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## **Preparing for the German Family Panel:**

Design and Fieldwork of the Mini Panel

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# Preparing for the German Family Panel: Design and Fieldwork of the Mini Panel

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The goal of the German Panel Study of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (PAIRFAM) is the examination of intimate and family relationships based on a repeated survey (panel). A multidisciplinary point of view is used to obtain a better understanding of decision processes relevant for family development. The disciplines involved in the PAIRFAM project are Sociology, Psychology, Demography, and Economics. The research programme focuses on the establishment and management of intimate relationships, the timing and spacing of parenthood, the management of intergenerational relationships, and the stability of intimate relationships. Between 2004 and 2006, PAIRFAM conducted a three-wave pilot study (Mini Panel) with about 600 respondents. The present paper describes the design and summarizes the fieldwork of the Mini Panel.

## *I. Design of the Mini Panel: An Overview*

The Mini Panel (MP) is a three-wave panel study on partnership and family processes. It is called “Mini” because it was conceived as a small pilot study for a large-scale Family Panel scheduled to start in 2008. Nevertheless, it contains information on about 600 respondents and thus provides a valuable basis for family research. Interviews were conducted in six-month intervals (September–December 2005, March–June 2006, September 2006–January 2007).

The target size of the MP was 600 respondents, 150 from each of four German cities: Bremen, Chemnitz, Mannheim, and Munich. These four cities were chosen because all field work was done by members of the PAIRFAM team, located in exactly these four cities. Consequently, the MP is not representative of Germany but only of these four cities. Nevertheless, these represent different and major areas of Germany. Bremen is an old Hanseatic city located in the North, Mannheim is an industrial city in the South-West, Munich emerged in recent decades as a high-tech centre in the South, and Chemnitz is a middle-sized city in the East.

The MP follows a cohort design with three age cohorts: 15-17, 25-27, and 35-37 years. For every cohort we targeted at least 200 respondents. The youngest cohort is at an age when partnership- and family-formation processes start. Thus, it is an ideal cohort with which to start a family panel study. The two older cohorts were included to allow us to study “middle-aged” family processes from the beginning of the project.

A particular feature of the Mini Panel is its multi-actor design. Besides our main respondents (anchors), also their partners, parents, one of their children, and people from their social network (alteri) were involved at different stages in the survey. Table 1 gives an overview of the instruments used.

In wave one (W1) anchors were interviewed using CAPI. For several long-lasting scales, a PAPI questionnaire was used that respondents filled out at the end of the CAPI. In addition, some anchors and their partners were asked to fill out a seven-day time-use diary. A postal survey of

the partners and a short CATI validation study of a sub-sample of the alteri completed the programme of the first wave.

The second wave (W2) was the most complex one. Anchors were re-interviewed using CAPI and PAPI, and their partners received a postal survey. Additionally, retrospective information about mobility, partnership, children, and education and work-career was collected by means of a life-history calendar (LHC) starting for all cohorts at the age of fourteen years. Furthermore, unlike in W1, also the anchors' parents (regardless of whether they are biological, adoptive, step, or foster parents) received a postal questionnaire, and one of the anchors' children was interviewed face-to-face.

In the third wave (W3) only anchors, their partners, and their parents were interviewed. Three significant changes were implemented in comparison to W2: Some sensitive questions on sexuality were asked in a CASI mode, a drop-off questionnaire concerning the economic situation of the household was offered to the respondents of the last two cohorts, and partners were interviewed using CATI. The LHC was used again to collect changes in the biography between the second and the third waves.

**Table 1: Instruments used in the Mini Panel**

	Anchor	Partner	Child	Parents	Alteri
Wave 1	CAPI PAPI Diary	PAPI (mail survey) Diary	-	-	CATI
Wave 2	CAPI PAPI LHC	PAPI (mail survey)	PAPI (face-to-face)	PAPI (mail survey)	-
Wave 3	CAPI PAPI LHC CASI Drop-off	CATI	-	PAPI (mail survey)	-

The MP is monotonic in design: Cooperation in the previous wave was requisite to be eligible for further waves. Thus, we have only respondents who participated either in all three waves, in waves one and two, or only in wave one. There are several reasons for the choice of a monotonic design, one issue being the stringency of German law on address storage. Another issue affected particularly wave three therein which we decided to implement dependent interviewing (using information we collected in wave two).

The Mini-Panel team in Mannheim developed guidelines for conducting fieldwork, whereas a local field manager in each of the four cities was responsible for coordinating activities on-site according to the agreed procedures. Each team selected and trained its own interviewer staff.

## ***II. The First Wave of the Mini Panel***

### **II.1. The Sample**

The sample for the first wave of the MP was randomly drawn from the population registers of the four cities; eligible were German citizens residing in Mannheim, Bremen, Munich or Chemnitz who were born in 1968-70, 1978-80, 1988-90.

In total, 1,800 addresses (450 in every city, i.e. 150 for each cohort) were drawn in May 2005. 1,200 of these addresses were the primary sample, whereas the remainder were kept as a reserve sample. The target size in each city was 150 (50 for each cohort), i.e. in total, the target size was 600 interviews. Not all of the 450 addresses were used in each city, because for some cohorts the target size of 50 interviews was reached already through the primary sample. Table 2 gives an overview of the addresses used by city and cohort. In total, 1,664 addresses were used. Due to low response rates, Munich used all of its addresses, whereas the other three cities each used about 400. For the two older cohorts, all 600 addresses were used, as opposed to the youngest cohort, for which only 464 addresses were used (due to the higher response rate in this cohort). These 464 addresses had been drawn by means of a random procedure prior to the beginning of the fieldwork. Thus, the 1,664 addresses used in the fieldwork are a random sample from the 1,800 addresses drawn from the population register.

**Table 2: Addresses used (by city and cohort)**

City	Cohorts			Total
	1988-90	1978-80	1968-70	
Mannheim	102	150	150	402
Bremen	106	150	150	406
Chemnitz	106	150	150	406
München	150	150	150	450
Total	464	600	600	1664

A major problem with addresses from population registers is that many are not valid. In our sample, this was true for 21% of the addresses. In Bremen, as many as one fourth of the addresses could not be used (Note that these population registers will form the basis for the German Census 2010!). This was due in a few cases to the fact that the addresses were drawn in May but respondents had moved meanwhile. In most of the cases, however, the invalid addresses existed only on paper. Due to our limited resources, we were only able to update addresses for 35 of those who had since moved.

### **II.2. Response Rate of the First Wave**

The first wave was fielded from the last week of September until mid-December 2005. About 20 interviewers in each city were in charge of the interviews. The persons responsible for the fieldwork in each city sent to each sample member an advance letter in which our study was shortly described and the visit of an interviewer was announced. Each interviewer received about 5 of the approximately 15 addresses we assigned them. Further addresses were issued later, according to each interviewer's pace. If an interviewer did not perform well, his or her addresses

were redistributed to other interviewers. The final figures indicate that in the first wave, each interviewer processed 21 addresses and realised 8.5 interviews on average<sup>1</sup>.

We requested of our interviewers a minimum of 5 attempts to make contact in person or 10 call-backs on the phone, and a minimum of one attempt in the evening and one at weekends before an address could be discarded as not accessible (no-contact). After an interview had taken place, a short thank-you letter and a feedback form with a stamped self-addressed envelope were sent to each respondent. Respondents assigned to the experimental group with conditional incentives (see below, section II.3.) received their voucher together with the thank-you letter.

Table 3 shows the outcome: Out of 1,664 addresses, we were able to realize 663 completed interviews. This corresponds to a raw completion rate of almost 40%. However, as explained above, many addresses were not valid. To calculate response rates, we follow the conventions of the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR 2000; AAPOR 2004).

**Table 3: Case outcome in wave 1 by cohort**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Response	236 (50.86)	214 (35.67)	213 (35.50)	663 (39.84)
Lost Data	1 (0.22)	4 (0.67)	1 (0.17)	6 (0.36)
Refusal	169 (36.42)	172 (28.67)	230 (38.33)	571 (34.31)
Not interviewable <sup>2</sup>	10 (2.16)	8 (1.33)	10 (1.67)	28 (1.68)
No contact (valid address)	2 (0.43)	5 (0.83)	4 (0.67)	11 (0.66)
No contact (invalid address) <sup>3</sup>	44 (9.48)	194 (32.33)	142 (23.67)	380 (22.84)
Out of sample	2 (0.43)	3 (0.50)	0 (0.00)	5 (0.30)
Total	464 (100.00)	600 (100.00)	600 (100.00)	1,664 (100.00)

As it can be seen from Table 3, five respondents turned out to be out of the sample (no longer lived in one of the four cities). Out of the remaining 1,659 addresses, we were able to contact 1,268, corresponding to 76% (see Table 4). The contact rate was especially low for the middle cohort (ConR1 only 67%).

To calculate the co-operation rate, we reduce these 1,268 contacts by 34 addresses because contacts were sick, disabled, absent, or did not speak German, and also in the case of lost data (following AAPOR definition CR4). In Table 5, one can see that 663 persons (660 complete plus 3 incomplete interviews) were co-operative. This is a rate of 54%. The co-operation rate declined monotonically by age.

<sup>1</sup> The number of addresses assigned to interviewers ranged from one to 49, whereas the number of realised interviews ranged from a minimum of none to a maximum of 17.

<sup>2</sup> Because sick, away, physically or mentally impaired, or due to insufficient language skills.

<sup>3</sup> In these cases, the eligibility status is unclear.

A more conservatively calculated response rate (AAPOR definition RR6) yields a value of 52% (see Table 6). This result confirms the trend across cohorts: The response rate declines from 56% in the youngest cohort, to 47% in the oldest one. To calculate this rate, one excludes as neutral only those contacts who are out of sample, and those whose address turned out to be invalid.

**Table 4: Contact Rates (AAPOR ConR1) by cohort**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Contacted	416 (90,04)	398 (66,67)	454 (75,67)	1,268 (76,43)
Not contacted	46 (9,96)	199 (33,33)	146 (24,33)	391 (23,57)
Total	462 (100,00)	597 (100,00)	600 (100,00)	1659 (100,00)

**Table 5: Co-operation rates (AAPOR CR4) by cohort**

	K1: 1988-90	K2: 1978-80	K3: 1968-70	Total
Co-operative	236 (58,27)	214 (55,44)	213 (48,08)	663 (53,73)
Non-co-operative	169 (41,73)	172 (44,56)	230 (51,92)	571 (46,27)
Total	405 (100,00)	386 (100,00)	443 (100,00)	1234 (100,00)

**Table 6: Response rates (AAPOR RR6) by cohort**

	K1: 1988-90	K2: 1978-80	K3: 1968-70	Total
Response	236 (56.46)	214 (53.1)	213 (46.51)	663 (51.84)
Non-response	182 (43.54)	189 (46.90)	245 (53.49)	616 (48.16)
Total	418 (100.00)	403 (100.00)	458 (100.00)	1279 (100.00)

Overall, with a response rate of 52%, the MP is at the current average of surveys in Germany (see also Haarmann, Scholz, Wasmer, Blohm, and Harkness 2006). This result is highly positive, considering that the Mini Panel was conducted exclusively in large cities, that the age groups targeted are generally considered difficult to reach, and that the fieldwork was done by non-professional interviewers.

### II.3. The Incentive Experiment

The Mini-Panel being a pilot study, we were particularly interested in testing different strategies to increase the survey response. All sample members were randomly assigned to three experimental groups: The first group received an unconditional incentive in the form of a 10€ voucher together with the advance letter, the second group was promised a 10€ voucher upon completion of the interview, while the third group was a control group and received only an advance letter. The allocation to a given experimental group was kept constant across waves. The aim of the experiment was to test the effectiveness of monetary incentives in face-to-face

interviews from cross-sectional and longitudinal perspectives. We adopted a single-blind design: Interviewers were not aware of the experimental condition of the interviewee (Willimack, Schuman, Pennel, and Lepowski 1995). We furthermore took care to send out the advance letters at different time points, according to the progress made by each interviewer. This was done to avoid letting too much time elapse between the receipt of the advance letters and the first contact with the interviewer, and to prevent respondents from forgetting that they had received unconditional incentives.

In contrast to postal surveys, the effect of incentives in face-to-face interviews has seldom been investigated<sup>4</sup>, especially in an experimental setting and from a longitudinal perspective. However, it is generally assumed that the effect of incentives can be outweighed by interviewers' persuasive skills (Porst, Ranft, and Ruoff 1998; Singer, Hoewyk, Gebler, Raghunathan, and McGonagle 1999; Willimack, Schuman, Pennel, and Lepowski 1995). The results achieved by the Mini Panel confirm that cross-sectionally, the incentives do not make much difference in gaining co-operation (see table 7).

**Table 7: Co-operation rates (by cohort and experimental group)**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
No Incentive	58.46	52.00	46.38	52.16
Conditional Incentive	54.11	53.78	57.43	55.21
Unconditional Incentive	62.79	59.86	40.76	53.74
Total	58.27	55.44	48.08	53.73

#### II.4. The Anchor Questionnaire

The face-to-face interview with the anchor lasted on average 60 minutes and questions covered several topics: socio-demography, family-related values, "Big Five", relationship with parents, quality of and satisfaction with partnership, mobility and commuting, fertility and family planning, social networks, financial situation and economic arrangements between partners, time use (see Table 8).

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of Yu and Cooper's meta-analysis (Yu and Cooper 1983), face-to-face interviews constituted only 14% of the sample and no separate analyses on this kind of survey could be conducted. Singer et al. (1999) concentrated only on interviewer-mediated experimental studies, but neither in this case are specific results for face-to-face or for panel studies available.



**Table 8: CAPI Wave 1, Overview of the topics**

Modules	Routing
1. Family-related values	All
2. Big Five	All
3. Socio-demography and household composition	All
4. Relationship to biological parents and parents' intimate relationship	All, with internal routing
5. Partnership institutionalisation and future plans	If living in a partnership
6. Education and working situation	All
7. Mobility and commuting	Only second and third cohort, with internal routing
8. Quality of intimate relationship	If living in a partnership
9. Fertility and family planning	Only heterosexuals, with internal routing
10. Social network (generators, descriptors, and PAPI density grid)	All
11. Income & financial arrangements	All, with internal routing
12. Time-use	If living in a partnership
13. PAPI	If living in a partnership
14. Consent (partner survey, time-use diary, network survey) and interviewer's protocol	All

In the social network module, we implemented a random split between two different generator question orders to examine the effect of generator order on the generated network size.

All respondents were interviewed face-to-face and to those living in a relationship, a PAPI questionnaire regarding their relationship at the end of the CAPI interview was also submitted. Of the 663 CAPI respondents, 391 turned out to have a partner, and 366 also completed the pencil-and-paper questionnaire.

## II.5. The Time-Use Diary

At the end of the interview, a sub-sample of respondents who had a partner were also offered a time-use diary. Both partners were requested to fill in a seven-day time-use diary: Respondents were requested to report their activities during the day in 15-minute intervals. A list of 26 activities was provided and in addition, three open categories were offered. Moreover, at the bottom of the diary a row was added to record which time intervals had been spent together by anchor and partner. Despite the relative complexity of the instrument, instructions on how to fill in the diary could be wrapped up in less than one page.

Irrespective of the allocation to our other incentive experiments, we offered a 20€ voucher for each returned diary. Because of concerns about the negative effects of this additional burden on panel attrition, only fifty percent of the respondents who had a partner were offered the time-use diary. A letter illustrating the objectives of the time-use study and a stamped self-addressed envelope were added to the diary. A reminder letter was sent to all those who had not yet returned their diary within two weeks of the interview.

Considering the heavy burden of filling in a rather detailed time-use diary for seven consecutive days, a return rate of about 37% from the anchors and of about 32% from their partners can overall be deemed as a positive result, especially if we also consider that all returned diaries were

carefully filled out (see Table 9). We are nonetheless aware that a strong self-selection bias applies to time-use data.

**Table 9: Response of time-use diaries (anchor and partner; by cohort)**

	C1: 1988-90		C2: 1978-80		C3: 1968-70		Total	
	Anchor	Partner	Anchor	Partner	Anchor	Partner	Anchor	Partner
Received completed	12 (33.33)	10 (27.78)	34 (44.16)	30 (38.96)	27 (31.76)	24 (28.24)	73 (36.87)	64 (32.32)
Missing	18 (50.00)	16 (44.44)	33 (42.86)	35 (45.45)	42 (49.41)	43 (50.59)	93 (46.97)	94 (47.47)
Refused at interview	6 (16.67)	10 (27.78)	10 (12.99)	12 (15.58)	16 (18.82)	18 (21.18)	32 (16.16)	40 (20.20)
Total of offered diaries	36 (100.00 )	36 (100.00 )	77 (100.00 )	77 (100.00 )	85 (100.00 )	85 (100.00 )	198 (100.00 )	198 (100.00 )

## II.6. The Multi-Actor Design

In the first wave, we requested permission to contact the partner of our respondent and, as part of a validation study, up to six people (alteri) generated in the social-network module of the survey.

All partners, irrespective of the duration of the relationship, cohabitation status, and the like were held eligible. If the respondent's partner was at home during the interview, the interviewer was instructed to hand out the partner questionnaire in order to keep the partner busy and to avoid interference; in all other cases, the interviewer collected the partner's postal address and the questionnaire was sent by mail. Completed questionnaires were either collected by the interviewer or, most frequently, mailed back using the stamped self-addressed envelope we provided. If we did not receive a questionnaire within two weeks from sending it, a reminder letter was sent.

The partner questionnaire contained a selection of items which were also part of the anchor's interview and focused particularly on the issues of fertility, and partnership quality and dynamics. Besides the usual socio-demographic variables, a short instrument on time-use, and questions on mobility and commuting completed the questionnaire.

The incentive experiment was extended to partners as well, albeit with small changes: Partners were offered a conditional incentive in the form of a 10€ voucher if the corresponding anchor had been offered a conditional or unconditional incentive<sup>5</sup>, whereas in the case that the anchor had not received an incentive, the partners did not receive any kind of incentive either. Out of the 391 respondents living in a relationship, 55 were not willing to involve their partner in the study, and 217 questionnaires, corresponding to 55.5% of the eligible, were returned completed (see Table 10).

<sup>5</sup> Due to organisational reasons, we decided to avoid unconditional incentives for partners.

**Table 10: Response rates for the partner survey (by cohort)**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Received completed	27 (34.18)	36 (26.28)	57 (32.39)	119 (30.43)
Missing	32 (40.51)	83 (60.58)	102 (57.95)	217 (55.50)
Refused at interview	20 (25.32)	18 (13.14)	17 (9.66)	55 (14.07)
Total with partner	79 (100.00)	137 (100.00)	176 (100.00)	392 (100.00)

Response rates varied strongly across cohorts. The tendency to allow partners' involvement in the study increases across the three cohorts: from a minimum of almost 75% consent among the first cohort, to a maximum of roughly 91% consent among the third cohort. Our youngest respondents' partners also turned out to be less co-operative, so that overall, only 41% of the partners returned their questionnaire. As for the second cohort, the overall response rate ended up almost equalling that of the third one, with some 60% of the partners sending back their questionnaire. This was due to the fact that a rather high number of those who received a questionnaire also completed and returned it.

The response rate figures of the partner study show a pattern similar to that of the time-use diaries. In both cases, the youngest cohort was the least co-operative, whereas the middle one turned out to be the most co-operative. Preliminary evidence suggests that our teenage respondents' reluctance to involve their partners might be a consequence of a shorter duration and lesser institutionalisation of their relationships. This hypothesis will be further analysed in a multivariate perspective in a separate paper.

The network validation study was the last part of the first wave of the Mini Panel and took place in December 2006, as soon as the first wave of the anchor survey was declared completed. For 296 of the respondents, i.e. 45.1%, it was possible to collect at least one network person's telephone number for the network validation study. In total, 805 valid telephone numbers were collected<sup>6</sup>, and in 676 cases an interview was conducted.

### ***III. The Second Wave of the Mini Panel***

The second Mini-Panel wave was fielded between the end of March and early June 2006. Interviewers were requested to cease contact attempts by June 7<sup>th</sup> since we suspected that chances to win cooperation were not going to improve with the beginning of the football World Cup in Germany. The deadline for completing interviews was set at the end of June. As a rule, interviewers were re-issued the same respondents as in the first wave. Exceptions were necessary though if an interviewer was no longer available for the second wave, or if the field manager decided not to continue cooperation with an interviewer. All in all, 37 of the 79 interviewers who worked for us in wave one ceased to work for us in wave two, and 21 new interviewers were employed. Thus, wave two was conducted with 63 interviewers. On average, each interviewer was issued 10.8 addresses and completed 7.8 interviews.

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<sup>6</sup> In total, 869 telephone numbers were collected, some of which turned out to be invalid: Some of these cases can be attributed to recording mistakes, but we cannot exclude that incorrect telephone numbers were given on purpose.

### III.1. Response Rate of the Second Wave

Of the 669 first-wave respondents<sup>7</sup>, five were not contacted again: Their previous interview could not be fully completed and the interviewer advised us to not re-interview<sup>8</sup>. Of the 664 remaining respondents, 634 could be re-contacted, and 498 were re-interviewed. Consequently, the contact rate was about 96%, and the response rate added up to about 75%<sup>9</sup> (see Table 11).

As in the first wave, an advance letter informed the respondents that the new wave was about to start. In addition, a four-page overview of some preliminary results from the first wave was enclosed in all advance letters. Like in the first wave, Interviewers were requested to make at least 5 attempts in person or 10 on the phone before discarding an address as “no contact”.

**Table 11: Case outcome in wave two (by cohort)**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Response	190 (80.51)	150 (68.81)	158 (75.24)	498 (75.00)
Refusal	46 (19.49)	40 (18.35)	45 (21.43)	131 (19.73)
Not interviewable	0 (0.00)	4 (1.83)	1 (0.48)	5 (0.75)
No contact (valid address)	0 (0.00)	9 (4.13)	6 (2.86)	15 (2.26)
No contact (invalid address)	0 (0.00)	10 (4.59)	0 (0.00)	10 (1.51)
Moved to a non-Mini-Panel city	0 (0.00)	5 (2.29)	0 (0.00)	5 (0.75)
Total	236 (100.00)	218 (100.00)	210 (100.00)	664 (100.00)

The number of outdated addresses and respondents we could not trace was very small in the second wave as opposed to the first one for two main reasons. First, we kept in touch with our respondents between waves both by sending them a thank-you letter including a feedback form, and by sending them a Christmas card. These procedures enabled us to update a number of addresses. Second, if the advance letter was bounced back, we consulted the local authorities in charge of the population register to obtain updated records.

In the second wave we also tried to collect feedback from the field regarding the acceptance of the questionnaire. Together with a thank-you letter, we sent a feedback form with a stamped self-addressed envelope. The feedback form included questions on interview duration and mode, two questions about interviewer’s behaviour, and open questions on positive and negative aspects of the survey. The feedback form was returned in 43.57% of the cases, and opinions on the study were generally mildly positive or neutral.

<sup>7</sup> We also re-issued the six addresses corresponding to lost data since we were not bound to consider them as refusals from the perspective of the German law on data protection. Thus, while our design is monotonic, our data are not.

<sup>8</sup> The reason for interrupting the interview was that the interviewer realised that the respondent was linguistically or otherwise impaired and unable to complete the survey.

<sup>9</sup> Here we use the raw completion rate as a measure for the response rate since this determines the quality of a panel.

### III.2. The Anchor Questionnaire

The anchor questionnaire in the second wave was fairly different from the previous one: The topics of fertility and inter-generational relationships constituted the focus of the second wave, whereas the topic of quality and dynamics of the partnership was much less relevant. In addition, retrospective data were collected by means of a life-history calendar, starting for all cohorts at the age of fourteen years. The first cohort thus reported information for the last two to four years, the second one for the past twelve to fourteen years, and the third one for the past twenty-two to twenty-four years. The life-history calendar was divided into four areas: mobility, partners, children, and education and work-career. Interviewers were instructed to collect transition dates accurate to the month, but this was not always possible due to the long time span covered.

As in the first wave, some longer scales were placed in a paper-and-pencil instrument (PAPI questionnaire) which was handed out by the interviewer at different points in the interview and filled out section-wise, according to the topic covered. In the second wave, the average interview duration was about 65 minutes.

**Table 12: CAPI Wave 2, Overview of the topics**

Modules	Routing
1. Life-history calendar and socio-demography	All
2. Values and attitudes, Aims in life (PAPI)	All
3. Inter-generational relationships	If anchor has contact to parents or parent-like person, with internal routing
4. Marriage market	If no child aged 3-14 and heterosexual living in household
5. Institutionalisation and quality of intimate relationships (CAPI + PAPI)	All, with internal routing
6. Fertility and family planning (CAPI + PAPI)	If heterosexual, with internal routing
7. Child-care arrangements	If any child younger than 15 living in household
8. Parenting style and SDQ <sup>10</sup>	If any child aged 3-14 living in household
9. Psychological scales (e.g. control strategies, shyness, exclusivity)	All
10. Consent (partner survey, child survey, parents survey) and interviewer's protocol	All

### III.3. The Multi-Actor Design

With the second wave, the multi-actor design was fully implemented: Not only partners, but also one of the children, and all parents and parent-like persons were involved.

Partner questionnaires were generally handed out during the interview (to the partner, if present, otherwise to the anchor) unless anchors explicitly asked the interviewer to mail it to their partner. Compared with wave one, this was a change of the field procedure: In wave one, the partner

<sup>10</sup> SDQ stands for "Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire".

questionnaire was not handed out to the anchor. This change was implemented because Chemnitz had already used this procedure in wave one and had a much higher partner response rate (75%, as opposed to 48% in the other three cities). However, this change in the field procedure did not alter the outcome: Chemnitz still had a partner response rate of 75%, whereas the partner response in the other three cities had a ranged from 37% to 55%.

**Table 13: Response rates for the partner survey (by cohort)**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Received completed	23 (35.94)	62 (67.39)	72 (55.81)	157 (55.09)
Missing	33 (51.56)	23 (25.00)	37 (28.68)	93 (32.63)
Refused at interview	8 (12.50)	7 (7.61)	20 (15.50)	35 (12.28)
Total with partner	64 (100.00)	92 (100.00)	129 (100.00)	285 (100.00)

A cover letter was included to clarify the objectives of the survey and, if applicable, to announce that a 10€ voucher was going to be sent out upon receipt of the completed questionnaire. A stamped self-addressed envelope was also enclosed. A rather large part of the partner questionnaire was devoted to questions about the relation to the anchors' parents. Furthermore, the value-of-children scale, questions on partnership dynamics, and a large section with questions on fertility and family planning, which were also part of the anchor's interview, were submitted to the partners. In addition, the psychological scales and, for respondents with children, those on pedagogic style were presented.

Of the 498 respondents, 285 had a partner (57%<sup>11</sup>), and 55% of the partners returned a completed questionnaire (see Table 13). The turnout of the second wave of the partner survey remained fairly the same as that in wave one, but in contrast to the first wave, we reduced the cases of refusal during the anchor interview<sup>12</sup>. The meaning of this result is potentially twofold: It could be interpreted first as a sign that we were able to gain the anchors' trust and therefore they became more willing to involve their partner and second, as an effect of the different field organization, in the sense that more anchors actually agreed on picking up the questionnaire on behalf of their partners but never really forwarded it to them. The decline in response rates among the first cohort would support the latter, whereas the better rates among the middle cohort would speak for the first. Further analyses are necessary.

The second element of the multi-actor design was the child survey. The target child was the oldest child aged 8-14 years and living in the household. Considering that the interview with the anchor had already lasted more than one hour, and that children might be away or already in bed by the end of the anchor's interview, it was up to the respondent to choose whether to let the child interview be conducted at once or at a later point. 35 anchors had a child in the described age-group and 28 permitted an interview (see Table 14). Six people refused, and in one case, the interview was temporarily not possible since the child was abroad during fieldwork.

<sup>11</sup> In the first cohort 34%, in the second one 61%, and in the third one 82% had a partner.

<sup>12</sup> This was a result of higher cooperation in the first two cohorts.

**Table 14: Response Rate to the Child Survey**

	Count	Percent
Completed	28	70.00
Refused	6	17.14
Temporarily not possible	1	2.86
Total	35	100.00

The child questionnaire was a paper-and-pencil questionnaire to be filled out by the interviewer in a face-to-face interview. We estimated that the interview would take about 15-20 minutes. Children taking part in our study were given a 10€ voucher for a local cinema. The child questionnaire started with questions about the children's experiences at school and their impressions about their success at school. A large second block collected the children's perceptions of how the anchors and their partners behaved toward them. After a few questions on the children's friends, the SDQ closed the questionnaire.

The third and last element of the multi-actor design was a survey of the anchor's parents (mail survey). The target group in this case were all parents or parent-like persons the anchor named and was in touch with. Consequently, foster and step-parents were included as well (up to four parents per anchor). Parents' postal addresses were collected during the interview with the anchor, or, if they considered it more appropriate, the interviewers called back, thus allowing the anchors to first check with their parents. The anchors were invited to address the envelope for their parents themselves or to take care of handing over the questionnaire personally (this was the case especially with the youngest respondents who were still living with their parents). In order to improve response rates, a 10€ voucher was offered to all respondents upon return of the completed questionnaire.

Co-operation in the parent survey was very high: Overall, we obtained the addresses of 81% of the parents, and in almost 70% of the cases, the parents returned a completed questionnaire. Thus, the overall response is 57%<sup>13</sup>. Conditional response rates are very similar across cohorts, whereas the propensity to involve the parents in the study declined with age and was particularly low among respondents of the oldest cohort (cf. Table 15).

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<sup>13</sup> Compared with the response in the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS 2004), our response is quite high. In the NKPS, permission to contact parents was given for 59% of the living parents, and the response rate was 67%, meaning that the overall response rate was 39%.

**Table 15: Response Rates to the Parent Survey (by cohort)**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Refused at Interview	48 (11.79)	50 (16.72)	85 (31.6)	183 (18.77)
Address provided	359 (88.21)	249 (83.28)	184 (68.40)	792 (81.23)
Missing	98	84	57	239
% of eligible	(24.08)	(28.09)	(21.19)	(24.51)
% of provided addresses	(27.30)	(33.73)	(30.98)	(30.18)
Received Completed	261	165	127	553
% of eligible	(64.13)	(55.18)	(47.21)	(56.72)
% of provided addresses	(72.70)	(66.27)	(69.02)	(69.82)
Parents with contact to anchor	407	299	269	975

The questionnaire for the parents collected socio-demographic information about the parent, data about the anchor's siblings (age, gender, distance from parental home, frequency of contact), and the value-of-children scale. The largest part of the questionnaire was devoted to the collection of information on the relationship between the respondent and the anchor (downward inter-generational relationships), both in material and emotional terms. If the anchor belonged to the youngest cohort, the SDQ was used. A scale on general values and attitudes and some factual information about the respondent's parents closed the questionnaire.

Finally, an external validation study connected with the marriage market module was carried out. Its goal was to validate the respondents' answers about the potential number of partners in various contexts. The validation study was restricted to those respondents residing in Mannheim. Of the 123 Mannheim respondents in wave two, 98 (80%) were routed to the marriage market module. These respondents generated 294 contexts (3.0 per respondent). In the module, 11 respondents were filtered out since they saw no prospect to find a partner in any of the generated contexts. After filtering out all contexts which were unsuitable as a partner market<sup>14</sup>, the remaining 87 respondents had generated in total 174 contexts (2.0 per respondent). For 158 of these contexts, (91%) respondents provided addresses. Of these, 118 (75%) were validated.

#### ***IV. The Third Wave of the Mini Panel***

The third and final Mini-Panel wave was fielded between mid-October and the end of December 2006. Interviewers were requested to complete contact protocols before Christmas and to conduct interviews until the end of the month.

Since it was possible to work only with interviewers from wave two, interviewer training was conducted in one day. Field procedures generally resembled those of the earlier wave, but additional complexity arose from the implementation of dependent interviewing (see below). The rule about the 5 call-backs in person or 10 on the phone was maintained.

<sup>14</sup> If the Anchor has no contact to any person of the opposite sex in a given context this was considered irrelevant for the partner market study and filtered out.



Of the interviewers in the field in the second wave, 18 ceased cooperation, so that the fieldwork in wave three was conducted with 46 interviewers. On average, each interviewer processed 10.83 addresses and realised 9.26 interviews.

All respondents of the second wave received an advance letter announcing the third and final wave, a 12-page brochure with an overview of the analyses run for the first two waves, and, if applicable, a 10€ voucher<sup>15</sup>.

Of the 498 re-issued addresses, 480 could be contacted, and 427 interviews were conducted. These data correspond to an overall contact rate of 96%, and to a response rate of 86% (see table 16).

**Table 16 Case outcome in wave three (by cohort)**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Response	166 (87.37)	125 (83.33)	136 (86.08)	427 (85.74)
Refusal	21 (11.05)	14 (9.33)	18 (11.39)	53 (10.64)
No contact (valid address)	2 (1.05)	8 (5.33)	3 (1.90)	13 (2.61)
No contact (invalid address)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.63)	1 (0.20)
Moved to a non-Mini-Panel city	1 (0.53)	3 (2.00)	0 (0.00)	4 (0.80)
TOTAL	190 (100.00)	150 (100.00)	158 (100.00)	498 (100.00)

## IV.2. The Anchor Questionnaire

In the third wave, the anchor questionnaire covered a wide variety of topics and, unlike in the first two waves, did not have a marked focus. It was conceived as a summary of the first two waves, firstly, in order to provide a second or third measurement for all of the most important dependent variables and secondly, to examine how much we could condense the most important modules, and how well these compact versions would work.

In the first part of the interview, we submitted to our respondents a simplified version of the PAPI life-history calendar covering the time-span since the previous interview. This version of the life-history calendar covered only residence, intimate relations, and whether the respondent had children and whether they were living together with the respondent. After that, we switched back to CAPI for questions on particular events that might have happened between the waves and on the overall satisfaction with their current situation, and to collect a number of socio-demographic data which were relevant for routing.

The next section was on intimate relations: The respondent was asked questions on the current status of institutionalisation of the relationship, on partnership dynamics, and on the quality of and satisfaction with the current relationship. These questions were partly asked orally, partly in the form of a paper-and-pencil questionnaire, and partly in CASI<sup>16</sup>-modus. If the relationship

<sup>15</sup> The assignment to one of the three experimental groups was kept constant across the three waves since we were interested in testing which experimental condition produced the best results from a longitudinal perspective.

<sup>16</sup> The self-interview was chosen for questions on sexual life. In this section, we also implemented a random split between different question orders to test whether this affects answers about actual and desired frequency of intercourse and partner's preferred frequency.

with the partner of the second wave had ended, this section was preceded by questions about the end of that relationship. All heterosexual respondents were then routed through a module on family planning and fertility. Submitted to all respondents who had contact with at least one parent was a module on emotional and practical aspects of their relationship with their parents.

The last large block constituted a shorter version of the module on social networks which had been implemented in the first wave. The new version was more parsimonious as to the number of generators and descriptors used. Moreover, it included global items which aimed at measuring the general disposition of the respondents' social environment on some family issues.<sup>17</sup>

The last modules of the interview dealt with perceived income and consumption. Finally, a few follow-up questions concerning their marriage market were submitted to a rather limited number of respondents who had started a new relationship since the first wave.

**Table 17: CAPI Wave 3, Overview of the topics**

Modules	Routing
1. Life-history calendar, life satisfaction, socio-demography	All
2. End of previous relationship	After a split
3. Quality of intimate relationship and its dynamic (CAPI + CASI+PAPI)	If living in a partnership
4. Fertility and family planning (CAPI + PAPI)	Heterosexuals
5. Value of children	All
6. Inter-generational relationships	All, with internal routing
7. Social network (generators, descriptors, and global items)	All
8. Income and consumption	All, with internal routing
9. Marriage market (follow-up)	If started a partnership within one year
10. Consent (drop-off, partner survey, parents survey) and interviewer's protocol	All

The most innovative aspect of the questionnaire used in the third wave was the implementation of dependent interviewing features to improve routing and data quality. Information from wave two on partnership, occupation, sexual orientation, and on parents was fed forward to wave three. Thus, we could avoid repeating some questions and quickly identify important changes in personal and professional life (for a literature review on DI see Jäckle 2006).

The software we used, Ci3 by Sawtooth, does not support dependent interviewing (DI), so we had to be creative. Most of the variables we needed had been encrypted in a numeric code that the interviewer had to type in at the beginning of the interview. The code was printed on the contact form so encryption was necessary to protect respondents' privacy. To avoid typing errors, the interviewer had to type in the code twice. The second solution we tried was to embed information in the source of the programme. This solution was possible only for a very limited number of variables since the number of programme lines grows at a very high rate, making the CAPI tool very unstable and increasing the risk of a programme crash. This second solution was used for the follow-up questions on the marriage market.

<sup>17</sup> One further methodological experiment was embedded in the network section. We suspected that the length of the pre-printed PAPI-list used by the respondents to write down the members of their social network could influence the number of people named. For this reason, we used a list with 30 spaces in Munich and Chemnitz and a list with only 20 spaces in Bremen and Mannheim.

To our knowledge, our attempt to use DI was the first one in Germany: Most researchers assume that Germans are too concerned about their privacy and would react badly if their answers from a previous interview were mentioned. We tested two types of DI. We implemented reactive DI<sup>18</sup> to detect whether a relationship had ended or begun between waves, for one's sexual orientation, and for the information on parents. Reactive means that the information from wave two was revealed only if there was a discrepancy to the answer given in wave three. For the question on occupational history, we opted for an experiment: using reactive DI with half of the respondents, and proactive DI with the other half ("In wave two, we recorded that you ..."). Moreover, in Chemnitz and Bremen we pre-printed on the life-history calendars information regarding the month in which the interview of the second wave was conducted.

Our experience with DI was very positive: None of the respondents complained about references to earlier answers, either during the interview or in their feedback forms, and none of the interviewers reported any awkward situations during the interview.

On average, the interview lasted about one hour<sup>19</sup>: in terms of both mean and median time. Interviews run with proactive dependent interviews turned out to be about 2 minutes shorter than those run with reactive dependent interviewing. This difference is not statistically significant, but considering that the experiment was run on one set of questions only, it suggests that proactive dependent interviews might be a way to design more efficient questionnaires.

### **IV.3. The Multi-Actor Design**

Two elements of the multi-actor design were implemented in the third wave: the partner survey and the parent survey.

During the CAPI interview with the anchors, we asked permission to contact their partners again, this time for a 30-minute telephone interview to be conducted in February 2007. For this purpose, we collected telephone numbers under which we could contact the partners. If the respondents so desired, the interviewer would call back at a later time so as to allow the anchors to ask their partners for permission. In these cases, the interviewer gave the anchor a letter for the partner, explaining the aim of the survey and, if applicable, announcing a conditional incentive in the form of a 10€ shopping voucher.

Overall co-operation was rather high: 76% of the eligible respondents provided us with a telephone number. To our surprise though, cooperation among the youngest cohort declined sharply: As many as 43% of the respondents with a partner refused to involve their partner.

Fieldwork was conducted in Mannheim from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2007. The overall response rate lies at 64%, which means that all in all, by using CATI we were able to reach 9% more of the eligible partners than with PAPI. We regard as particularly positive the fact that we have substantially improved response rates in the first and third cohorts, from whom we obtained less satisfactory results in the second wave.

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<sup>18</sup> For a review of the literature on DI, see Jäckle (2006)

<sup>19</sup> Median and average interview duration were 59 minutes.

**Table 18: Cooperation to Partner Survey Wave 3**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Telephone number denied at interview	26 (43.33)	13 (17.11)	20 (18.18)	59 (23.98)
Telephone number provided	34 (56.67)	63 (82.89)	90 (81.82)	187 (76.02)
Incorrect telephone numbers	1	2	3	6
% of eligible	(1.67)	(2.63)	(2.73)	(2.44)
% of provided tel. numbers	(2.94)	(3.17)	(3.33)	(3.21)
No interview <sup>20</sup>	4	10	11	25
% of eligible	(6.67)	(13.16)	(10.00)	(10.16)
% of provided tel. numbers	(11.76)	(15.87)	(12.22)	(13.37)
Complete interviews	29	51	76	156
% of eligible	(48.34)	(67.10)	(69.09)	(64.41)
% of provided tel. numbers	(85.29)	(80.95)	(84.44)	(83.42)
Total eligible	60	76	110	246

The only other part of the multi-actor design in the third wave was the second wave of the survey of the parents. Since a second wave had not been announced, we were not allowed to re-use contact information collected during the second Mini-Panel wave. For this reason, we had to explicitly ask for permission to re-contact the parents and had to collect their postal addresses anew. The respondents were also informed that their parents would receive a 10€ shopping voucher upon sending back the completed questionnaire.

Also in this case co-operation was high: We collected contact data for 598 parents in total, which correspond to 72% of the parents we could potentially reach. All parents whose contact data were obtained were sent a postal questionnaire in January 2007. A letter of reminder was sent out at the beginning of February to all those who had not yet sent back their questionnaire. All in all 440 questionnaires have been returned: this corresponds to a response rate of almost 54% which is only slightly below that of the previous wave. This very positive result was obtained thanks to the very high cooperation of the parents (+3%), which compensated for the slightly lower percentage of permissions to contact obtained from the anchors.

<sup>20</sup> This could be due to refusal, no contact after 30 call-backs, or because the respondent was not interviewable during fieldwork.

**Table 19: Response Rates to the Parent Survey (by cohort)**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Refused at Interview	65 (18.79)	83 (33.88)	79 (33.76)	227 (27.52)
Address provided	281 (81.21)	162 (66.12)	155 (66.24)	598 (72.48)
Missing	76 (21.97)	45 (18.37)	37 (15.81)	158 (19.15)
% of eligible	(21.97)	(18.37)	(15.81)	(19.15)
% of provided addresses	(27.05)	(27.78)	(23.87)	(26.42)
Received Completed	205 (59.25)	117 (47.76)	118 (50.43)	440 (53.33)
% of eligible	(59.25)	(47.76)	(50.43)	(53.33)
% of provided addresses	(72.95)	(72.22)	(76.13)	(73.58)
Parents with contact to anchor	346	245	234	825

#### II.4. The Drop-Off Questionnaire

A new element of the third wave was the drop-off questionnaire collecting information on the economic arrangements within the respondents' household in a more detailed manner than in the face-to face interview. The drop-off questionnaire was offered only to the respondents belonging to the two older cohorts and covered issues such as housing, perceived income, household expenditures and consumption, as well as some questions on the anchor's time-use.

If the respondent agreed, the interviewer handed out a package containing the questionnaire, a stamped self-addressed envelope, and a personalised letter describing the purpose of the study and announcing a conditional incentive in the form of a lottery ticket.

Of the 261 respondents eligible for the study, only 21 (8%) refused the drop-off, and 110 (42% of the eligible) returned a completed questionnaire.

**Table 20: Response to the Drop-Off Questionnaire (by cohort)**

	C1: 1988-90	C2: 1978-80	C3: 1968-70	Total
Received completed	--	53 (45.60)	53 (38.97)	110 (42.15)
Missing	--	54 (43.20)	76 (55.88)	130 (49.81)
Refused at interview	--	14 (11.20)	7 (5.15)	21 (8.05)
Total eligible	--	125	136	261

## *V. Preparing for the German Family Panel Revisited – What We Learned*

### **V.1. Response Rates**

Conditional response rates increased across the three waves of the Mini-Panel (see Chart 1). The net response rate in the first wave was about 52%, whereas the gross conditional response rates in the second and third wave were 75% and 86% respectively. This pattern of decreasing panel attrition across the three waves is generally expected in longitudinal studies. Compared with the results generally achieved by SOEP, our conditional response rates are slightly lower (5-10%). In the first wave, though, we achieved a fairly higher net response rate. We do not have an explanation for these differences, but we suspect that the general topic “Family” boosted our response rate in the first wave. As a pilot study though, the Mini-Panel questionnaires included some rather complex instruments, which downsized the respondents’ willingness to participate again.

Panel attrition affects the three cohorts in different ways: The first cohort is generally easier to contact and co-operates more often, whereas the second one displays the sharpest decline: The first cohort represents for this reason almost 39% of the respondents in wave 3, whereas the middle cohort represents only 29%. The third cohort constitutes the remaining 32% of the respondents. We observed that the slightly worse response rates of the second cohort compared to the other two depends mostly on the lower contact rates we had in this group rather than on the different co-operation rates. We think that this is related to the higher mobility of the second cohort, especially when, as in the Mini Panel, only big cities are surveyed. Therefore, we assume that contact rates will on average improve in the main panel, which also includes small cities and rural areas.

These results make us optimistic in view of the German Family Panel (GFP). Response rates in the three Mini-Panel waves were already rather high and it is to expect that the larger study will reach even higher rates. We have several reasons for our positive expectations: in the first place, the larger study will benefit from the expertise of a professional research institute in the data collection. Secondly, all respondents will be offered conditional incentives, which have returned the best cumulative response rate after three waves. Thirdly, the large study will cover also rural areas, in which cooperation is usually higher than in cities. Fourthly, cumulative response rates will be improved by more consequent tracking, since fewer addresses will be lost to the follow-up when the respondent moves. Furthermore, we expect to reduce significantly the burden of the survey, since there will be no need to include experimental instruments in the questionnaires. Finally, thanks to longer intervals between two waves (one year instead of six months), we will be able to lengthen the duration of fieldwork.

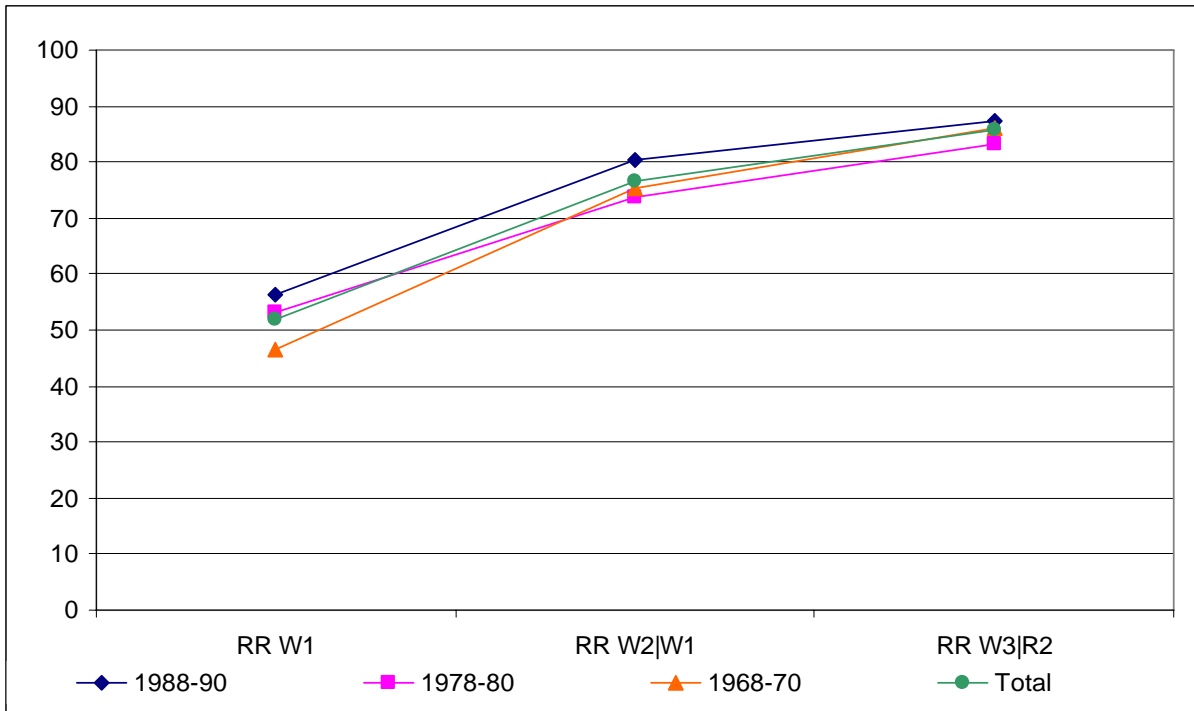


Chart 1: Conditional Response Rates by Cohort across the Three Waves

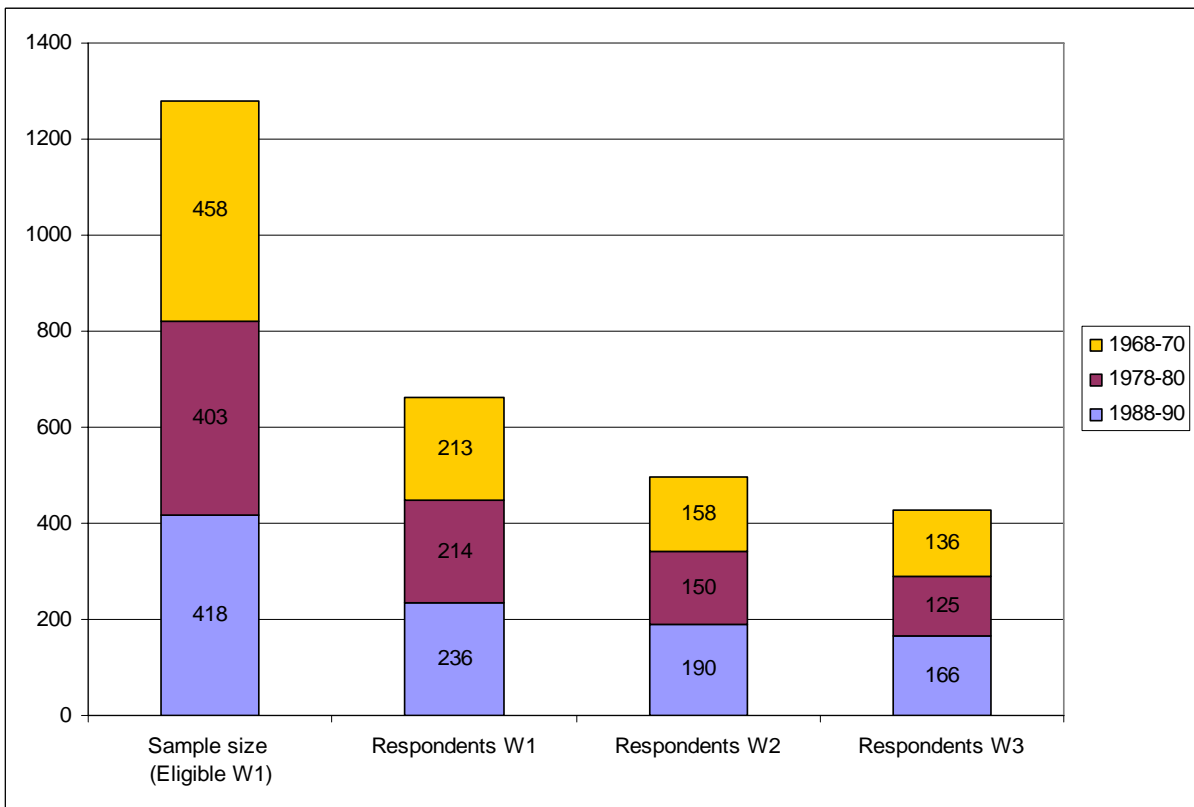


Chart 2: Sample Size and Respondents by Cohort and Wave (Counts)

## V.2. Multi-Methods and Multi-Actor Design

### *PAPI vs. CATI to Survey the Partners*

To examine which mode would lead to higher response rates, in the third wave we switched from PAPI to CATI for our survey of the partners. All in all, the CATI survey yielded better response rates: About 63% of the partners were interviewed, whereas in the first two waves, only about 55% of the partners returned a complete questionnaire.

The reason for this difference was the higher cooperation in the case of the CATI-based survey. Contrary to our expectations though, the anchors more often refused to provide us with the telephone number of their partners' than with their postal address (24% vs. 13%). This is especially problematic for the first cohort: In the case of the PAPI survey, 20% of the anchors of the first cohort refused to provide contact to the partner, in comparison to about 12% for the other cohorts. This rate increases in the case of the CATI survey to 43.3% for the first cohort, in comparison to 17.1% for the second, and 18.2% for the third cohort.

### *CASI Intimate Questions*

One important aim of PAIRFAM will be the examination of intimate relations. Frequency of sexual intercourse and satisfaction with it are considered important indicators of the quality of a relationship; therefore, we have already checked the acceptance of questions on the topic in the Mini Panel. Questions on sexual behaviour were asked in self-administered form as CASI: This not only guarantees respondent's privacy while answering the questions, but also after the interview, since data are not immediately accessible to third parties. Although we have no comparison group and have not analysed the quality of the answers, the feedback received from the interviewers gives a positive impression. All in all, the interviewees had no difficulty answering highly intimate questions in the provided mode.

### *PAPI, Drop-Off and Diary*

Additionally to the CAPI we used in all three waves paper questionnaires for the anchor interview. Firstly, this allowed us to switch from one medium to another during the interview, which seemed to hold up the respondent's attention. Secondly, this gave the interviewers time to transfer information from the LHC and other information to the computer without actually interrupting the interview. Finally, as this gave the respondents the choice of how much burden they wanted to accept, it was possible to collect valuable information for at least some respondents.

### *Multi-Actor Design*

For theoretical reasons, it was necessary to interview the anchor's partners, children, and parents. Especially the response rates of the partners and parents differ across cohorts. Firstly, the youngest cohort, more often than the older ones, did not want to or could not give permission to contact their partners, and, secondly, their partners more often did not cooperate. The lower response rate of the partner interviews for the first cohort can probably be explained by the lesser institutionalization of the relationship. On the other hand, the response rate of the parents was much higher for the first cohort than for the older cohorts. We assume that the main reason for this difference is that the first-cohort respondents more often are still living with their parents. We are going to further investigate these hypotheses in order to develop more effective procedures and a better understanding of the possible biases.

The difference in the degree of institutionalization of the relationship across cohorts also leads to the problem that the relationship biography, surveyed by means of the LHC, displays more spells



for the youngest cohort than for the older ones, as the respondents' definitions of what constitutes a relationship differ.

### V.3. Use of Incentives

The results of the incentive experiment suggest that in the first wave, incentives (either conditional or unconditional) did not affect response rates. In the second wave, conditional incentives delivered the best results (80% vs. 72%), whereas in the third wave, response rates were better for both incentive groups than for the group without incentives (89% vs. 76%). In the first wave, we found that for less skilled interviewers conditional incentives increase cooperation rates by some 10%. For more skilled interviewers, however, we do not find any difference between the incentive groups. **We have not run comparable analyses on the second- and third-wave data, but the available preliminary evidence suggests that conditional incentives are a reasonable choice for the main study in order to improve response rates.**

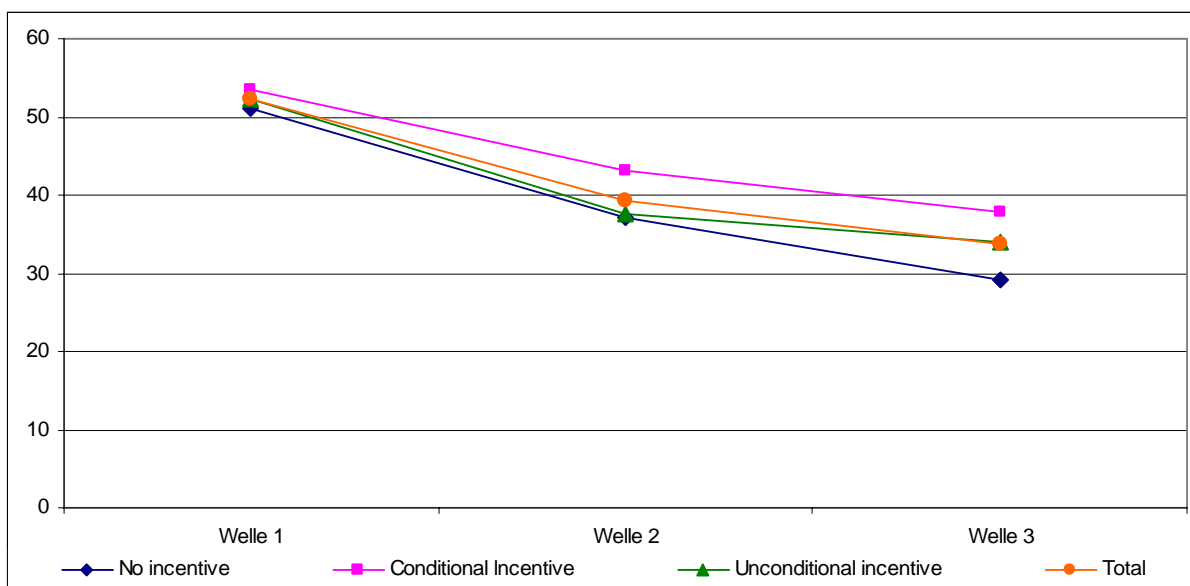


Chart 3: Cumulative Response Rates by Experimental Group across the Three Waves

One further aspect for future investigation is whether incentives have an effect on data quality, operationalised in term of percentage of item non-response (see also Singer 2002).

## VI. Conclusion

Considering the difficult target group (young people and young adults in an urban context), the fact that short intervals between waves allowed only for a rather short period of fieldwork, and that fieldwork was conducted by non professional interviewers, the Mini Panel delivers respectable results.

As we mentioned, Mini-Panel data contain valuable information from a number of experiments which deliver important suggestions on how to improve the design of the GFP. At this point we are not yet able to report final results, since data analyses are still in progress.

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