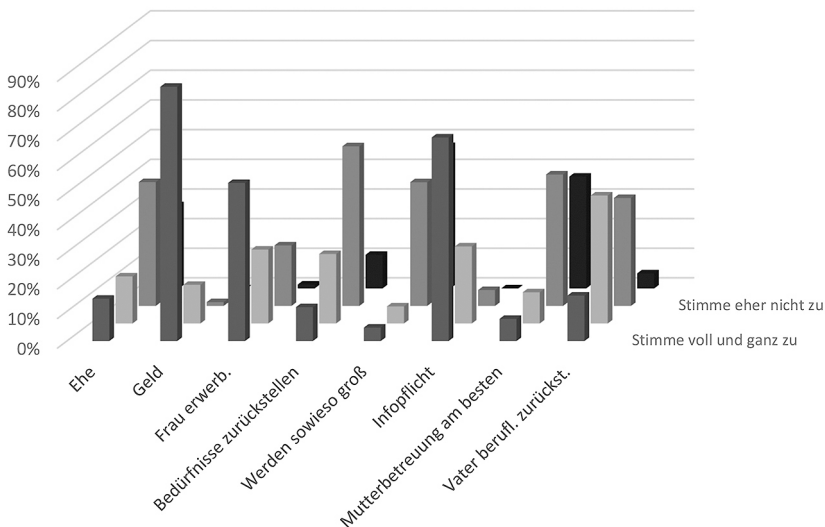
Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen, LCA Itemprofile, bedingte Antwortwahrscheinlichkeiten.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648)

Das Leitbild der dritten Klasse, die ähnlich groß ist wie die zweite, kann als *gemäßigt-konservativ* umschrieben werden. Eine Ehe als Basis einer Familie wird hier weniger stark abgelehnt als in den anderen beiden Klassen („Das Paar muss verheiratet sein“: 14,2 % „stimme sehr zu“; *gemäßigt-modern* 2,0 %; *modern-informiert* 7,6 %), während gleichzeitig großer Wert auf die finanzielle Basis (85,7 % „stimme sehr zu“) und eine gesicherte Erwerbstätigkeit der Frau (53,3 % „stimme sehr zu“) als Vorbedingung einer Familiengründung gelegt wird (vgl. Abb.3 u. Tab. A3). Eigene Bedürfnisse komplett zurückzustellen wird weniger stark abgelehnt als in den anderen Klassen („Eltern sollten ihre Bedürfnisse für ihre Kinder komplett zurückstellen“: 11,4 % „stimme sehr zu“). Dass sich Eltern über Erziehung informieren müssen, wird stark befürwortet (68,7 % „stimme sehr zu“). Dass es für ein junges Kind am besten sei, nur von der Mutter betreut zu werden, wird im Vergleich zu den anderen beiden Klassen weniger stark abgelehnt (7,5 % „stimme sehr zu“, *gemäßigt-modern* 2,6 %; *modern-informiert* 4,7 %) und über die Beteiligung

von Vätern wird, ebenfalls wie bei den *modern-informierten*, ambivalent geurteilt, d. h. es wird weder besonders stark befürwortet noch abgelehnt.

Abbildung 3: Gemäßig-konservative Klasse (22 %)



Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen, LCA Itemprofile, bedingte Antwortwahrscheinlichkeiten.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648).

Die drei Klassen weisen keine grundlegenden Einstellungsunterschiede auf, es kann also eher von einem einheitlichen Leitbild der Kinderlosen gesprochen werden, das sich in der Gewichtung der Komponenten in den jeweiligen Gruppen unterscheidet. Eine anschließende multinomiale logistische Regression (vgl. Tab. 2A) zeigt, dass sich die Gruppe mit einem *gemäßigt-konservativen* Leitbild und diejenigen mit einem *gemäßigt-modernen* sozialstrukturell nicht signifikant unterscheiden. Allerdings möchten die *gemäßigt-konservativen* mit höherer Wahrscheinlichkeit sicher kein Kind bzw. mit geringerer Wahrscheinlichkeit „eher schon“. Anders stellt sich die Situation derjenigen mit einem *modern-informierten* im Vergleich mit denjenigen mit einem *gemäßigt-modernen* Leitbild dar. Die Gruppe mit dem *modern-informierten* Leitbild ist signifikant jünger und höher gebildet. Wie bei den *gemäßigt-konservativen* ist auch bei den Mitgliedern dieser Gruppe die Wahrscheinlichkeit signifikant höher, dass sie sicher keine Kinder möchten.

4.2 Kinderwunsch und Leitbild der intensivierten Elternschaft

In einem zweiten Schritt wird die Perspektive gewechselt und der Zusammenhang zwischen Kinderwunsch und Leitbild mit dem Kinderwunsch als abhängige Variable betrachtet. Um für die nachfolgenden Analysen robustere Ergebnisse zu erhalten, wurden die Einzelitems mittels einer Hauptkomponentenanalyse zu Dimensionen zusammengefasst (vgl. Tab. A4). Demnach lassen sich die Einstellungen zur intensivierten Elternschaft von Kinderlosen drei Dimensionen zuordnen, die alle einen ähnlich hohen Varianzanteil erklären: *Finanzielle Vorsorge* (21,5 % Varianz) aus den Items zu Vorbedingungen einer Elternschaft „Es muss genügend Geld da sein“ und „Die Frau muss im Beruf Fuß gefasst haben“. *Kindzentriertheit* (17,8 % Varianz) aus den Items „Eltern sollten ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse für ihre Kinder komplett zurückstellen“, „Für ein Kind zwischen 1 und 3 Jahren ist es das Beste, wenn es nur von der Mutter betreut wird“ und „Das Paar muss vor einer Familiengründung verheiratet sein“ und *Informierte Elternschaft* (15,6 % Varianz) aus den Items „Eltern können vieles falsch machen und müssen sich daher gut informieren“ und „Kinder werden sowieso groß, da muss man sich nicht so viele Gedanken machen“ (negativ gepolt). Während die Dimensionen *Informierte Elternschaft* und *Finanzielle Vorsorge* den theoretischen Erwartungen voll entsprechen, fehlt bei *Kindzentriertheit* das Väterengagement, das deshalb als Einzelitem in die Analyse eingeht.

Der Zusammenhang der einzelnen Dimensionen mit dem Kinderwunsch wurde mit einer Ordered-Probit-Regression modelliert. Der Kinderwunsch ist von 1 „sicher nicht“ bis 4 „ja, auf jeden Fall“ kodiert und die Ausprägungen der jeweiligen Dimensionen ebenfalls von 1 „stimme überhaupt nicht zu“ bis 4 „stimme sehr zu“. Von den vier untersuchten Dimensionen weisen drei signifikante Effekte auf. Der Zusammenhang zwischen der finanziellen Vorsorgedimension und dem Kinderwunsch ist negativ, d. h. je stärker dieser Dimension zugestimmt wird, desto wahrscheinlicher ist beim Kinderwunsch ein Wechsel in eine ablehnendere Kategorie. Bei den anderen Dimensionen stellt sich das Bild umgekehrt dar, der Zusammenhang ist positiv. Je stärker der Kindzentrierung, der Informationspflicht von Eltern und dem Väterengagement zugestimmt wird, desto wahrscheinlicher ist ein Wechsel in eine Kategorie mit höherem Kinderwunsch, wobei der Effekt des Einzelitems Väterengagement nicht signifikant ist (vgl. Tab. 3).

Die Aufnahme der Übereinstimmung mit der gesellschaftlichen Ebene in das Modell ermöglicht es, individuelle Einstellungen in den Kontext des gesellschaftlichen Leitbildes einzuordnen und aufzuzeigen, inwiefern der Kinderwunsch durch Konformität oder Abweichung davon beeinflusst wird. Hier zeigt sich kein signifikanter Zusammenhang. Die anderen Dimensionen behalten sowohl ihre Richtung als auch ihre Signifikanz, außer der finanziellen Vorsorge, die gerade nicht signifikant wird. Die soziodemografischen Kontrollvariablen zeigen bei ihrer Aufnahme in das Modell die erwartbaren Effekte, d. h. das Alter weist einen negativen Zusammenhang mit dem Kinderwunsch auf: Mit steigendem Alter sinkt der Kin-

Tabelle 3: Zusammenhang Leitbildindikatoren intensivierter Elternschaft und Kinderwunsch von Kinderlosen

	Modell 1	Modell 2	Modell 3
Leitbildindikatoren			
Finanzielle Vorsorge	-0,073 * (0,03)	-0,065 (0,03)	-0,195 *** (0,03)
Kindzentrierung	0,355 *** (0,04)	0,337 *** (0,04)	0,359 *** (0,04)
Informierte Elternschaft	0,102 ** (0,04)	0,106 ** (0,04)	0,079 * (0,04)
Engagierte Vaterschaft	0,054 (0,03)	0,059 (0,03)	0,057 (0,03)
Übereinstimmung ind. – gesell. Leitbild		0,029 (0,02)	0,012 (0,02)
Alter			-0,066 *** (0,00)
Geschlecht (Ref. männlich)			0,062 (0,05)
Partner (Ref. nein)			0,397 *** (0,05)
Bildung (Ref. niedrig)			0,233 *** (0,05)
Sozialisation (Ref. Alte BuLä)			0,107 (0,06)
Pseudo R ²	0,01	0,01	0,07
N	3.305	3.305	3.305

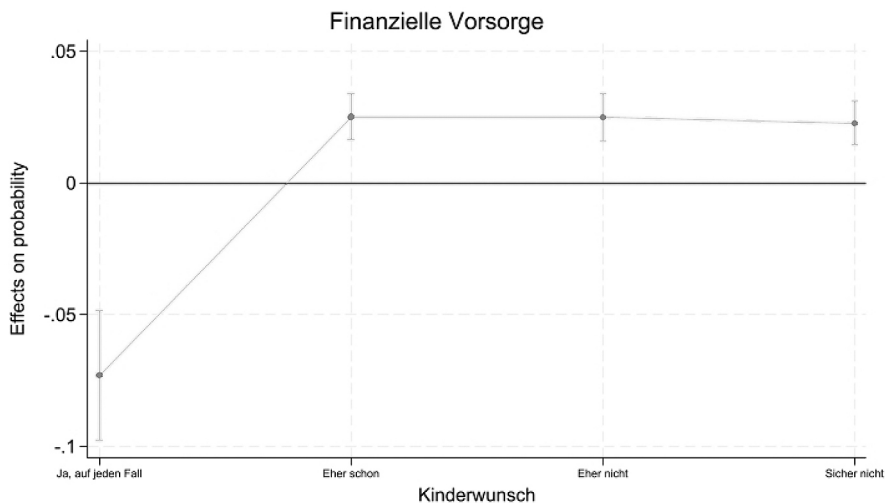
Anmerkung: Ordered-Probit-Regression mit panelrobusten Standardfehlern, eigene Berechnungen; alle Variablen ohne missings; Kinderwunsch: 1 „sicher nicht“, 2 „eher nicht“, 3 „eher schon“, 4 „ja, auf jeden Fall“; Einstellungsdimensionen von 1 „sehr starke Ablehnung“ bis 4 „sehr hohe Zustimmung“; * $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,00$.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648), FLB 2016 (doi.org/10.7802/2246); gepoolter Datensatz

derwunsch, entweder durch seine Erfüllung und eine damit einhergehende Selektion der Kinderlosen, die von vornherein keinen Kinderwunsch hatten oder durch eine Anpassung an veränderte Lebensumstände von Kinderlosen mit früherem Kinderwunsch. Eine Partnerschaft erhöht die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines Kinderwunsches, da mit ihr die Realisierungschancen steigen, ein höherer Bildungsabschluss wiederum führt häufig zu einem Aufschub der Realisierung, so dass es länger

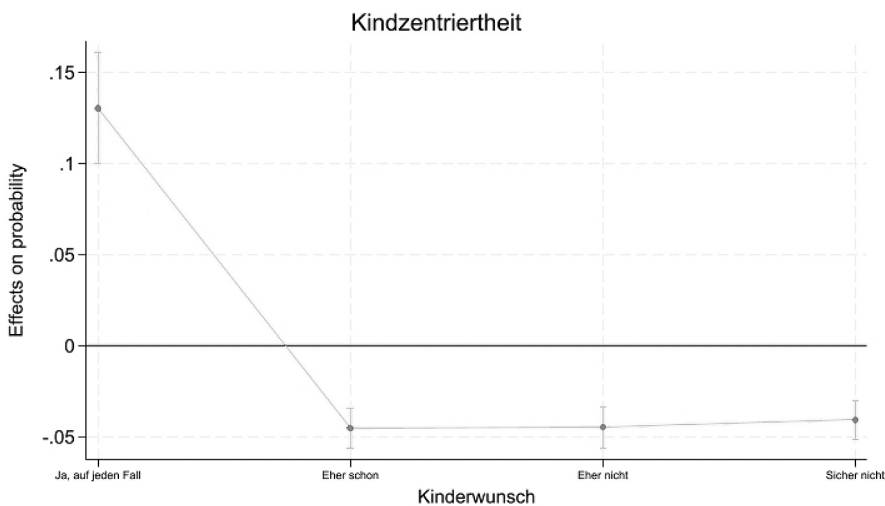
beim Wunsch bleibt (z.B. Liefbroer 2009; Übersicht: Peuckert 2019). Die anderen Dimensionen behalten sowohl Vorzeichen als auch Signifikanz, mit Ausnahme des der finanziellen Vorsorge, die wieder signifikant wird. Die Pseudo- R^2 Werte deuten an, dass die Modelle nur einen geringen Anteil der Varianz der abhängigen Variable erklären. Dies bedeutet, dass der Kinderwunsch von Kinderlosen zu einem großen Teil von anderen Einflussfaktoren abhängt. Trotzdem ist ein Einfluss, insbesondere bei den hochsignifikanten Dimensionen, erkennbar.

Differenzierter lassen sich die Zusammenhänge zwischen den Dimensionen intensivierter Elternschaft und dem Kinderwunsch über Average Marginal Effects (AME) darstellen (vgl. Abb. 4-7). Diese geben für jede Ausprägung des Kinderwunsches die Änderung der Wahrscheinlichkeit an, in diese Kategorie zu fallen, wenn sich eine unabhängige Variable um eine Einheit ändert. Die AME für die Dimension der finanziellen Vorsorge zeigen, dass steigende Zustimmung zur Vorsorgedimension, also zur Notwendigkeit einer finanziellen Basis und einer Festigung der Berufstätigkeit der Frau, die Wahrscheinlichkeit, einen sicheren Kinderwunsch zu haben, um 7,3 % verringert, während die Wahrscheinlichkeiten in den anderen Kategorien von „eher schon“ bis „sicher nicht“ steigen (2,5 % „eher schon“, 2,5 % „eher nicht“, 2,2 % „sicher nicht“). Für die anderen Dimensionen gilt genau das Gegenteil, wobei der Effekt für Kindzentriertheit am stärksten ausfällt. Das heißt, ein Anstieg der Kindzentriertheit um eine Einheit erhöht die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines sicheren Kinderwunsches um 13,0 %. Gleichzeitig verringert sich die Wahrscheinlichkeit, in eine der drei anderen Kategorien zu fallen, um 4,5 % für „eher schon“, 4,4 % für „eher nicht“ und 4,1 % für „sicher nicht“. Da bereits die Bezeichnung der Dimension die starke Fokussierung auf Kinder anzeigt, ist dieses Ergebnis nicht überraschend. Allerdings besteht dieser positive Zusammenhang auch bei der Informationspflicht von Eltern (Erhöhung der Wahrscheinlichkeit eines sicheren Kinderwunsches um 2,9 %) und bei der Erwartung, dass Väter sich beruflich zurücknehmen sollten, um sich um ihre Kinder kümmern zu können (Erhöhung der Wahrscheinlichkeit eines sicheren Kinderwunsches um 1,8 %). Im letzteren Fall allerdings nicht signifikant. Während also die Einstellung, dass eine Familiengründung eine ausreichende finanzielle Basis erfordert, negativ mit einem Kinderwunsch zusammenhängt, ist bei anderen Aspekten des Leitbildes das Gegenteil der Fall. Die Erwartung, als Eltern die eigenen Bedürfnisse hinter diejenigen eines Kindes zurückzustellen, auch im Sinn beruflicher Zugeständnisse sowohl von Müttern wie auch von Vätern, als auch die Erwartung, dass Elternschaft viel Informationsarbeit bedeutet, korreliert positiv mit dem Kinderwunsch von Kinderlosen. Interessant ist zudem, dass der Sprung von positivem zu negativem Effekt nicht zwischen „eher schon“ und „eher nicht“ stattfindet, sondern zwischen „ja, auf jeden Fall“ und „eher schon“. Ein konkreter Kinderwunsch scheint das Leitbild der intensivierten Elternschaft als Handlungsroutine zu aktivieren, wodurch die Anforderungen nicht als Hindernis, sondern als normaler Bestandteil der Elternschaft wahrgenommen werden.

Abbildung 4: Zusammenhang „finanzielle Vorsorge“ und Kinderwunsch

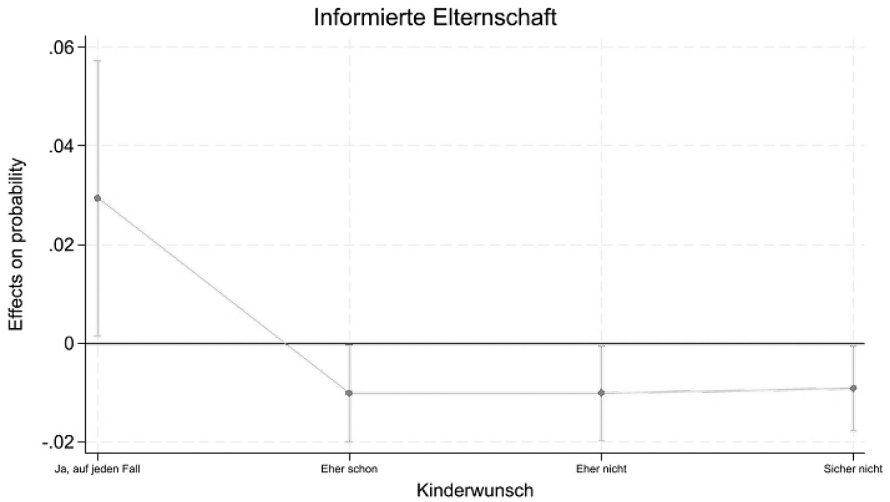
Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen, Average Marginal Effects.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648), 2016 (doi.org/10.7802/2246).

Abbildung 5: Zusammenhang „Kindzentriertheit“ und Kinderwunsch

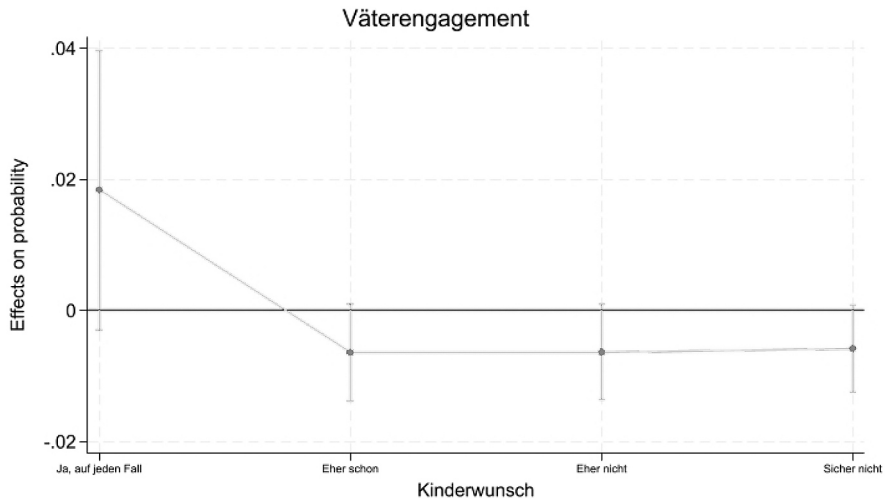
Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen, Average Marginal Effects.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648), 2016 (doi.org/10.7802/2246).

Abbildung 6: Zusammenhang „Informierte Elternschaft“ und Kinderwunsch

Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen, Average Marginal Effects.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648), 2016 (doi.org/10.7802/2246).

Abbildung 7: Zusammenhang „Väterengagement“ und Kinderwunsch

Anmerkung: Eigene Berechnungen, Average Marginal Effects.

Quelle: FLB 2012 (doi.org/10.4232/1.12648), 2016 (doi.org/10.7802/2246).

5 Zusammenfassung und Diskussion

Ausgehend vom Erziehungsstil der intensivierten Elternschaft wurde im vorliegenden Beitrag untersucht, welches Leitbild Kinderlose in Deutschland in Bezug auf die Ansprüche und Anforderungen an Elternschaft haben und inwiefern dieses Leitbild auch auf gesellschaftlicher Ebene wahrgenommen wird. Es zeigt sich, dass von einem übergreifenden Leitbild mit unterschiedlichen Gewichtungen gesprochen werden kann, das in vielen Aspekten mit dem Erziehungsstil der intensivierten Elternschaft übereinstimmt. Die wichtigsten Komponenten sind die Dimensionen der *informierten Elternschaft* und der *finanziellen Vorsorge* als Basis einer Familiengründung. Die Vorstellung, dass gesicherte Finanzen und umfangreiche Informationen notwendig sind, um Kinder adäquat erziehen zu können, findet sowohl auf individueller Ebene bei Kinderlosen als auch im von ihnen wahrgenommenen gesellschaftlichen Leitbild große Zustimmung. Die Ehe als konstituierendes Element von Familie spielt allerdings kaum noch eine Rolle. Im Gegensatz zu der an Hays (1996) angelehnten Definition von „intensive parenting“, die eine zentrale Vorrangstellung der kindlichen Bedürfnisse beinhaltet, ist die Bereitschaft, die eigenen Bedürfnisse komplett hinter die der eigenen Kinder zurückzustellen, bei Kinderlosen in Deutschland weniger stark ausgeprägt. In diesem Kontext kann auch die Ablehnung einer ausschließlichen Betreuung jüngerer Kinder durch die Mutter, die hohe Zustimmung zur weiblichen Erwerbstätigkeit sowie die nur moderate Zustimmung zur Zurückstellung des beruflichen Engagements von Vätern zugunsten ihrer Kinder interpretiert werden. Dieses allgemeine Leitbild differenziert sich in drei Gruppen von Kinderlosen, die anhand einer latenten Klassenanalyse identifiziert wurden. Die Mehrheit hat ein gemäßigt-modernes Elternleitbild, das eine moderate Umsetzung des „intensive parenting“ Ansatzes widerspiegelt: hohe Zustimmung zu finanzieller Vorsorge und informierter Elternschaft, jedoch geringere Kindzentriertheit. Zudem wird von Vätern ein hohes familiäres Engagement erwartet. Die beiden anderen Gruppen zeigen extremere Einstellungen: Kinderlose mit einem modern-informierten Leitbild, die vergleichsweise jünger und höher gebildet sind, lehnen die Bedeutung der Ehe und traditionelle Betreuungsformen stärker ab, während das gemäßigt-konservative Leitbild durch eine höhere Kindzentrierung und stärkere Betonung traditioneller Werte geprägt ist.

Die zweite forschungsleitende Frage des Beitrages bezieht sich auf den Zusammenhang von Leitbild mit dem Kinderwunsch von Kinderlosen. Mit dem Frageprogramm des Familienleitbildsurveys wurden vier Leitbilddimensionen ermittelt, *finanzielle Vorsorge*, *Kindzentrierung*, *informierte Elternschaft* und *engagierte Vaterschaft*, die eng mit dem Konzept des „intensive parenting“ übereinstimmen. Von diesen vier Dimensionen weist nur eine einen negativen Zusammenhang mit dem Kinderwunsch von Kinderlosen auf. Eine hohe Zustimmung zur Notwendigkeit finanzieller Absicherung verringert die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines sicheren Kinderwunsches. Finanzielle Absicherung und berufliche Etablierung beider Partner, die

als einer Geburt zeitlich vorgelagerte Bedingungen erfragt wurden, zeigen, dass die weitreichenden Konsequenzen und die Irreversibilität der Entscheidung für ein Kind Kinderlosen durchaus bewusst sind. Auch wenn durch das Querschnittsdesign keine kausalen Zusammenhänge erfasst werden können, liegt die Schlussfolgerung nahe, dass Kinderlose durchaus die Erwartung haben, dass berufliche und finanzielle Ansprüche, die nicht vor einer Familiengründung erfüllt sind, mit Kind schwieriger zu erreichen sein werden (Huinink et al. 2008). Inwiefern deshalb berufliche Aspirationen einen Kinderwunsch hemmen oder ein Kinderwunsch ohnehin nicht vorhanden war, ist mit den Daten nicht darstellbar.

Für die anderen drei Dimensionen *Kindzentrierung*, *informierte Elternschaft* und *engagierte Vaterschaft* finden wir dagegen einen positiven Zusammenhang mit dem Kinderwunsch. Die Dimension der *Kindzentriertheit* beinhaltet Faktoren, die als Bereitstellung kindzentrierter Rahmenbedingungen beschrieben werden können, d. h. die Bereitschaft, die eigenen Bedürfnisse für das Kind komplett zurückzustellen, die Zustimmung, dass jüngere Kinder am besten nur von ihrer Mutter betreut werden sollten und die Einstellung, dass eine Ehe Voraussetzung einer Familiengründung sein sollte. Letzteres kann dahingehend interpretiert werden, dass die Eheschließung „kindorientiert“ (Nave-Herz 1984) und zur stabilisierenden Rahmenbedingung für das Aufwachsen von Kindern wird. Auch berufliche Interessen treten dabei in den Hintergrund, um Kinder in den Mittelpunkt der eigenen Lebensführung zu stellen. Das Hintanstellen beruflicher Interessen verweist noch einmal auf den negativen Zusammenhang von Kinderwunsch und Vorsorgedimension, denn eine berufliche Etablierung von Frauen muss nach diesen Vorstellungen vor einer Familiengründung erfolgen. Zwar wird auch von Vätern erwartet, Familie dem Beruf gegenüber zu priorisieren, insbesondere in Bezug auf die Zeitverwendung, und auch hier geht eine Zustimmung zu dieser Anforderung mit einer erhöhten Wahrscheinlichkeit eines sicheren Kinderwunsches einher, allerdings ist dieser Zusammenhang nicht signifikant. Vergleicht man die Dimension der *finanziellen Vorsorge* mit den anderen drei Dimensionen, so scheint sie am stärksten von externen Gegebenheiten abhängig zu sein, während die anderen Dimensionen stärker durch persönliche Einstellungen und Werthaltungen geprägt sind.

Betrachtet man die Leitbildaspekte *Kindzentrierung*, *informierte Elternschaft* und *engagierte Vaterschaft* in ihrem Zusammenwirken mit dem Kinderwunsch, dann scheint die individuelle Zustimmung eine Art „Nestbaubereitschaft“ zu signalisieren. Mit einem Kinderwunsch und damit bereits vor einer Familiengründung werden die im Leitbild verankerten Handlungsroutrinen wirksam und die mit einer Elternschaft einhergehenden Aufgaben antizipiert und akzeptiert. Ähnliche Ergebnisse im Zusammenhang mit Kinderbetreuung erhalten Mynarska/Rytel (2020) für Polen. Auch Schwiter et al. (2014) können für die Schweiz zeigen, dass bei einem Kinderwunsch bereits die Berufswahl im Hinblick auf die spätere Elternrolle erfolgt (vgl. auch Baumgarten/Maihofer 2021). Mit der individuellen Entscheidung für ein Kind werden die erwarteten Anforderungen zu einer positiven Herausforderung

(Beck-Gernsheim 1989). Die Ergebnisse der Regression zeigen jedoch auch, dass dies nur für einen sicheren Kinderwunsch gilt. Ist der Kinderwunsch zwar vorhanden, aber eher unsicher, dann wirken die Leitbilddimensionen genau umgekehrt und ähnlich wie bei keinem oder einem unsicheren Kinderwunsch. Zusammenfassend kann festgehalten werden, dass Kinderlose ein relativ einheitliches Bild von den Anforderungen an Eltern in Deutschland haben, das vor allem durch eine Informationspflicht der Eltern und finanzielle Vorsorge geprägt ist und in dem sie sich mit der Gesellschaft auch in Übereinstimmung sehen. Für den Zusammenhang von Leitbild und Kinderwunsch ist zwischen einem sicheren Kinderwunsch und unsicheren oder negativen Kinderwünschen zu unterscheiden. Finanzielle Anforderungen erhöhen die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines unsicheren oder nicht vorhandenen Kinderwunsches. Ist der Kinderwunsch sicher, dann scheinen die Herausforderungen in einer Art „Nestbaubereitschaft“ akzeptiert zu werden. Bereits bei einem positiven, aber unsicheren Kinderwunsch kehrt sich der Zusammenhang aber ins Negative um.

Methodisch wurde in der Studie ein Ansatz gewählt, der zwei voneinander unabhängige Verfahren kombiniert, um die Fragestellung aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven zu beleuchten. Die Ergebnisse der beiden Ansätze ergänzen und validieren sich dabei wechselseitig. Die in der Latenten Klassenanalyse identifizierten Gruppen unterscheiden sich insbesondere in ihrer Einstellung zur intensiven Mutterbetreuung, zur Bedeutung der Ehe und zur Kindzentrierung. Die anschließende Faktorenanalyse ordnete diese Items einer übergeordneten Dimension zu, was die Hypothese untermauert, dass die Differenzierung der Gruppen auf klar abgrenzbaren latenten Dimensionen beruht.

Insgesamt stellt die Studie einen Beitrag zur Erforschung des Konzepts der intensivierte Elternschaft in Deutschland dar. Die explorative Anlage ermöglicht es, erste zentrale Zusammenhänge zu identifizieren und Hypothesen für zukünftige Untersuchungen zu entwickeln. Eine vertiefte Analyse der Verbreitung und Umsetzung dieses Leitbildes in verschiedenen sozialen Schichten, Regionen oder kulturellen Kontexten bleibt jedoch ein zentrales Desiderat weiterer Forschung. Ebenso erfordert das komplexe Wechselspiel zwischen individuellen und gesellschaftlichen Leitbildern eine systematischere Untersuchung.

Die Studie hat mehrere Limitationen. Erstens beruht sie auf Daten von 2012 und 2016, insofern ist davon auszugehen, dass sich die Elternschaftsleitbilder in den letzten Jahren gewandelt haben. Dabei ist aber anzunehmen, dass ein solcher Wandel nicht abrupt verläuft, sondern graduell vonstattengeht und die Aussagen im Kern ihre Gültigkeit behalten. Eine Implementation entsprechender Fragen in aktuelle Erhebungen wäre deshalb wünschenswert. Zweitens sind die hier gezeigten Befunde für Deutschland nur teilweise im internationalen Kontext zu vergleichen. Überlegenswert wäre deshalb eine engere Anbindung der Items an internationale Skalen (s.o.). Drittens zeigt die Studie nur Assoziationen und keine Kausalbezie-

hungen. Um einen kausalen Zusammenhang zwischen Elternschaftsleitbildern und tatsächlicher Fertilität erfassen zu können, wären Paneldaten notwendig. Insofern erweitert die vorliegende Studie das Forschungsfeld zu intensiver Elternschaft in Deutschland und nennt relevante Aspekte für zukünftige Forschung.

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Societal transformation and organisational change:

How advocacy organisations respond to migration-related diversification*****

Abstract: This article investigates how and why advocacy organisations adapt to social diversification. Advocacy organisations play a key role in the formation and articulation of interests as well as their aggregation in political claims. But whose interests are represented? While we know that underrepresentation of minorities is a typical phenomenon, we know less about changes towards more inclusion and representation. Drawing on a detailed qualitative study of the leading LGBTI- and disability rights organisations in Germany, this article contributes to clarifying trajectories and preconditions of organisational change in response to migration-related challenges. We draw on neo-institutionalist theory and social movement research, but also emphasize specifics of advocacy organisations to explain processes of change. Using an approach that accounts for the contingency and temporality of organisational developments, we outline surprisingly different developments and offer an interpretation that focusses on the intermediary role of advocacy organisations and their interactions with the specific organisational fields. By doing so, this article expands our empirical and theoretical understanding of organisational

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change and the preconditions of an increased democratic participation and representation of immigrants in an increasingly diverse society.

Keywords: Advocacy Organisations; Immigrant Representation; Diversity; Disability; LGBTI; Intersectionality

Gesellschaftliche Transformation und organisationaler Wandel:

Wie Interessenorganisationen auf migrationsbezogene Diversifizierung reagieren

Zusammenfassung: Der Artikel untersucht, inwiefern und wodurch Interessenorganisationen sich an die gesellschaftliche Diversifizierung anpassen. Interessenorganisationen haben eine zentrale Funktion in der Ausbildung und Artikulation von Interessen und deren Bündelung in politischen Forderungen. Aber welche Interessen repräsentieren sie? Während bereits gezeigt wurde, dass eine Unterrepräsentation von Minderheiten verbreitet ist, verstehen wir bislang weniger gut, wie es zu Wandel hin zu deren stärkerer Beteiligung und Repräsentation kommt. Gestützt auf detaillierte qualitative Studien der führenden LGBTI- bzw. Behindertenrechtsorganisationen in Deutschland, trägt dieser Artikel bei zur Aufklärung von Wegen und Voraussetzungen organisationalen Wandels in Reaktion auf migrationsbezogene Herausforderungen. Um Wandel zu erklären, stützen wir uns auf neo-institutionalistische Theorien und die soziale Bewegungsforschung, berücksichtigen aber auch Besonderheiten von Interessenorganisationen. Mit einem Ansatz, der der Kontextbedingtheit und Temporalität organisationaler Entwicklungen Rechnung trägt, skizzieren wir differierende Entwicklungen und bieten eine Interpretation an, die die intermediäre Rolle von Interessenorganisationen und deren Interaktionen mit den jeweiligen organisationalen Feldern in den Mittelpunkt stellt. Der Artikel trägt damit zur Erweiterung unseres empirischen und theoretischen Verständnisses organisationalen Wandels und der Voraussetzungen erweiterter demokratischer Partizipation und Repräsentation von Eingewanderten in einer zunehmend diversen Gesellschaft bei.

Stichworte: Interessenorganisationen; Repräsentation von Eingewanderten; Diversität; Behinderung; LGBTI; Intersektionalität

1 Introduction

The diversification of society is a process characterizing many contemporary societies. Migration has importantly contributed to it. Thus, in Germany, the share of the population who came to the country as immigrants had, by 2022, risen to 18

per cent. Societal institutions and organisations are faced with new expectations regarding their inclusiveness and their contribution to shaping a diverse society. But to what extent are they recognizing new challenges and willing to adapt, and what drives such processes? Focussing on organisations that represent specific interests, this article investigates processes of adaptation to migration-related diversity and their underlying drivers. Advocacy organisations play a key role in the formation of interests and their aggregation in political claims (Armingeon 2007: 107; Andrews/Edwards 2004: 290; Sack 2017). They thus crucially influence to what extent minority interests are put on the table of mainstream politics. And yet, the huge field of mainstream interest or advocacy organisations has been insufficiently explored with respect to the representation of immigrants and their interests (see also Ray 2019; Ramakrishnan/Bloemraad 2018). We investigate, first, to what extent such organisations are willing and able to incorporate the representation of newcomers and the newcomers themselves. Do non-immigrant advocacy organisations develop forms of representation that aim to include and represent the immigrant population? Secondly, we aim to identify what drives such developments.

Organisational change in general has been a longstanding topic in different fields of research (e.g. Collins 2005). And yet, we identify important lacunae: At the focus of most research, including studies of diversity or affirmative action programmes, have been firms and public administrations (e.g. Bührmann/Schönwälder 2017; Dobbin/Kim/Kalev 2011; Jannsens/Zanoni 2014; Lang 2020). In contrast, civil society organisations, including advocacy organisations, remain underexplored. Further, while existing research has addressed the widespread inertia of organisations, the often-selective representation of more privileged interests, and the persistence of racism and exclusion, we insufficiently understand what may drive organisational change towards more equal representation of immigrants and their interests. Given that nowadays the diversity of society and the need to ensure more equal participation are widely acknowledged, it is even more relevant to understand the role of civil society organisations in these changing contexts (on the importance of new demands on organisations see also Gibel/Nyfelner 2022).

Given our limited knowledge so far, we opted for a detailed reconstruction of the developmental paths of a small number of cases as a basis for our more general suggestions. The analysis was led by theoretical assumptions from organisational neo-institutionalism and more actor-centred approaches. Focusing on the largest and politically most influential LGBTI- and disability rights organisations in Germany, this article explores how processes of change evolved in advocacy organisations and identifies drivers of such processes. Our analysis offers empirical insights into the responses of important political actors in Germany to migration-related change, and contributes to the refinement of a theoretical tool kit for understanding societal change and the preconditions for greater social incorporation of immigrants more

broadly. In doing so, we hope to contribute to political sociology, organisational sociology, migration studies and the more general understanding of societal change.

We proceed by first outlining the state of research and our theoretical framework. In a second step, we describe research design and methods, followed by a section analysing the trajectories of the featured organisations and their determinants. A conclusion summarizes our findings and theoretical suggestions.

2 Theory and Literature

Advocacy or interest organisations are commonly defined as organisations that aggregate specific interests and seek to influence policy-making and the general public to advance them. As intermediary organisations, they mediate between members and institutions (Armington 2007; Andrews/Edwards 2004: 290; Sack 2017; Lengfeld 2013: 422-3). Specific immigrant interests are articulated by dedicated immigrant or ethnic minority associations whose structures and development have been investigated by a large body of research (e.g. Schrover/Vermeulen 2005; Rosenow-Williams/Sezgin 2014). And yet, individuals of immigrant and ethnic-minority backgrounds have of course a range of interests that intersect with the interests of non-immigrants. As workers, youths, women, gays and lesbians, or people with an impairment, their “intersectional” interests, that is, interests as immigrants but also as, for example, women, may or may not be represented by mainstream advocacy organisations. We contend that unlike public administrations and elected political representatives, such advocacy organisations are not obliged to represent or service the population as a whole, but decide whether they identify immigrants as belonging to the group they seek to represent. Immigrants may be seen as indistinct from other groups of the population and thus not in need of specific attention. If, in contrast, they are perceived as people with specific needs and concerns, an organisation may seek to represent such needs and concerns. An organisation may also disregard them as none of its business, as an unwelcome additional burden on organisational resources, or even perceive such concerns as opposed to its own interests (Evers/Zimmer 2010: 328, 332-3; Braunstein/Fulton/Wood 2014). Furthermore, organisations decide whether they care about their openness and their ability to attract and service an immigrant clientele and membership, for instance by making provisions within the organisation to ensure that immigrant members can articulate their concerns, and whether they regard it as relevant to diversify their leadership and staff.

2.1 Previous research

In particular for the United States and for the women’s movement research exists that has studied responses of social movements and organisations to ethnic diversity and racist exclusion (e.g. Nelson 2003; Ray/Purifoy 2019; Robnett 1997; Weldon 2011). The focus of much scholarship has been on demonstrating the

limited efforts of organisations or movements to include and represent underprivileged populations. Thus, Strolovitch (2006) demonstrated the bias leading national organisations in the US – despite representing marginalised groups – to privilege the interests of a white middle-class membership. In a recent piece on the French women's movement, Lépinard (2020) attacked its persistent Whiteness and resistance to intersectional approaches. Altogether, we know a lot about the persistence of exclusionary structures, but less about the drivers of more inclusion and equality. Research that theoretically and empirically deals with the causes of organisational change, in particular in advocacy organisations, seems scarce. In an early study of the ability of social movement organisations to adapt to changing circumstances, Minkoff (1999: 1667, 1696) pointed to a “complicated interaction” of environmental conditions and attributes of the organisations as preconditions of organisational change, but did not go much deeper. Lépinard (2014) identified specific understandings of women's emancipation and citizenship as causal for a limited openness towards immigrants in feminist organisations, thus arguing for a crucial influence of ideas. Equally, Ilgün-Birhimeoglu (2016) in her brief exploratory study of German associations more generally, emphasises the power of prejudice. Summarizing research on trade unions, Marino, Penninx and Roosblad (2015: 11) rather pointed at functional needs of organisations when identifying a decline in union influence and a limited institutional embeddedness as factors encouraging more inclusive approaches: “institutional power tends to reduce trade unions' need to resort to the membership, thus lowering recruiting and organizing efforts towards underrepresented groups.” Volkert's (2017) study of political parties in Germany and France pointed to the key importance of structural characteristics of the organisations that impact their motivation to address immigrants. Given this patchy and incoherent picture, more studies of European cases, with their specific contexts and organisational structures, and studies advancing theory, are desirable, and this article aims to contribute to these aims. We focus on an underexplored type of organisation and presume that attention to the specifics of different types of organisations will allow valuable insights.

2.2 Theoretical perspectives

We draw on general insights in neo-institutionalist scholarship, but extend those to reflect the peculiarities of advocacy organisations. In neo-institutionalist scholarship, the organisational field is a key concept that goes beyond more general references to the social and political context by focusing attention on those actors that interact (Dobbin/Kim/Kalev 2011; Funder/Walden 2017). In the neo-institutionalist tradition, the organisational field has been defined as “a locale in which organisations relate to or involve themselves with one another” (Wooten/Hoffman 2016: 13). The concept reflects that collective actors interact with specific other actors, potentially of different type or thematic focus, but all relevant in the same policy fields. As distinct from field concepts following Bourdieu, the neo-institu-

tionalist concept emphasizes cultural influences (see Emirbayer/Johnson 2008, on such differences). Actors within a field are seen as influencing each other through laws and other rules, through shared norms, and by providing examples others tend to adjust to (DiMaggio/Powell 1983).

In applying the general concept to advocacy organisations, we follow critics who have pointed at an underestimated role of agency, for instance in social movement research (Davis et al. 2005; Rojas/King 2019), and at insufficient attention to power dynamics (Emirbayer/Johnson 2008). While neo-institutionalism emphasizes the external, often unconscious, cultural influences on organisations, we account for their agency by conceptualizing them as potential “strategic actors” who can actively seek to position themselves in organisational fields to increase their power (see also Hensmans 2003; Fligstein/McAdam 2011; Funder/Walden 2017: 60). This attention to active positioning is particularly relevant as political and social advocacy does not always take place in stable organisational fields. When new issues arise, the relevant field of actors and their interactions may initially be unstable and little consolidated. Collective actors may position and reposition themselves vis-à-vis other actors by re-defining their identity and purpose and by building coalitions, for instance with new migrant representatives.

To capture the specifics driving advocacy organisations, we also draw on concepts that focus on the intermediary role of some types of organisations. In their positioning between state and individuals, advocacy organisations obviously differ from e.g. firms, and theory-building that centres on the latter tends to overlook such relational and power dynamics that go beyond cultural influences. Schmitter and Streeck (1999) proposed to describe consequences of this intermediary position as the coexistence of a “logic of influence” and a “logic of membership”. As they aim to achieve policy reforms and often also receive state funding, advocacy organisations tend to interact closely with the state. Compared with social movements that often focus on protest and mobilization, they may thus be more dependent on dominant policies, the “logic of influence” be predominant (Rucht 2002; Simsa 2013). As distinct from firms as well as state bureaucracies, advocacy organisations are characterized by a specific logic of membership.¹ As membership is voluntary, not defined by an employment contract, and usually based on commitment to shared goals or interests (rather than a salary and contractual obligations), it may be less stable than in other types of organisation, and maintaining or mobilizing the membership base may require active efforts by the leadership (Kühl 2020: 9, 21-43; Horch 1983). Members also participate in the formulation of policy. Changes need to be supported, or at least tolerated, by existing members (or donors). They need to be understood as in line with a shared perception of identity and purpose, as

1 Here we mainly think of membership-based advocacy organisations. Organisations may also operate with a looser support structure of people contributing money and occasional support. Like formal members, they are tied to the organisations via commitment.

this is the glue that ties organisation and members together. Ensuring membership support and a relevant membership is a “functional need” (Dobbin/Kim/Kalev 2011; Oliver 1992: 571–574) for such organisations, a factor affecting their survival and the pursuit of key aims. While early institutionalist scholarship had centrally argued against efficiency, or need, as a main force driving change (DiMaggio/Powell 1983), neo-institutionalist scholars have increasingly acknowledged that responding to changes that affect the pursuit of key aims is an important driver of change. Membership can of course also be an active driver of change when key actors push for reorientations. Those themselves belonging to minorities, or women as disadvantaged group, have been described as such potential “internal advocates” (Dobbin/Kim/Kalev 2011).

Three key assumptions about factors driving change thus guide our analysis: first, the importance of the organisational field, second, attention to agency, conceived as a role of potential strategic actor in the organisational field, and, third, the intermediary position of this type of organisation that pays particular attention to relations with the state, but is also influenced by dynamics of its membership.

In addition, we should acknowledge that advocacy organisations exist in specific social and political contexts, and contextual developments may motivate adjustments as, e.g., organisational fields and actor constellations are transformed or prevailing norms change. The period covered by our research comprises the early 1990s until the present day. In Germany, these decades were marked by important transformations affecting demographic trends, the political importance of migration, and perceptions of equality and participation. Due partly to the disintegration of the socialist states, the 1990s were a phase of major migration movements. A decade later, refugee migration and ongoing labour migration from the EU again caused immigrant numbers to rise steeply. Thus, between 2005 (when such data were first recorded) and 2020, the population with a “migrant background”, that is, immigrants and their children, rose from 14 to 22 million, then representing more than a quarter of the population (Statistisches Bundesamt 2021). Both the potential clientele and membership of organisations underwent a significant diversification.

Migration was further politically highly salient in that period. Thus, in the 1990s, restrictions to the constitutional right to asylum and violent attacks on immigrants provided the background to mobilizations against racism and violence. Later, naturalization and immigration law reforms were heavily contested (Hess/Green 2016). In 2015, the arrival in Europe of hundreds of thousands of refugees mobilized solidarity and elevated controversies about an adequate response to the top of the political agenda. Advocacy organisations had to decide whether such debates and mobilizations were relevant to them and potentially reorient their policies.

This was also imperative because, since the mid-2000s, the “integration” of immigrants had been declared a key concern not only of the state, but also of civil society. Further, diversity became an accepted or even appreciated feature of Ger-

man society. A normative framework emerged in which inclusion of the long-term immigrant population and their participation in society and politics became goals state and civil society were expected to contribute to. Increasingly, pushed on by Black Lives Matter protests and mobilisations against racist violence and exclusion, openness and non-discrimination became common standards (El-Mafaalani 2021: 8-9, 137-139; Schönwälder/Triadafilopoulos 2016) – potentially also in the organisational fields of the investigated organisations. Indeed, beyond the field of migration and racialized minorities, we have seen a considerable rise of demands for minority rights and public recognition.

And, last, people of immigrant background in this phase achieved greater presence as political actors, thus potential players, competitors or partners in the organisational fields of mainstream organisations (Blätte 2014: 167, 74-75; Schönwälder 2012). In order to account for such contextual changes, we chose a research design emphasizing the reconstruction of organisational developments over time and resembling what Renate Mayntz (2016: 487) referred to as "explanatory causal reconstruction" (see also Tolbert/Zucker 1983: 35; Armstrong 2005: 162, on the importance of historical approaches).

3 Case Selection and Methods

To allow a detailed reconstruction of organisational trajectories, qualitative studies of a limited number of cases seemed particularly appropriate. The selection of the two cases examined here was led by our interest in investigating whether organisations advocating for a disadvantaged group were positively disposed towards other disadvantaged minorities, such as immigrants, and their interests, and whether they were developing intersectional forms of advocacy. Such advocacy addresses the interlinkage of different forms of difference, for instance, minority-sexuality and migration history, or impairment and migration history, respectively. The organisations analysed here represent two issues typically identified with the policies of diversity, homosexuality and disability. We present results for two advocacy organisations, one representing persons with impairments and their relatives, the other people with non-hegemonic sexual identifications (for results of the full study see von Unger et al. 2022). In terms of membership and political recognition, the selected organisations are the most prominent in Germany, an additional criterion for their selection. The study was not conceived as a comparative study of contrasting cases. Rather, the detailed reconstruction of the developmental paths of a small number of organisations (four in the full study, see von Unger et al. 2022) was intended to allow conclusions about the dynamics driving migration-related change in advocacy organisations. Empirically observed differences between the organisations served as a productive challenge to our initial theoretical assumptions.

Our first case is the *Bundesvereinigung Lebenshilfe e.V.* (Federal Lebenshilfe Association), the largest disability rights organisation in Germany. The organisation has

about 125,000 members and 500 local and regional associations (in 2020) that not only organise self-help, but offer services and run workshops or nursery schools for persons with a disability² (Baykara-Krumme/Rau 2022). It was founded in the 1950s by parents of persons with intellectual disabilities and experts in the field. Nowadays it is a political lobbyist, a self-help organisation, a service-provider and an enterprise. The federal leadership, in 2020 supported by about 60 officials and headed by a former federal minister, is in charge of political advocacy as well as conceptual developments and the overall integration of the organisation. Referring to its “lighthouse-function” (LH 2014: 5; “Leuchtturmfunktion”), *Lebenshilfe* claims a strategic role beyond its own organisation. It is confident of its political weight and involved in the development of legislation and policies in the interest of people with impairments (LH 2017a: 11).

The second organisation represents the interests of gender and sexual minorities. The *Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland*, LSVD (Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany) is less professionalized and relies mostly on volunteer engagement. The organisation counts about 4,400 members (since 2016) and has usually had 6-15 paid officials (Schönwälder/Bökle 2022). Founded in 1990 as an organisation of male homosexuals (SVD), it transformed to an organisation of gay and lesbian people in 1999 and later also took up causes of other gender minorities, such as trans persons. In federal politics, it is now the recognized voice of the gay and lesbian population. Still, the LSVD describes itself as “one voice in the multifaceted LGBTI-community” (LSVD 2018), acknowledging that it acts in a contested field. Distancing itself from previous more radical and more identity-focussed groups, the organisation focusses on influencing legislation and government policy, aiming to achieve equal rights for sexual and gender minorities.

Both organisations are financially independent and sustain themselves mainly through membership contributions. Key decisions are taken by the elected federal boards. Important political statements are passed by annual or bi-annual conferences of delegates or members. The everyday practice and implementation of policy is importantly shaped by the professional staff.

In the following analysis, we reconstruct key developments over time in order to identify responses to societal changes and the varying influences driving them. We use triangulation between documents and qualitative interviews to validate and complement information and allow insights into organisational memory and salience of programmatic aims. Our analytical methods build on interpretative social research. Data were analysed based on content analytical methods, for classi-

2 As *Lebenshilfe* refers to “people with a disability”, we adopt their vocabulary when referring to their agenda and outlook. Elsewhere, we refer to people with impairment. Along with disability studies scholars (Waldschmidt 2014; Jacob/Köbsell/Wollrad 2010), we distinguish between an impairment and the social construction of “disability”, alluding to “being disabled” by heteronormative and non-inclusive structures of society.

fying content (Przyborski/Wohlrab-Sahr 2014: 189; Wohlrab-Sahr 1999; Mayring 2002; Mayring/Fenzl 2019), as well as reconstructive logics of inquiry (Dausien 2004).

Our data include programmes and relevant resolutions, proceedings of annual conferences or board meetings, annual reports, the magazines of the organisations and published interviews with leading representatives. Beyond published material, we could access documents from archives, and both organisations made internal materials directly available to us – sources that help understand organisational practice and strategic decisions. For the LSVD, the material encompasses the protocols of the *Verbandstage* (the annual conferences) from 1992 to 2019, all reports of the board (*Tätigkeitsberichte*, for 2002 to 2020), all programmes, relevant resolutions, all issues of the magazines for members *„Rundgespräch“* (1995–2004) and *„Respekt“* (2005–2020), selected records of the board meetings (as available), records of the meetings with the state-level sub-organisations (*Bund-Länder-Treffen*, 2000–2019), the organisation’s internet pages and relevant publications. For the disability rights organisation *Lebenshilfe*, we analysed all statutes and programmes (1990–2020), the annual reports of the past two decades (2002–2020), archived protocols of the main board (2000–2018) and major committees (2000–2020), the quarterly *Lebenshilfe Zeitung* for the organisation’s members (1980–2020), the organisation’s specialized journals *„Rechtsdienst“* (2001–2020), the academic journal *„Teilhabe“* (2009–2020) and its predecessor *„Fachzeitschrift Geistige Behinderung“* (1999–2008), the trainings offered by *inForm* (2011–2018), public statements and press releases on relevant issues as well as other publications and the organisation’s website until 2020. We analysed the documents with reference to three meta-analytical categories and themes (Wohlrab-Sahr 1999), namely (1) when and in what contexts the topic of migration appeared, (2) immigrants in their roles as e.g. clients, members and officials, (3) the development of migration-related positions.

In addition, we gained insights about the organisations and their key concerns from a body of 65 interviews (33 for *Lebenshilfe* and 32 for LSVD) and four focus groups (two for *Lebenshilfe* and two for LSVD) with members of the organisations as well as former and current staff and officials, conducted between 2018 and 2020. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by all four authors of this article and were analysed following qualitative content logics of analysis (Mayring 2002; Mayring/Fenzl 2019). For specific and most relevant parts of the interviews, we used detailed hermeneutical analyses.

Research in interest organisations faces specific challenges, as strategic considerations and internal processes may not be disclosed to outsiders, or not fully recorded in documents (Sack 2017: 676). In such cases, we rely on our analytical conclusions, drawn by linking observed changes with contextual and intra-organisational developments. The following section presents our historical reconstruction

and presents how the two advocacy organisations responded to migration-related change. In a second step, we suggest what drove such processes.

4 Responses to the Challenges of Migration

4.1 Disregard and openness

The disability rights organisation long remained distant to migration and the needs of immigrants. cursory evidence suggests that, in the 1980s, the presence of immigrant families including children with a disability was noticed as the organisation encountered migrants in its service provision. A couple of articles in the organisation's quarterly newspaper mentioned specific challenges in schooling or counselling services for foreign families (Walkowiak 1982; no author 1983). In 1994 (a time of major controversies about a revision of the constitutional right to asylum and racist violence), a conference for "foreign parents of disabled children" signalled awareness in the organisation of their specific needs and concerns. An appeal to *Lebenshilfe* (and other services) was passed calling for more attention to the cultural peculiarities, religious values, and specific needs of a group facing not only huge obstacles but also experiencing prejudice and discrimination (Schädler 1994). Remarkably, no action seems to have resulted from these early initiatives, and the 1994 conference left no noticeable trace in the institutional memory or practice.³ *Lebenshilfe* did not make the topic of immigration part of its programme or key political statements,⁴ nor did it, before around 2015, become an advocate of immigrant concerns (Baykara-Krumme/Rau 2022; Rau/Baykara-Krumme 2024). As a long-term staff member of the organisation confirmed: "These people were present, including in our social facilities, but nothing special was ever done [for them ...]. To be honest, *Lebenshilfe* did not care" (Interview, Baykara-Krumme).⁵

In contrast, for the LGBTI organisation, migration policy has been a major concern since its founding phase. All programmes have addressed immigration and asylum (SVD 1996b; LSVD 2002, 2010a, 2018), and a number of resolutions repeatedly formulated political demands (SVD 1996a; LSVD 2006a, 2011, 2016). Further, the young organisation invested a considerable share of its activities in supporting self-help groups of bi-national couples, providing legal advice and campaigning for legal changes to ensure residence rights. Gay and lesbian refugees also turned to the organisation for advice and support (and keep doing so). While numbers are unknown, the organisation has continuously had some immigrant members.

3 No interview partner mentioned the event on their own accord. When asked about it, hardly anyone knew that such an event had been organised.

4 The 1990 Grundsatzprogramm (LH 1990) merely noted, in the context of support for families in need, that this also referred to families coming "to our country" with a child with a mental disability.

5 All citations from interviews and organisations' documents were translated by the authors from the German original.

Some formed specific national-origin groups within the organisation (Bökle 2022; Delveroudis 2006; Mercan 2004). Immigrant members were instrumental in formulating a migration policy in the 1990s.

What influences and considerations can explain this openness and engagement in migration policy? Clearly, engagement was a source of membership for the new organisation, thus crucial in its development. But a leading member also recalls that urgency and need motivated them: “these were the cases that really went to heart, that in a human-rights perspective represented the most severe issues. [...] This was important to us [...] because we saw what grievances this [rigid decisions of the aliens offices] caused” (Interview, Schönwälder and Bökle). Scholars have pointed at the influence of transnational solidarities among sexual and gender minorities. As Adam, Duyvendak and Krouwel (1999: 370) argue, “gays and lesbians very often feel themselves to be ‘a people’”. It was thus not a huge step for this organisation to consider immigrants part of the own clientele. Indeed, since 2002, LSVD-programmes have emphasized the “intercultural” character of German society and the diverse origins of LSVD-members.

Interactions with the organisational field were another driver of engagement in migration themes. In the early 1990s, when the association was founded, acts of racist violence led to protests mobilizing civil society. In the women’s and lesbian movement, anti-racism became a central topic (Dennert/Leidinger/Rauchut 2007). For the new association, steps such as supporting a major national demonstration (SVD 1991; 1992) offered an opportunity to side with other actors beyond the gay and lesbian movement and thus create the legitimacy the recently founded organisation was seeking. Archival documents illustrate the considerable efforts of leading officials to ally with supporters of immigrant rights and anti-racism (LSVD-archive Cologne). The newly founded organisation behaved as a strategic actor who sought to place itself within a still rather unstable field of other actors. As Elizabeth Armstrong (2005: 162) has emphasized, “unstable institutional environments” orient action less clearly, actors are under particular pressure to define their own role and gain recognition.

In contrast, the quest for legitimacy in the organisational field did not require adjustments on the part of the disability rights organisation *Lebenshilfe*. Unlike the LSVD, *Lebenshilfe* was at the time not placed in a shifting and emerging field, but operated – and still operates – within a well-defined field of social welfare organisations and state actors. Led by a former federal minister and previously former members of parliament, it has long been a recognized partner of the dominant political parties, of governments and public administration. Further, the intersection of disability and migration was at the time rarely addressed by influential organisations in (and beyond) Germany (Wansing/Westphal 2014: 17; Burns 2019). Unlike the LSVD, *Lebenshilfe* itself did not consider events around

asylum and racism directly relevant to the interests of disabled persons.⁶ Further, the functioning of the social services run by *Lebenshilfe* associations did not create sufficient pressures for change. As far as we can determine, immigrant members were few and did not publicly voice any group-specific claims; internal advocacy for change – as witnessed at the 1994 conference – was inconsistent and weak.

4.2 Migration as a threat? Re-orientations of the LGBTI organisation

While in the 1990s solidarity with gay, lesbian and trans-immigrants had dominated, in the early 2000s the LGBTI-organisation turned its attention to threats allegedly posed by the straight immigrant population. As the organisation warned in a migration-policy statement: “Achieved levels of tolerance towards Lesbians and Gays might be forced back” (LSVD 2006a). Immigrant neighbourhoods were described as marked by intolerance and aggression, as no-go areas for homosexuals. A leading official demanded to scandalize that “discrimination and violence are frequently committed by Muslim youths” (Zinn 2005). Now the organisation believed that key interests of its members, achieved freedoms and the opportunity to live openly, were endangered by the presence of large immigrant communities, and it responded with illiberal gestures (see also Kosnick 2015). It called for clearer rules and boundaries, enforced with sanctions, as “a precondition of integration” (LSVD 2006a). This development illustrates that organisations may be confronted with conflicting concerns in their membership, and that priorities and power relations can change. Here, the organisation followed pressures from the Berlin regional organisation in an almost unanimous decision at the annual conference (LSVD 2006b: 2). Immigrant members who advocated an anti-racist orientation of the LSVD (GLADT 2004) remained without influence.⁷ Some left around 2003 in protest against the focus on allegedly violently homophobic migrants and an insufficient engagement against racism.⁸

The temporary shift towards a migration-critical position illustrates that different orientations were present within the membership. It should also be understood against the background of broader societal developments. In the early and

6 On the occasion of racist attacks in the early 1990s, *Lebenshilfe* wrote a letter to the Federal Chancellor reminding him that violence was also directed at persons with a disability. However, it did not join the anti-racist protests or emphasize a common cause (LH 1992). In contrast, the SVD joined such protests and emphasized the common experience of violence against minorities (SVD 1991).

7 No verbatim records exist of the annual conferences. The summary record does not suggest that immigrant members protested against the decisions, opponents may not have been present (LSVD 2006a). Our interview partners could, or would, not remember details of the conflicts and re-orientations.

8 Others agreed with aggressive stances towards Islam and cultural practices perceived as illiberal. Polish-born Halina Bendkowski (2005), until 2003 a member of the federal board, co-initiated an anti-headscarf appeal. A Turkish-origin member of the Berlin-Brandenburg board pushed for engagement against forced marriages (Saygili 2008).

mid-2000s, public debates in Germany were dominated by concerns over violence in the name of Islam and the assumed development of “parallel societies” in which immigrant communities were allegedly shutting themselves off from mainstream society (Schiffauer 2007). As a political lobbyist that mainly seeks legitimacy with the powers that shape and implement legislation, the LGBTI-organisation was more sensitive to positions in mainstream politics than to antiracist positions in the queer movement. Parts of the membership who perceived migration as threatening temporarily gained the upper hand within the organisation, as this position was, at the time, influential with major political actors, that is, actors the LSVD sought to influence. The logics of influence and of membership coincided.

As our analyses of the documents revealed, positions in the organisation were not uniform and conflicts erupted around the appropriate approach towards migrant and religious minority populations and their organisations. Thus, while some officials attacked the latter sharply, demanding that they address homophobia and take responsibility for such trends in “their communities” (LSVD Berlin-Brandenburg 2003), others followed a cooperation-oriented approach, arguing that migrant organisations represented another minority facing discrimination and thus potential partners in a civil-rights alliance. “Those who discriminate against one minority”, the organisation’s manager wrote in the LSVD magazine, “will sooner or later discriminate against other minorities” (Jetz 2008). This latter approach prevailed in the following years, and solidarity among minorities suffering discrimination has since the later 2000s been placed above other considerations. Documents increasingly show efforts to avoid culturalisations or other generalizing accusations against immigrant groups. The new programme addressed homophobia as a problem of German society and identified specific contexts furthering it (social marginalisation, patriarchal family structures and rigid religiosity), rather than blaming ethnic groups (LSVD 2010a). Motions aiming to more directly attack immigrant communities were now turned down at annual conferences (LSVD 2010b).

We interpret this second reorientation as encouraged by changes in the political context and thus parts of the organisational field. From around 2005 (with the Grand Coalition led by Chancellor Merkel), hegemonic policy in Germany was oriented towards immigrant integration and participation. Integration became a political consensus, and diversity was increasingly seen as beneficial for the country (Schönwälder/Triadafilopoulos 2016). Furthermore, the LGBTI-organisation also importantly engaged in international solidarity and human rights campaigns (reflected e.g. in the 2010 and 2011 issues of its magazine *Respekt*). Given that human-rights NGOs were becoming more important partners and thus increasingly present in the instable, constantly developing organisational field (Duchrow 2015), legitimacy was now sought with a set of actors often sensitive to discrimination and critical of nationalism. The rise of the extreme Right provided another impetus to prioritize alliances of minorities and focus on fighting a common enemy. The organisation has repeatedly rejected attempts of the Right to mobilize against refugees

and explicitly sided with Muslims (Dworek 2015, 5). It has been eager to distance itself from right-wing populist instrumentalisations of homophobia (LSVD 2018). Forming alliances against the extreme Right, a force seen as a threat to elementary interests of the organisation's clientele, is seen as a key political aim. We suggest that the LSVD again behaved as a strategic actor in re-defining immigrant organisations as potential allies in a changing organisational field increasingly defined by the fight against all forms of discrimination, for human rights and an acceptance of diversity.

4.3 "Intercultural opening": late adjustments of the disability rights organisation

For the disability organisation, it was this very societal context of the late 2000s which became crucial for a more consistent engagement for immigrants. In 2012, preceded by a conference in 2011 and a number of regional projects (Baykara/Rau 2022), the organisation, together with other federations, published a declaration "on intercultural opening and culturally sensitive work for and with people with a disability and migration background" (Die Fachverbände 2012). Among other aspects, the signatories committed to creating "structures that will allow for the cooperation and participation of immigrants in the organisation". Introducing a dedicated official (made permanent in 2021) and a three-year project, *Lebenshilfe* took steps towards an "intercultural opening" of the organisation and aimed to establish a "culturally sensitive" set of offers to better service families with a migration background (LH 2013: 18; LH 2014). Now, reflections on the homogeneity of the membership emerged: According to the new head of the organisation, efforts to make the organisation "more colourful" were desirable: While people with "foreign roots" were using the services, few were present in the associations and their boards and "this ought to change" (LH 2012: 5). A project of the organisation since 2017 aims to promote migrant 'self-help' structures affiliated with the organisation, a focus reflecting its identity as a self-organisation of families.

In the 2015 crisis of asylum policy, the organisation also began to voice political demands concerning refugee policy. In 2016 and 2017, for the first time, migration policy was addressed at the *Lebenshilfe* annual meetings with parliamentarians, a key event for the communication of the organisation's political demands. It called for better provisions for refugees with a disability and attacked the fact that legal status posed barriers to social provisions (LH 2016b; LH 2017b).

Pressures from the organisational field crucially caused these re-orientations. The 2007 Integration Plan of the national government had made civil society actors co-responsible for immigrant integration. Germany's leading welfare organisations publicly committed to taking specific steps (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege 2008). Around the time, the biggest welfare organisations (such as Caritas, Red Cross) had begun to introduce concepts for an "intercultural opening" (Vanderheiden/Mayer 2014). Slowly, soft coercion exercised by the government and

legitimacy requirements filtered through and reached the leading organisations for the interests of disabled people around 2010. Against a background of widespread engagement for migrants and refugees and an elite consensus on immigrant integration, *Lebenshilfe* eventually adjusted its profile.

In addition, as mentioned above, the organisation also discovered immigrants as potential members. Activism in the *Lebenshilfe* is largely represented by non-immigrant parents of people with disabilities and professionals in the field. Given decreasing numbers, membership development has for some time been a pressing issue (LH 2008: 46; LH 2014: 11, 52-53), but it took a while until immigrants were explicitly identified as a target group. Thus, in 2013, the Council of Parents within *Lebenshilfe* declared its intention to win more members with a migration background (Koska 2013). Such declarations signal a changing perception of the functional needs of the organisation. At the same time, efforts to gain immigrant members seem reluctant, and an interview with a regional head of the organisation documents resistance against active recruitment efforts. As he argued, the organisation should be a “reflection of society” and immigrants were welcome. But it would be wrong to make targeted efforts, as in the eyes of the organisation everyone was equal. Regardless of nationality, people themselves should find out that *Lebenshilfe* was a good and important organisation they wanted to join (Interview, Rau). Such a position shifts responsibility for change from the organisation to the immigrants themselves and neglects organisational barriers to migrants’ participation. It may also hide resentment against immigrants.

4.4 Limited change

While our perspective on drivers of openness emphasizes moves towards inclusion and immigrant participation, it is important to acknowledge change that did not happen, persisting discriminatory and exclusionary structures and practices. Our analysis of both organisations did not identify debates about internal power structures and immigrant representation, or structural interventions to improve the latter. Unlike the gender balance (in the LSVD) or representation of people with a disability (in *Lebenshilfe*), immigrant representation on their boards has not been addressed in the course of recent elections within LSVD or *Lebenshilfe*.

In *Lebenshilfe*, the 2012 call to introduce structures allowing for a “cooperation and participation of immigrants in the organisation” (Die Fachverbände 2012) had not been followed until the time of writing. Apparently, neither membership shortages, nor legitimacy requirements or internal advocacy were strong enough to push the organisation beyond declarations of good will. Racism and multiple discrimination are not yet addressed in publications. LSVD-publications and resolutions do address these problems (e.g. LSVD 2002, 2010a), but intra-organisational change is not actively pursued. A specific organisational identity of the LSVD supports this non-attention to internal exclusionary mechanisms and potential racism. As

leading members emphasize, the LSVD wants to be distinct from others in the queer social movement who focus on internal issues and self-inspection, rather than directing all energies towards changing politics and society (Beck/Dworek 1992: 3). As illustrated in this statement and argued above, advocacy organisations tend to prioritize the “logic of influence”. In the organisational field, thus legitimacy with state and party-political actors is more important than with antiracist movement groups, as the former determines the political influence the LSVD seeks. Such legitimacy nowadays requires an anti-racist standpoint, and pro-diversity statements are increasingly standard in the field. Intersectional measures or interventions to ensure diverse leadership bodies are not as yet. Furthermore, given the traditional plurality of the field, members and potential supporters demanding a more rigorously antiracist profile can join or found other organisations, and did so in the past – conditions that make internal powerful advocacy for structural change less likely.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

This article reconstructed the trajectories of two German advocacy organisations in their responses to the migration-related diversification of society. It did so in order to gain insights into the factors that drive change in this type of organisation. Both organisations, although open in principle, still hesitate to actively address the underrepresentation of immigrants among members and officials. And yet, change occurred. While the LGBTI-organisation articulated immigrant interests since its foundation, the disabled rights organisation for a long time did not see this as its job. Policies changed, but only from about 2010. Reference to a common theoretical framework can help explain these developments.

Above we emphasized the theoretical considerations that guide our analysis. We start from the assumption that it is useful to distinguish different types of organisations. For our analysis of advocacy organisations, we emphasize the influence of the organisational field, combined with an emphasis on the agency of organisations. For advocacy organisations, in particular, we further assume that their intermediary role importantly influences dynamics of change. Indeed, as our analysis demonstrated, organisational developments did not simply mirror developments of national policy. For example, a major turning point, the reform of citizenship law (1999) that recognized the realities of an immigration society, remained irrelevant to the two organisations. Attention to specific factors allows a better explanation of their development than a general reference to social and political context.

As set out in previous literature (see above), interactions with the organisational fields turned out to importantly drive developments. Going beyond the cultural mechanisms emphasized in neo-institutionalist scholarship and conceiving this relationship as actively shaped proved important. Our findings thus help clarify the much-debated actorhood of organisations. The LGBTI-organisation, in particular, fits the role of strategic actor. Operating in a little defined, changing organisational

field, it had to establish who it wanted to interact with and, beyond LGBTI-oriented partners and competitors, chose civil and human rights as frame of reference. Solidarity with immigrants was established in LGBTI political culture, in addition, it helped the new organisation to form alliances beyond that context.

Our second case illustrates conditions of relative stability and isomorphic changes in an advocacy organisation. In contrast to the LSVD, the disability rights organisation was firmly established in a network of other disability and welfare organisations and for a long time under no pressure to (re)position itself. In Germany, the semi-state welfare system provides a rather stable framework for some organisations, while in other political fields, actor constellations and power structures are more unstable and contested. We confirm a suggestion from trade union-research that “institutional embeddedness” may impede change (Marino, Penninx/Roosblad 2015: 11) as it provides security and stability. The specific features of the different organisational fields, unstable or consolidated, thus condition actorhood and impacted change, causing differences in the trajectories of the two advocacy organisations studied here.

As outlined above, advocacy organisations are distinguished by their intermediate position between state and membership. As intermediate actors that aim to influence government policy, state and main party actors are key players in the organisational fields. When contributing to immigrant integration became something the government expected of civil society actors, *Lebenshilfe* turned towards “inter-cultural opening”. Legitimacy requirements in the organisational field had changed. Further-reaching expectations to adopt active antiracist strategies within and ensure more diverse leadership bodies exist in the organisational fields, but neither the “logic of influence”, that is, attention to actors crucial to the two organisations, nor the “logic of membership”, that is, pressure from within (Schmitter/Streeck 1999), have been strong enough to initiate resolute action beyond passive openness to immigrant incorporation.

As assumed at the outset, membership is clearly a factor for advocacy organisations, distinguishing their developmental dynamics from those of firms and state bureaucracy, the most often investigated types of organisations. Despite the force of the “logic of influence”, organisations have to maintain the support of the individuals who voluntarily provide labour and financial contributions, elect leadership bodies and whose membership enables them to claim the authority to speak for a specific group in the population. Furthermore, membership recruitment can be an important motivation to address immigrants. For the LGBTI-organisation, immigration turned out to be a contested field, important to members, and positions changed partly in response to membership demands. Members of the disability rights organisation seemed less interested, immigrant incorporation and policy were not contested issues. While in the cases examined here the sources did not document active resistance to immigrant inclusion – a factor that may prevent such developments –,

it is possible that leaderships anticipate such resistance and refrain from initiatives that might be perceived as preferential treatment of a select target group. This has been observed in trade unions (Albrecht/Karakayali 2022).

Pro-change advocacy from within – such as from women or minority members (as assumed in Dobbin/Kim/Kalev 2011; see also Cook/Glass 2015) – did not materialize in the *Lebenshilfe* case. In the LGBTI-organisation, immigrant members in the 1990s importantly shaped political positions, but later largely disappeared as an organised collective factor within (Schönwälder/Bökle 2022). We assume that minority membership and representation among staff need to reach a crucial size to allow a formation and efficient articulation of group interests (see Childs/Krook 2009, for a critical discussion). Further, in the case of advocacy organisations, leaving the organisation for another one (rather than fighting for change) may be an easier choice for activists than in other types of organisation. More research is needed to clarify the role of internal advocacy in different situations and different types of organisation and the conditions under which a stronger internal immigrant advocacy can succeed.

Advocacy organisations importantly contribute to the articulation of group-specific political demands and are instrumental in ensuring equal representation of immigrant minorities. While previous research has disclosed the persistence of exclusionary structures in civil society organisations and social movements, this article contributes to exploring the still under-researched topic of change towards more equal representation and participation. It also identifies specific features of this type of organisation and demonstrates how they impact the “heterogeneous diffusion” of change (Powell/DiMaggio 2023: 13), thus contributing to a better understanding of such processes. Two features were identified as crucial: first, the constitution of the organisational field with the different opportunities and incentives it offers. Second, the dual impact of the internal dynamics in such membership-organisations, on the one hand, and of the external focus on influencing key political actors, on the other, determines developments.

Future research should extend perspectives to different types of civil society organisations or comparison across national contexts. Larger-scale studies could also investigate additional potential factors; thus, e.g. the size of firms has been shown to influence openness to diversity (Jungbauer-Gans 2016). Further, studies that cover whole organisational fields and their relational dynamics (as suggested by Emirbayer/Johnson 2008) may be able to provide additional insights. Our case study provides insights in an as yet little explored field and will hopefully stimulate the empirical study and theoretical conceptualisation of organisational responses to migration-related change.

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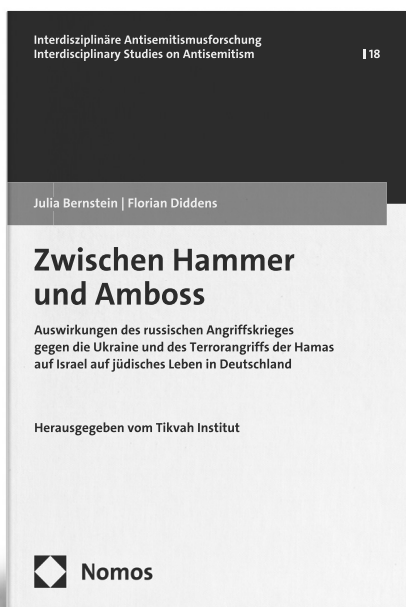
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Lebenswelten russischsprachiger Jüdinnen und Juden in Deutschland



Zwischen Hammer und Amboss

Auswirkungen des russischen Angriffskrieges gegen die Ukraine und des Terrorangriffs der Hamas auf Israel auf jüdisches Leben in Deutschland

Von Prof. Dr. Julia Bernstein und Florian Diddens

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Die Interviewstudie führt in die gegenwärtigen Lebenswelten russischsprachiger Jüdinnen und Juden in Deutschland ein. Im Vordergrund steht dabei, welche Erfahrungen sie in Deutschland als Post-Shoah-Land sowie im Zusammenhang mit dem Krieg gegen die Ukraine, dem Terror gegen Israel und mit Antisemitismus gemacht haben und wie das auf ihre Vorstellungen von Identität und „Heimat“ wirkt. Es zeigt sich, dass

sich diese Vorstellungen angesichts von Krieg, Terror und Antisemitismus verändern. Was als neues Zuhause erschlossen werden soll oder worden ist, droht nun angesichts des grassierenden Antisemitismus diesen Status zu verlieren. Die soziologische Studie bietet die Grundlage dafür, sich marginalisierten Perspektiven anzunähern und Bedarfe auf unterschiedlichen Handlungsfeldern abzuleiten.

