INTRODUCTION

The insane celebration of children [*Kinderwahnsinn*] around me is reaching its zenith. Almost all my girlfriends and close acquaintances are in baby-frenzy or heavily pregnant. Everyone promises during pregnancy to not be this über-mother and what happens? No sooner is the baby born than the madness starts. Photos of the child breast-feeding, photos of the child lying on the father's naked belly, photos with inscriptions like "120 grams weight increase in the first week." Who is interested in that? I wonder how people who were always so guarded, with whom one could never discuss details of their sex life or their work and income, how they can suddenly become so shameless, circulating intimate photos and talking about private details. Some-how it seems outrageous [*unverschämt*] to bring these matters about pregnancy and childbirth into public [*in die Öffentlichkeit bringen*]! Did you hear about the new noise laws that don't restrict what time of the day and for how long children can scream and make a ruckus? I think it's terrible [*schrecklich*]. This just absolves parents of any responsibility and children from learning to be considerate [*rücksichtsvoll*]. It is like there is no room for anyone else except those who care to reproduce. You not only show your children everywhere [*überall*], whether or not we want to see them, you also make sure that now we have to hear them all the time [*ständig*]! Everything is about and for the ben-efit of children [*alles ist auf Kinder eingestellt*]! This is not the Berlin I know from the time of reunification.

In 2013, toward the end of my stay in Berlin, Beate, one of my friends and interlocutors, spoke to me about the "outrageous" vis-ibility of children and reproductive labor in the city. Beate was at the time of this conversation 42 years old, childless, and single.[1] Her anger and shock at seeing and hearing children at all times and ev-erywhere speak to what Berliners often called the paradox of Ger-man child-(un)friendliness.[2] On the one hand, "child-unfriendly" Germany reflects a global trend of steady fertility decline over the

last four decades. On the other hand, "child-friendly" family poli-
cies and changing social expectations about biological reproduction
provoke and make possible a conspicuous display of reproductive
labor, such that children attain a "hypervisible" presence (*präsenz*).
Precisely because they are fewer in number, and have become in-
valuable, they seem to appear everywhere—in playgrounds, cafes,
market places, and most importantly in public consciousness.

Children Are Everywhere describes and interprets gendered and
generational experiences of parenting, childlessness, and emergent
nonbiological intimacies through the lens of what I call conspicuous
reproduction. Conspicuous reproduction refers to discourses and
practices that make reproduction explicit in public consciousness and
for social contemplation and consumption. Conspicuity is associated
with the physical presence of strollers and children in public spaces.
It is the "exaggerated" value placed on the child, the prominence
and display of child-centered objects and ideas, "aggressive" moth-
erhood and "active" fatherhood. It also signifies a visible presence
in political and social discourse and policies that tend toward pro-
natalism. I argue that in its material and symbolic conspicuity, (Ger-
man) reproduction signals transformations in reproductive regimes
in contemporary Berlin that privilege forms of heterosexuality, glo-
rify biological families, and marginalize nonreproductive concerns.
Even as the German state strives to foster a "child-friendly" society,
such practices mark childlessness as reproductive *Unlust* (disinterest)
and disregard forms of nonbiological intimacies.

Thus, I show how demographic transitions and reproductive re-
gimes produce social boundary-making practices. Reproduction in
low-fertility Germany emerges as a form of exclusion, pitting peo-
ple against each other and stimulating resentments on both sides;
on the other hand, it also creates new senses of belonging. Women
are often marked as producing a "culture of childlessness" and con-
sidered the primary drivers of low fertility. Additionally, their par-
enting practices engender moral evaluations, at times expressed
through negative stereotypes and derogatory idiomatic utterances.
Thus, female childlessness was often referred to by some interlocu-
tors as a social "sickness," marginalizing women and criticizing their
particular reproductive pathways. On the other hand, women who
do have children are judged negatively for engaging in intensive
mothering (Hays 1996), which is deemed "damaging" to the child
(*es schadet dem Kind*). Men, on the other hand, when taking advan-
tage of recent paternity leave policies, experience an emergent sense
of belonging as they engage in direct childcare. "Active" fatherhood

as an ideology and form of parenting is seen to contribute to creating a *Lust* to reproduce and is socially valued and lauded. Reproductive exclusions and inclusions are clearly stratified along gendered norms of "proper" reproduction and "good" parenting.

Toward the end of our conversation in 2013, and in the many years after I left Berlin, Beate remarked wistfully that her memories of the reunified Berlin of the early 1990s were far removed from what she witnesses in contemporary times. In fact, Beate did eventually move out of Berlin because she could not bear to see "children and families everywhere." The sociality and atmosphere (*Stimmung*) that the city provided just before and after reunification were no longer present for Beate, who has now been living and working in a neighboring European country for the past five years. As this book will show, reunification as a transformative material, social, and emotional experience played a vital role in how reproduction was apprehended and experienced by my interlocutors. While demographic anxieties have over the last decade or more directly resulted in introducing "child-friendlier" family policies, I show how the fall of the Berlin Wall shifted the social *Stimmung* in Berlin, making reproduction conspicuous and engendering belonging for some and exclusions for others.

As reproduction moves from the "private" and inconspicuous to the visible and "public" arena, it arouses the disquiet that Beate describes so evocatively. What disturbs, though, is not necessarily children per se, but the fact that they are "out of place" (Douglas 1966) and the way that their presence reminds Berliners of changing material forms and social norms. Thus, when speaking of conspicuity, I pay attention to how reproduction appears at the intersection of topographical and procedural space (Iveson 2007). Topographically defined, public space refers to that which is physically situated in city spaces, such as parks, streets, squares, and the context where a (or the) public can potentially be addressed.[3] Material city spaces animate public experience, while also emphasizing that this materiality is devoid of meaning for my interlocutors unless they *feel* addressed. Here, procedural space intersects with materiality. Procedural space is the spontaneous space created in the moments of action or speech that make reproduction socially prominent, valuable, visible, and conspicuous. Thus, procedural space emerges in the actual encounter with screaming children or "*über*-mothers" and in the context of German demographic anxieties and changing reproductive practices and ideologies. Reproduction is conspicuous because it appears explicitly; it is present, not just in bodies and objects on the streets of

Berlin, but also in photos shared among friends, in political discourse, in changing laws, and in public consciousness. I argue that conspicuous reproduction is the experience of a particular meaningfulness of biological and cultural reproduction as apprehended by men and women of the reunification (*Wende*) generation.[4] When speaking of "publicness," then, my interlocutors speak of how having children has attained a specific social and national value in Germany today, such that other concerns—including their own experiences of exclusion, loss, nonbiological intimacies, and nonreproduction—find little articulation.

Conspicuous Reproduction in Berlin

In this ethnography I propose a framework of conspicuous reproduction to examine the relationship between demographic anxieties, "engaged" parenting, and changing forms of social inclusion and exclusion.[5] Fertility transitions and contemporary family policies, post-reunification gentrification and internal migration, and parenting practices have acquired a specific visibility in the changing material and social-emotional landscape of Berlin. This visibility—which I call conspicuous reproduction—produced and crystalized my interlocutors' particular identifications, experiences, and life courses, providing insights into reproductive processes regarding diverse actors, with and without children. The framework of conspicuous reproduction is elaborated through: national demographic anxieties and subsequent interventions in population management that signal a heightened value accorded to biological and social reproduction; the salience of "child-friendly" spaces, that is, physical or social locations transformed for the benefit of children, such that other groups are materially and emotionally excluded; and intensive parenting practices that are apprehended in city spaces as a celebration of *Lust auf Kinder* (desire to reproduce), while they implicitly reveal the immense burden of gendered parenting for women.

Demographic Anxieties and Political Conspicuity

Globally, over the last four decades, fertility has steadily declined. This trend, though, is not homogeneous, and such heterogeneity is very much characteristic of Europe, which has been at the forefront of declining fertility worldwide.[6] In Germany, demographic transition has sparked debates on an aging population, shortages of labor, and the need for more tolerant immigration policies. Social

commentary on fertility decline often refers to a "culture of child-lessness" in the country (Dorbritz 2008; Konietzka and Kreyenfeld 2007; Rosenbaum and Timm 2010). Simultaneously, there is a push to create a child-friendlier society (*kinderfreundlichere Gesellschaft*) so that Germans feel like having, and can have, children (*Lust haben auf Kinder*). These concerns are further fueled by the recent refugee presence in Europe that both "threatens" the reproduction of Germanness and provides possibilities for sustaining German society. Yet underlying these debates and dilemmas is the question of the content of the nation and the fear that it may become "too foreign" (*Überfremdung*), as some interlocutors have opined.[7]

The anxious political and social discourse around low fertility has had parallel effects on family policies in Europe, and specifically in reunified Germany.[8] It is important to keep in mind that family policies in East and West Germany were significantly opposed up until reunification in 1989–90. The East German socialist state was concerned with supporting women in balancing employment and childcare. Public institutions took over childcare responsibilities when women were at work and in the service of raising socialist citizens (see Borneman 1992; Jurczyk and Klinkhardt 2014; Ostner 2002; Pohl 2000; Rosenbaum and Timm 2010). West German family policy was noninterventionist; the state withdrew from the private sphere of reproduction and family, to distance itself both from the national socialist legacy and also East Germany (Ostner 2002: 155). Here the male breadwinner model of the family was promoted. Women were expected to be, and often were, primary caregivers, with a high percentage of West German mothers not employed or employed only part-time (Borneman 1992). After reunification it took more than a decade before the German state began "catching up" with other European states to create more "gender equitable" family policies that provided women with opportunities to have children and advance their careers and men to be involved more directly in childcare.

Keeping in mind the above, I would argue that quantitatively as well as qualitatively, political intervention in matters of population management has taken on a bolder form in reunified Germany. This "paradigm shift" (Henninger, Wimbauer, and Dombrowski 2008: 289) is manifested in slogans such as "Germany needs more children" (*Deutschland braucht mehr Kinder*) and "Family brings profit/benefits" (*Familie bringt Gewinn*), popularized in 2005 by then family minister Ursula von der Leyen and accompanied by policy reforms. In the wake of the publication of the seventh *Familienbericht* (2006), a three-pronged approach to revitalize debate and action on popu-

lation and reproduction has been encouraged through the redistri-
bution of monetary support, building an infrastructural apparatus
for childcare and labor market flexibility to increase parental time at
home.[9] This is inclusive of what has been termed "sustainable family
policy" and is considered to contribute significantly to the "economic
growth and competitiveness of [the] German economy" (Hüben-
thal and Ifland 2011: 116). The national concern with demographic
transition manifests in managing reproduction so that Germany can
create a social environment conducive to having children.

What is ethnographically interesting here is that these legal and
political interventions are geared toward "development of positive
social attitudes toward children and parenting" (Kohler, Billari, and
Ortega 2006: 100). I would argue that their emotional and symbolic
content in reconstructing the "German family" cannot be overem-
phasized. Increased attention to family-friendly policies makes re-
production a matter of debate and public contemplation. It is also
objectively visible in, for instance, the figure of the father on paren-
tal leave or the phenomenon of children's cafes (*Kindercafes*). This
visibility is a burden for some and can isolate others. For instance,
in Chapter 4 I discuss how policy reforms that encourage male care-
giving enable routes to belonging and positive subjective and social
identifications for men who father. At the same time, men diag-
nosed with infertility struggle to achieve reproductive visibility, as
they are rendered socially invisible and politically insignificant in
the broader context of the marginality of (childless) men as repro-
ductive citizens.

Anthropological literature on fertility transitions in Western Eu-
rope shows how fertility discourse and policies reproduce power re-
lations and devalue divergent reproductive trajectories. For instance,
as discussed, low fertility is often framed in national rhetoric as a
"crisis," as "unnatural" or "irrational" (de Zordo and Marchesi 2015;
Krause 2005), or as "disinterest" (*Bundes Institute für Bevölkerungsfor-
schung* 2013). The abovementioned policy interventions in Germany
are thus an attempt to reinvigorate *Lust auf Kinder*. Demographic
anxieties are palpable in such interventions, which in turn manifest
in a political conspicuity and meaningfulness of reproduction.

Vulnerable Children, "Child-Friendly" Spaces, and Symbolic Conspicuity

Around the 1980s, Europe experienced rising concern regarding the
vulnerability of the child to outside dangers and risks, be they in the
form of traffic, strangers, abusers, or morally bad influences such as
other children (Blakely 1994; James, Jenks, and Prout 1998; Mat-

thews, Lamb, and Taylor 2000; McNeish and Roberts 1995; Preuss-Lausitz 1995; Valentine 1996a, 1996b). To keep dangers at bay, children have, over time, been locked into spaces, restricted in their mobility, hedged in, insulated, and separated, leading to what Zinnecker (1990) calls the "domestication" of childhood. Thus, places "specifically geared toward children's needs . . . are scattered like islands in the functionally differentiated urban landscape" (Zeiher 2001: 146). Writing about Latin American elite parenting practices and how these reinforce national and hemispheric relations of hierarchy and privilege, Ramos-Zayas (2020: 38) elaborates in *Parenting Empires* on the concept of nodules of child-centered urbanism. These are "physical and social spaces deliberately created and sustained on an elite ideology of 'in the name of the children' but that [are] in fact mostly about adult sociability, governance, and practices of class and racial inequality in intimate contexts." Ramos-Zayas shows how some of these spaces in her field site were predictable and bounded, like playgrounds and daycare centers; others were not explicitly focused on children, but played a role in their socialization and in adult interactions, relations, and self-fashioning as parents. Taking the example of a beachfront in Brazil, which was known to attract elite and rich families and foreigners, she shows how parents created a sense of belonging and entitlement through specific practices of policing and regulation, thereby maintaining racial and class divisions. Thus, this beach area where families would meet spontaneously was soon cordoned off by municipal order and because of the actions of the parent group. This space was deemed a safe environment for children to play in, and it successfully kept "dangers" such as homeless individuals and "dark-skin[ned] (and often young and male) bodies" out (ibid.: 64).

Taking the ideas of "domestication" of childhood and "child-centered nodules of urbanism," I examine how post-reunification gentrification (and family gentrification in particular) has brought the child from the "domestic" into the "public" space in Berlin. As some gentrifying neighborhoods welcomed increasing number of families with children, the boundaries around child-centered spaces became more flexible and less cordoned off from other spaces. Increasingly in my field site, child-centered nodules, rather than being institutionalized and insulated (Valentine 1996b), expanded and encroached on "adult" spaces, extending to and symbolizing whole neighborhoods and social groups and thereby transforming material and social landscapes and the "original" *Stimmung* of Berlin that Beate refers to at the start of this chapter.

Immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and gaining momentum starting in the early 2000s, West German and other Europeans migrants moved to reunified Berlin seeking "adventure," "cheaper living," "new jobs," and "better childcare options," as many told me of their own motivations. Household composition in central neighborhoods, which had been the focus of reconstruction investments and efforts, changed drastically. For instance, Prenzlauer Berg, previously a working-class neighborhood, ethnically mixed and inhabited by singles, students, and unemployed men and women, has in the last two decades become increasingly homogeneous, composed of middle to high-income families with children. More than half the residents are between the ages of 25 and 45. A detailed breakdown of numbers reveals that in the first half of the 1990s, the majority of the neighborhood population was single and between 25 and 35 (Bernt, Grell, and Holm 2013). Since 1997, the proportion of 30 to 40-year-olds has been steadily increasingly and has reached an all-time high. "Eighty-five percent of new inhabitants are aged between 18 and 45. Older children as well as seniors are practically non-existent in this group" (ibid.: 117).[10] Between 2005 and 2010, there was a 30 percent increase in the number of births in Prenzlauer Berg, but the fertility rate of the neighborhood is still comparable with Berlin's average. It is, in fact, the high concentration of families in the childbearing age group that explains the overwhelming presence of children in Prenzlauer Berg, and not exceptionally high fertility rates.[11] Not only have some of the West German students who first squatted in the rundown houses in Prenzlauer Berg started families, but increasingly, young, upwardly mobile families with children are moving into Berlin (see Becker-Cantarino 1996; Bernt, Grell, and Holm 2013; Holm 2013). Catering to the needs of households with children, neighborhoods such as Prenzlauer Berg have become what locals call a *Kinderinsel* or "children's island"—in the very center of the city, materially prominent, symbolically conspicuous, and spilling into spaces previously not committed to the ideology of "in the name of the children" (Ramos-Zayas 2020: 38).

While typical child-centered nodules such as playgrounds may not have disturbed per se, they became hypervisible when concentrated in space, marked for expansion, or constructed in public parks that were open to "unsavory" individuals. In Chapter 1, for instance, I discuss this expansion of child-friendly spaces from the perspective of residents of former East Berlin and analyze the way that conspicuous reproduction organizes living space (driving rent prices up and forcing former inhabitants to move out) and German–

German relations in the city. Children's cafes, playgrounds, strollers, and children's noise cross over into adult material, emotional, and acoustic spaces and encroach on Berlin's neighborhoods. The material presence and symbolic value of reproduction, the vulnerability of children, and a "terrible" (*schrecklich*) demand on citizens to accommodate this socially and nationally prized resource are palpable on the streets of Berlin.

Material and Ideological Conspicuity: Intensive Parenting on Display

Recent scholarship on parenting has turned a critical eye to the relationship between cultures of parenting and larger socioeconomic, demographic, and political changes in modern societies, particularly in Euro-American contexts (Hays 1996; Furedi 2008; Lee 2014; Faircloth 2013; Tomori 2014). This literature shows how the emergence of childhood during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries engendered an intensity of parental engagement vis-à-vis the care and nurture of children. Since the publication of Aries's (1962) *Centuries of Childhood*, several scholars have advanced our understanding of childhood as a sociocultural construct (see Allerton 2016; Frones 1994; Froerer 2009; Holloway and Valentine 2000; James and James 2001; James, Jenks, and Prout 1998; Näsman 1994; Valentine 1996b; Zeiher 1983). Aries's widely debated seminal work argued that until medieval times, childhood as separate from adulthood did not exist. This did not mean that children were not loved and cared for, only that they were seen as miniature adults and did not structurally occupy a distinct position or role. With the breakdown of the agrarian economy and the separation of domestic and productive lives, children ceased to be economically valuable and instead grew to be emotionally priceless (Zelizer 1981). Male adults were involved in productive activity in factories and urban centers of employment, whereas children went to school and mothers were tasked with domestic responsibilities. A revaluation of the innocence of childhood, and especially in the last century, the rising concerns over outside dangers, have led to the development of risk consciousness and paranoid parenting (Blakely 1994; Furedi 2008; James, Jenks, and Prout 1998; Matthews, Lamb, and Taylor 2000; McNeish and Roberts 1995; Preuss-Lausitz 1995; Valentine 1996a, 1996b).

Alongside these transformations, the mid-twentieth century saw the growing influence of developmental psychology that specified the tremendous value of infant experiences on the later development of the child. "Parenting is therefore cast as the source of, and

solution to, a whole range of problems . . . parenting is routinely presented as a task requiring expert guidance and supervision" (Faircloth and Gürtin 2018: 986). This implies that parenting is considered deterministic, that is, parents can and must follow certain norms and fulfill certain expectations because their practices and behaviors have a direct consequence on their child. This further implies that parents' everyday practices and behaviors can potentially be harmful and that all parents (not merely "deficit" parents) need an army of professionals to guide them and monitor parental behaviors (Furedi 2008). This middle-class Euro-American cultural script—recognized as proper parenting—is intensive and individualized such that cooperation between other parents and community members is undermined (Arendell 2000; Hays 1996; Furedi 2008).

Intensive parenting is, of course, gendered, with the burden of total motherhood (Wolf 2011) falling mostly on women; the mother is supposed to be aware of all the risks the world poses to her child and act accordingly to keep the child safe. She is expected to be responsible for the all-round development of her child; her labor is monitored and evaluated accordingly, not only in private, but also in public, and is governed through policies. Thus, intensive motherhood is characterized in the now-classic and widely cited book *Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* as "child centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive" (Hays 1996: 8). Being a proper mother in contemporary Euro-American society is a full-time job. It emphasizes self-management and individual responsibility, and is often a defining feature of women's identity work (Faircloth 2013). These expectations and moral controls reinforce tensions between working women and stay-at-home mothers (Douglas and Michaels 2004) and also between different "types" of mothering practices, for instance how long to breastfeed for (Faircloth 2013). For example, in Chapter 2, I discuss the particular resentment expressed toward a group of West German mothers and newer migrants to Berlin. The former group is identified as performing intensive motherhood and described as aggressive. A political climate that encourages German reproduction tinges procreation with a flavor of social and moral responsibility. Thus, such performances of mothering are also a form of defense against the "child-unfriendly" social milieu in Berlin, which is often emphatically permissive in the display of irritation toward children. Mutual aggression further creates and sustains categorical distinctions between social groups, such as non-Berliners and Berliners, and manifests in a curious hostility toward inanimate objects such as

strollers. Thus, intensive parenting not only stratifies along lines of "good" and "bad" mothers, but also pits members of the community against each other, intensifying competition.

Interestingly, intensive parenting also addresses those without children, making the latter more visible in public consciousness. Childlessness emerges as reproductive *Unlust* (disinterest). My interlocutors challenge this homogenizing discourse in Chapter 3. Here, I highlight narratives of unmarried, childless West German women in Berlin who came of age around the fall of the Berlin Wall. This chapter illuminates individual biographies and collective memories, experiences of spatial and social exclusion in gentrified Berlin, and "hypervisible" reproduction amid low fertility anxieties. It foregrounds pathways, experiences, and meanings of being single and childless, including creating networks and intimacies outside of marriage and biological reproduction.

In the context of European demographic anxieties, family policies have in the recent past been structured to involve men in direct childcare, such that "new" fatherhood necessarily requires men not to think of productive labor as their primary identity.[12] Yet in spite of these attempts to achieve "gender-equitable" policies and encourage biological reproduction, it is primarily women who take extended time away from work to care for children or do part-time work. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed this fact in the number of women who gave up their jobs, faced setbacks in their careers, or when employed as "essential" workers were also required to manage children and household responsibilities. Men's direct engagement as fathers is also seen as an expansion of intensive parenting and its continued idealization by some scholars (Hays 1996). I would argue that this expansion certainly made "active" fathers more visible in my field site and in turn conspicuous to those men who were unable to father or were expected to father within traditional family structures.

Taken together, heightened political interest in creating a "child-friendly" Germany, continued gentrification, and the conspicuous family ironically structure reproduction as a form of social exclusion for some and a means of belonging for others. The ethnographic chapters that follow focus on the micro-narratives or "life constructions" (Borneman 1992: 37–38) of my interlocutors and provide an insight into what this larger context of conspicuity of reproduction means for individuals' lives. I focus on stories of loss, exclusion, and inclusion organized around discourses and practices of reproduction that regulate micro-interactions and mark social and ethnic boundaries.

Reproduction as Process

In an article in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, Almeling (2015: 423) writes that social scientists have thus far conceptualized reproduction primarily as "a series of events" that happen in the bodies of women, for instance, conception, pregnancy, birth, and infertility. This has had the consequence that reproduction is often studied and viewed as a collection of separate topics, rather than being theoretically integrated. Second, men continue to be marginal to scholarship on reproduction, reinforcing the idea that this work is a "women's issue" (ibid.: 424) and perpetuating the dichotomization of bodies: male as standard and female as reproductive. Almeling suggests a different conceptualization that shifts our notion of reproduction from that of a series of events to a "biological and social process" (ibid.: 423). For one thing, a processual approach allows us to conceptualize reproduction across the life span and make connections between seemingly divergent events and experiences, for instance pregnancy cultures and singlehood or childlessness. This life course approach also allows us to think about reproduction as both having and not having children. Finally, it integrates men into the picture, giving us a holistic context of reproductive pathways across time and scale.

Taking seriously Almeling's call to think about reproduction as processual, this book considers divergent actors, including East and West Berliners, mothers, fathers, and childless men and women, to examine meanings and experiences of reproduction. This allows for the illustration of a range of perspectives and for historically and culturally specific understandings of reproductive practices and social categories. By examining cultures of parenting alongside experiences of childlessness, parenthood alongside intended parenthood, and female and male perspectives, my work integrates and highlights relations between demographic anxieties, reproductive regimes, and forms of gendered inclusion and exclusion. Comparison across experiences of mothering and fathering, "active" fatherhood and male infertility, and intensive mothering and childlessness shows how conspicuous reproduction segregates Berliners into groups and allegiances. These divisions appear not only across diverse parenting ideologies and practices, but also across parent and nonparent groups and regional identifications. In turn, they negatively affect wider solidarity between social groups, instead increasing competition. Further, such a comparative lens enables understanding of the relation between demographic and parenting anxieties in a low-

fertility context and of how these may marginalize emergent nonbiological intimacies. Finally, the chapters in this book also address the ways that progressive and "gender-equitable" family policies aimed at reducing the burden of women's childcare reflect a pronatalist national agenda that celebrates specific reproductive trajectories.

Thus, the book's chapters analyze shifting discourses and practices of reproduction that socially, legally, and structurally regulate, deem (im)moral, include, and exclude individual and generational life courses and "choices" concerning the bearing and rearing of children. The "ever-present" child disturbs and encroaches. The West German mother whose intensive mothering excludes nonmothers is simultaneously marginalized and evaluated by other Berliners. Childless women confront a delegitimization of their "choices," and are marked as producing a culture of childlessness. And German men—both as fathers and infertile partners—experience their marginality even as they legitimize their partnership in biological and cultural reproduction. It is precisely at the site of "disrupted" reproduction that alternate intimacies are possible: with friends, with nonbiological children, and through practices of care.[13] Recording transformations in reproductive regimes in the period between the late 1980s and the 2010s, I show how demographic anxieties and conspicuous reproduction both reinforce older social divisions and create new ones. Thus, "good" or "irrational" reproductive subjects, "bad" mothering and "active" fathering, "insiders" (Berliners), and "outsiders" (*Zugezogene*) remain unstable social categories. Yet, as the book shows, the symbolic, material, and social labor that these categories perform profoundly impacts my interlocutors' experiences of belonging and exclusion.

Methodology

In this book, I tell the stories of a generation of men and women who came of age in the late 1980s and identified as ethnic Germans.[14] They witnessed life in divided Germany and Berlin. West Berlin was enclosed by the Berlin Wall, an island in the middle of East Germany. In the East, they lived in dull, dilapidated neighborhoods, unable to approach the Wall that was guarded by soldiers, lookout posts, and barbed wire. I call this group—as members often called themselves—the *Wende* generation.[15] On the one hand, they referred to the *Wende* as an event that brought defining changes in their lifestyles and environments and, for many, their economic

prospects and social milieus. On the other hand, the *Wende* was significant to understanding why matters of reproduction became so palpable during these decades of social and spatial transformations.

While I did not start fieldwork with the purpose of studying generational experiences of reproduction, my interlocutors often identified with generational life stories as they narrated their own reproductive trajectories. Some were at pains to point out how and why they belonged to the *Wende* generation, while others spoke about reunification and its effects on their lives, but not necessarily through the use of analytic categories such as generation. The chapters, then, do not present data in the form of a sociological study, where objective criteria of belonging to a generation correlate to a particular experience. Instead, I show how generational identification itself is a process of remembering, construction, and retelling of the past from the point of view of the present and vice versa. Many would see their life courses change dramatically after 1989 as a result of economic deprivation or opportunity losses, changes in residence, and belonging or exclusion experienced in Berlin at different points in time. Others would retain the event's imprint as information, as nostalgia, or as something to be celebrated annually. Some others were not directly affected at all. Yet the effectiveness of this categorization—the *Wende* generation—lies in how it is produced by and produces collective memory and experience. For example, for some West German childless women whose stories unfold in Chapter 3, reunification brought significant changes to their material and social lives. Sophie, Christine, and Susanne's generational narratives emerge not only from the memory of an event in 1989, but from its consequences, which involve among other things a drastic restructuring of the city and their lives—spatially and socially. Reunification meant the opening of East–West borders, migration of West Germans and Europeans into Berlin, gentrification, and a changing atmosphere in the city that accommodated more families with children. These transformations intersect with Sophie and others' contemporary lives without children and structure reunification as an event that crystallizes their generational identities. Thus, experiences of childlessness cannot be separated from reunification and the confrontation with "conspicuous" children, especially in light of these women's political and emotional investments in nonbiological forms of kinship.

The *Wende* generation as an age cohort was associated with a "culture of childlessness."[16] This generation also lived through a period of transformations in political discourse around Germany's child-

unfriendly social atmosphere and family-unfriendly policies, which did not enable people to achieve work–life balance and needed to be changed. As this is an anthropological inquiry, while demographic facts can provide valuable context, my aim is to record *experiences of living with low fertility* and "what tendencies toward fewer births means to the women and men who ultimately become demographic statistics" (Douglass 2005: 20) Thus, this book brings together memories and articulations of a generation's life courses and their experiences of reproductive inclusion and exclusion in the context of concerns over low fertility and transformations in the wake of Berlin's reunification.

My fieldwork began with two summer visits in 2010 and 2011 and a subsequent twelve-month stay in 2012 and 2013. During this period of sixteen months, I lived in three different neighborhoods in former East and West Berlin. At times I lived alone, but for the most part I shared living quarters—for two months with a German widow and for ten months with a single, childless Belarussian woman. Both became my friends and sources of invaluable insights into life in Berlin from the late 1960s onward.

My primary research participants were short-term (five to ten years) and long-term (ten to thirty years) residents of Berlin, identifying variously as Berliners, East Berliners, West Berliners, or Germans. I spoke with a wide cross-section of residents including unemployed men, men and women in low-income or insecure jobs, and those with secure employment and high incomes. Many interlocutors were college-educated while some were not. Most lived in the city's geographically central neighborhoods, such as Mitte, Kreuzberg, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, and Tiergarten. However, I also traveled to and spoke with residents of far West and East neighborhoods, like Spandau, Charlottenburg, Zehlendorf (West), and Marzahn and Köpenick (East). I was able to reach this latter population mainly using snowball sampling. Life in specific neighborhoods emerged as significant to understanding very particular relationships to Berlin and reunification. Without me asking, many interlocutors discussed how long they had lived in which parts of the city, and if and why it had become imperative to move. Often these biographies intertwined with post-1990s gentrification and economic and social displacement and became a significant experience of the changing *Stimmung* (mood) in Berlin.

I used a range of qualitative research methods including interviews, focus group discussions, and life history narratives. Fieldwork also included participant observation in public places, such as on the

streets, in playgrounds, and in cafes; in more private settings such as homes; and in institutions such as an infertility clinic, daycare centers, and counseling and support groups. Additionally, I took walks, bike rides, and traveled in subways and buses, often with long-term residents, to get a sense of how the city had changed after reunification. I spent many hours conversing over meals, at parties, or in children's playgrounds, asking questions about German romanticism and the fascination with barefoot playgrounds in Berlin, or discussing politics in India, the United States, and Germany. Several hours of observation in the street and during travel, as well as random conversations with strangers and participating in demonstrations against gentrification, were invaluable ways to learn about life in Berlin.

After the initial three months of more open-ended data collection, I had narrowed down on some primary sources to deepen and expand my research queries. I spoke to three groups of fathers. One group was on paternity leave, taking advantage of the 2007 parental leave policy that encouraged fathers to stay at home after the birth of a child. The second group had been actively seeking shared custody of their children over months or even years. The third was a group of fathers' advocates and counselors who helped expectant, new, and older fathers to learn and do more in terms of direct childcare. I interviewed about twenty fathers from these groups over several sessions. With about five fathers I developed a closer relationship and spent time with them on walks, cooking with them in their homes, and meeting their extended families. I was able to learn and observe a lot about this emergent form of "active" fatherhood that my interlocutors strove to achieve. Additionally, I attended monthly support group meetings for the entire duration of fieldwork with the group of fathers who were separated or divorced and were seeking custody or visitation rights. Here, I witnessed men's struggles to be "active" fathers in spite and because of separation. Many men revealed that changing family policies that encouraged men's role in childcare played a part in giving them access to children. Other than fathers, I also spoke with men desiring to become fathers. At an infertility clinic in West Berlin, I conducted interviews with couples seeking treatment, shadowed and interviewed doctors, lab technicians, nurses, and administrative staff, and observed in vitro fertilization procedures. I attended monthly infertility support group meetings for a year in 2012 and 2013. By the end of fieldwork, I had spent over a year observing and collecting data in the clinic. I conducted thirty interviews and informal conversations with fif-

teen couples, jointly and individually, inside and outside the clinic. Conversations lasted anywhere between an hour and a full day together; with five of the fifteen couples, I established frequent and repeated contact and close friendship. I was introduced to most of the couples and men by the clinic doctors. Those who consented to a conversation usually exchanged emails with me, and that is how I followed up with them for subsequent interviews.

I also spoke to women between the ages of 35 and 75, interviewing and collecting life histories from mothers, grandmothers, and single and childless interlocutors. As a then-married and childless woman in my mid-thirties, my attempts to understand motivations and desires related to reproduction were welcomed and most often not viewed as threatening. In fact, this was the group in which it was easiest for me to elicit information, hold conversations, and develop friendships and deeper connections. I spoke to thirty to forty women in this group and collected data on individual biographies, experiences of living in Berlin before and after the fall of the Wall, the conspicuity of reproduction over the last decade or more, and the ways that childlessness has been turned into a peculiar burden in contemporary Germany.

Finally, I visited eight daycare centers spread over both former East and West Berlin to observe the institutional care of children (this I was able to do in four different places) and interview staff members (this I was able to do in all centers). I conducted interviews with daycare staff (both former East and West Berliners) to learn about pedagogy and childcare ideologies before and after reunification. Most of the staff I spoke to had over thirty years of experience, and often pointed to particular East–West differences in approaches to education and styles of working. I spoke to public officials in three different county departments: parks and recreation, the noise law department, and the family court. These interviews provided further information about the conspicuity of reproduction enabled by "child-friendly" policies. I spent a lot of time in playgrounds and *Kindercafes* (cafes where the clientele is primarily adults with young children). As a woman, albeit without a child or stroller, my presence was nonthreatening. I often sketched the play structures, observed adult–child interactions, and introduced myself and spoke to parents about my research. These conversations elicited further questions or comments from parents, which continued throughout the period of my stay in Berlin.

Beyond the tried and tested methods in ethnographic fieldwork, I learned a lot from "being there" and through immersion in the con-

text of my research participants. For instance, a central experience of many of the *Wende*-generation interlocutors was one of loss of the Berlin they knew; they lamented that the city had a different feel to it after reunification. This feeling, mood, atmosphere, or *Stimmung* (as the various chapters elucidate) restricts movement in certain spaces, excludes or displaces from others, and for some emphasizes the devaluation of their reproductive trajectories. In order to understand this sense of loss that many described, I had to first feel a sense of belonging. Unexpectedly this came to my consciousness in the moment that I had the notorious bicycle accident that Berliners always warn you about.

> I have come a long way from not being able to walk without fear—of all the different markings on the streets for cycles, people, trams, and cars—to conquering this space by being here, by living, by walking, by traveling, by getting in and off trains, buses, trams, running between stations . . . I know exactly where to stand in a train bogie so that when the doors open, the stairs or elevators lead to exactly the next transportation connection that I want to get to. I know now how to walk and to travel in Berlin . . . And then of course there is the freedom of the bicycle, the spatial digestion of a city that's possible because of the strength in your legs; you move and the city moves along, besides, behind and looms in front of you. You see, you smell, you feel, and you eat it up, making it internal to you in a manner you can't do when you take the public transport. A sense of confidence, a feeling of having conquered something, a little bit of overconfidence, a little bit of scorn, carelessness, and a feeling that I can't be touched, I have it under control . . . and in that split second as I whizzed like a maniacal pro along the cycle path, the orangish strip on Berlin's streets that belonged to me, on which I was the legitimate traveler (fiercely ringing my bell if pedestrians got in my way!), I hit the curve at a breakneck speed and I was down, my palms crushed and bleeding, my head and legs miraculously unhurt. (Fieldnotes, 15 May 2013)

Three months before I left the field, the accident was a culmination of the process of learning how to enact the form of spatial incorporation and digestion that comes from walking and cycling through Berlin, not possible by travel in public transport. This excerpt from my fieldnotes reveals my sense of embodied belonging to Berlin, which has played a definitive role in my gaining deeper insight into why the material and social changes in the city anger and sadden my interlocutors. It is a feeling that *your* city is no longer yours; your space is vanishing. These emotions animate my inter-

locutors' narrations about hypervisible children and the conspicu-ousness of reproduction, highlighting their experiences of loss and exclusion.

Learning about a culture comes from "doing" the culture, partic-ipating in mundane, everyday activities and interpreting the words and practices of one's interlocutors. Interpretation leads to uncov-ering cultural meanings as inflected through the specific position-ality of the anthropologist, especially significant in the context of cross-cultural research, such as the project that I, a woman born and raised in India, conducted in Berlin. I do not claim that India is all familiar to me or that any place outside India is only ever strange. Yet I would argue that the familiarity that comes from being native to a place potentially places the burden on the anthropologist to make the familiar strange. Ethnographic fieldwork as the process of making the strange familiar and intelligible is first and foremost an encounter with cultural difference—a moment, a word, a narrative, an explanation, a scenario, a person—something that is odd, that makes little sense to the anthropologist in terms of her own concep-tual categories.

In seeking this oddity, I traveled to Berlin, Germany. In India, I had done research with childless women in urban slums. My inter-est had been to look at a marginal experience, marginal in a coun-try where demographically and culturally, women without children were stigmatized. Germany's demographic transition on the other hand is characterized as a problem of consistent low fertility. I wanted to understand childlessness in this very differently appre-hended context, as an experience that was not characterized in the German context as marginal, rather as normative. So, while not a new topic of research, childlessness was conceptually and experi-entially different in Germany, and while German was familiar, Ger-many and its relationship to reproduction were new to me. Doing research in India, I worked with a group that had limited economic and social access to biomedical treatment. These couples were all married (in India, as a norm, reproduction follows marriage, so in-fertility and childlessness would not be socially recognized in un-married individuals), and had, during the period of my research, never undergone any medical procedures. Furthermore, the experi-ence of childlessness, especially in their slum neighborhoods, where multiple houses share walls and privacy is a luxury, was particularly burdensome. With little scope to escape family and other pressures to reproduce, men and women had to find creative ways to con-tinue to coexist as married couples. Behavioral practices related to

poor hygiene and nutrition, infrequent condom use, multiple and closely spaced childbirths, and resistance toward regular gynecological checkups played a role in the high frequency of reproductive tract infections, which in turn were secondary causes of medical infertility in slum communities in India such as the one in which I did research.

In Germany, on the other hand, infertility was categorized as an unwanted medical condition often related to the advanced age of women or to a biological condition in men or women. Childlessness (following infertility or otherwise) was classified very distinctly into voluntary and involuntary (in medical, demographic, and political discourse).[17] Thus the idea that one might choose to not have children was not surprising or tabooed, as it would be in India. Childlessness also had a direct connection to a personal desire to have children and was not associated with being married (as it is normatively in India, even though legally, single women and men can adopt). I do not mean to imply that personal desire is missing from the practice of reproduction in India, but what I want to highlight is the stark difference in how much emphasis is placed on reproduction as individual decision versus a social norm in these two settings. This, I believe, has implications for how reproduction is contemplated (or not) and how childlessness is experienced differently in India and Germany.

While the starting point for my research was a demographic fact—a statistical analysis that characterizes Germany as a low-fertility context—I did not collect large-scale quantitative data that *explained* low fertility. Rather, I stayed close to native experiences and categories to interpret meanings of reproduction in a micro-context (reunified and gentrifying Berlin) for a specific group (the *Wende* generation) and its relation to the larger context (Germany and the demographic crisis). Thus, I present exemplary cases that do not serve as a representative sample, but rather shed light on different perspectives about changing life in the city of Berlin, its relation to personal and collective histories, and the experience of being a parent or childless. I focus on stories of loss, exclusion, and also inclusion that are organized through discourses and practices of reproduction. Unexpectedly, then, these experiences of the *Wende* generation point to the presence of children as a disturbance (*Störung*) and their absence as a dramatized reminder of children's heightened value in Germany. Thus, this book shows how in its conspicuity, reproduction in the context of national demographic anxieties privileges heterosexual family structures and biological procreation; in turn, social bound-

aries between individuals and groups are animated through the specific practices of parenting and the display of "moral" reproductive labor. Drawing on anthropology of gender, parenting cultures, and demographic anthropology, this book will reveal the relations between fertility decline, reproductive life histories, and the constitution of forms of social in- and exclusion. Ultimately this research contributes to global debates on demographic anxieties, reproductive regimes, parenting cultures, and emergent forms of national belonging and exclusions. This book is the only ethnographic work by a South Asian anthropologist on demographic anxieties and reproductive regimes in Germany. Methodologically, then, the book's approach and interpretive lens reverse the anthropological gaze to study Europe as "other."

Notes

1. In this book I use the category "childless" to describe a range of life circumstances and reproductive pathways. First, this category in itself is not one that exclusively expresses or excludes agency. Literature on singlehood and nonreproduction shows that several macro- and micro-factors interact in ways that influence particular reproductive life histories. Thus, these distinctions between voluntary and involuntary childlessness or between "childless" and "child-free" are too simplistic, unless they were relevant in the stories my interlocutors told me. Second, I argue that "childless" as a category also emerges in my field site as a social construct (see Chapter 3). The conspicuousness of the issue of reproduction brings the childless into existence and makes them visible, such that childlessness is apprehended as a social and moral condition.

2. "Child-friendly" and "-unfriendly" (*kinderfreundlich/kinderunfreundlich*) are local idioms and descriptive terms that were frequently uttered by interlocutors, including public officials. For instance, a former family minister argued that German society needed to be child-friendlier in order for individuals to feel like they could have children. Several employees in the local family court offices and community organizers asserted that in recent years, family policies had become "father-" and "child-friendlier" as compared to a decade ago. On the other hand, women and mothers often mentioned ways in which German society was child-unfriendly; other interlocutors spoke of the West German state as having been child-unfriendly. However, in the last few years there have been attempts to change that through the introduction of child-friendlier policies. I want to point out that I did not hear and therefore did not use the term "mother-friendly." Ironically, what

would be considered mother-friendly—e.g., children's cafes or increased state investment in childcare—was apprehended as conspicuous and aroused resentment. This speaks to the fact that the concern over demographic transition not only assumes women's presence (i.e., they are a given and therefore we don't speak about them), but also sheds light on societal morals about "good" mothering. Thus, we hear more about "aggressive" mothers than about ways to make it possible and easier for women to find family–work balance.

3. Distinctions between "private" and "public" here do not ignore the theoretical sophistication that scholars have achieved in clarifying how these two realms overlap and intersect. Here, I frame public and private neither as exclusive and sharply distinct spheres, nor as always collapsing together. Public appearance refers to the actual material presence of children, strollers, and caregivers on streets, in playgrounds, and in cafes. Yet visibility in public space does not amount to reproduction becoming conspicuous. Parenting and reproduction are conspicuous when they *address* a public. Alarmist reportage and discourse on low fertility in Germany, "child-friendly" policies, etc., consumed in the privacy of one's home and in personal encounters also address a public and add emotional significance to the material presence on city streets. Thus, material spaces animate public experience; yet this materiality is devoid of meaning for my interlocutors unless they *feel* addressed. Public space here is a topographical experience that is intimately related to spontaneous public space created through action or speech that makes reproduction socially visible, prominent, and valuable.

4. *Wende* in German comes from the verb *wenden*, which means "to turn," and refers to the reunification of Germany.

5. I use the terms "exclusion/inclusion" as a framework to represent social boundary-making practices, a core idea elaborated in the book. I further illustrate forms of inclusion and exclusion with the help of other terms such as "encroachment," "entitled display," "social divisions," and "belonging," to name a few. Throughout the chapters, I show how inclusion and exclusion are multidimensional and record reproductive experiences and life histories through historical (in terms of reunification), political (family policies), economic (gentrification), socio-emotional (generation/ethnicity/gentrification), material (class/residential), and symbolic (meanings of reproduction) lenses.

6. Very broadly, scholars have identified three phases of the fall in European fertility and accompanying social transformations. Between the late 1800s and the 1920s, growing urbanization, industrialization, and individualization were accompanied by shifts in the meanings and roles of family, children, and parents. Children were no longer viewed primarily as a labor force on whom household income was dependent. Child labor laws and educational institutions separated children's world from adult labor and emphasized instead children's physical, moral, and intellectual development. Simultaneously, the rise of the nuclear

family and an emphasis on parental responsibility for the moral education of children engendered a focused investment in existing children, rather than reproduction for the sake of economic security (Aries 1962: 411; Douglass 2005: 10–11). Thus, over time reproduction shifted in meaning, from economic to non-economic (Zelizer 1981). A second phase of significant fall in fertility rates in Europe corresponds to the end of the World Wars and the associated sense of desolation, insecurity, hunger, and death that deterred reproduction temporarily. Finally, the third phase can be traced back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time of global youth and student revolts, anti-authoritarian organization, the second wave of feminism, and concomitant reorganization of gender roles in Germany and Europe. More recently, factors such as austerity policies adopted globally after the financial crisis of 2008, the ongoing climate crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic have been associated with a continued fall in global fertility rates.

7. The Überfremdung of German society refers to the excessive foreignness or strangeness of one's own home.

8. In the last decade and more, several scholars have shed light on the demographic anxieties that have emerged from the continuous fall in global fertility rates, especially in Euro-American societies. These demographic anxieties are articulated in various ways: through increased attention to state policies that support and privilege (specific kinds of) families, evoking moral evaluations of reproductive choices, and using these anxieties as a mechanism of reproductive governance (de Zordo, Marre, and Smietana 2022). Such fertility discourse in Western Europe often reproduces power relations and marks immigrant and native reproduction as rational or irrational (De Zordo and Marchesi 2015; Krause 2005; Marchesi 2012; Mishtal 2015). For instance, Mishtal (2015) records effects of postsocialist transformations in Poland on reproductive rights, policies, and healthcare access. She discusses the ways that discourses of the state and Catholic church reproduce gendered and reproductive norms, thus shedding light on forms of moral governance. On the other hand, individual surveillance and political intimidation aimed at influencing family planning and reproductive decisions are also met with women's reinterpretation of the teachings of the church and the law to make personal reproductive decisions. Krause (2005) shows how demographers frame the "problem" of low fertility, thereby reproducing specific power relations. Alarmist language marks populations (immigrants) as irrational; on the other hand, this state discourse constructs Italians as homogeneous, white, and European, and their reproductive trajectories (low fertility) are depicted as "unnatural" and contradictory to a certain expected level of good sense. This demographic discourse holds women responsible; once again, women often interpret and negotiate these nationalist agendas in ways that are not always in line with state narratives that reflect fear of growing numbers of immigrants. More recent work on demographic anxieties continues

to reflect these abovementioned discourses. Additionally, we see on the one hand research on the outsourcing of reproduction (surrogacy, adoption, etc.). On the other hand, in many wealthy countries, young people are delaying or not reproducing due to an increased precaritization of work and lack of policies to balance work and family life. Thus, in this sense, delayed childbearing and low fertility "seem to be a rational . . . even forced choice" (de Zordo, Marre, and Smietana 2022: 592). Given this larger European context, this book adds to discussions on demographic anxieties, conspicuous reproduction, and social boundary-making practices. I do so by highlighting micro-interactions and experiences of changing reproductive practices and ideologies and antagonistic encounters between emergent internal social groups in Berlin, thereby highlighting German–German relations.

9. The federal government issues an annual report on specific family-related themes, based on scientific surveys, every year to discuss current and pressing demographic and population issues. The 2006 report specifically emphasized the need for parents to better balance work and home and recommended putting in place mechanisms that increased infrastructural and financial support for families, while also increasing their ability to spend time with their children.

10. Barely 25 percent of the original residents live in the renovated apartments in Prenzlauer Berg (Holm 2013). See also Sußebach (2009).

11. See Heilmann and Lindemann (2011).

12. The implications of some of the following father-friendlier polices are discussed in Chapter 4. Until 1998, children born in and out of wedlock had different legal status in Germany. Only after the 1998 reforms were the rights and responsibilities of parents vis-à-vis their children—regardless of whether they were married to each other—recognized. While this reform affirmed the right of fathers and children to know each other and have contact with each other irrespective of parental marriage, the mother's role was primary, especially if the status of the biological father was contested. In 2007 the then family minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) introduced the *Elterngeld* (parental leave money), replacing the *Erziehungsgeld* or parenting allowance. The latter was primarily aimed at women and provided for a period of thirty-six months after the birth of the child; the assumption here was that the woman would stay at home for up to three years after giving birth. *Elterngeld* on the other hand is aimed at encouraging fathers to take part in childcare and mothers to return to work earlier. The period for which *Elterngeld* is provided is restricted to twelve months, with an additional two months provided only if the other parent (usually the father) takes leave during this time. When availing themselves of *Elterngeld*, the parent may work, but not more than thirty hours per week. Depending on income, around 67 percent or more of net income, but no more than EUR 1,800 per month and no less than EUR 300 (for the low-income or unemployed parent), is given to the parent as *Elterngeld*. Scholars

have noted that since the introduction of *Elterngeld*, more fathers have been taking time off work to care for children, although the majority still only stay at home for two months (Jurczyk and Klinkhardt 2014; Richter 2013). To encourage further participation of men, a 2015 reform to the *Elterngeld* allows parents to spread the benefit payments over a longer period of time (twenty-four months). Up until 2013, the father—if not the same man as was married to the mother or legally recognized as such—did not have the right to contest paternity without the mother's support (Peschel-Gutzeit 2009; Pohl 2000). Since May 2013, a revision of fathers' rights now enables men claiming paternity to appeal directly in the family court for legal recognition. The mother's agreement is not required. In another change, in 2010 the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth rolled out a five-year program to encourage more young men to train for and work in childcare institutions. Instead of imagining men as providing "masculine" role models, this program aims to expose children to more diverse, multiple, and varying persons of reference, thereby enriching the quality of the environment in which children first learn to relate to a larger social group. This idea is also guided by the principle of gender equality, that is, equal opportunities for men to take on caretaking roles, thereby discouraging the feminization of this profession. Overall, fathers' legal rights have expanded in the last few decades, challenging the assumed "naturalness" of the mother–child dyad.

13. I use the terms "biological" and "nonbiological" children to make a distinction between children who are genetically related to a particular kin member versus those who are not. This distinction was important for a few reasons: for one, my interlocutors made these distinctions. These are not my terms; rather, they were used by my interlocutors (*eigenes Kind/biologisches Kind*). Two, the distinction enabled me to understand and analyze the range of parental labor, especially in the stories of men who father in diverse ways. While these distinctions (between genetic and nongenetic kinship) often collapsed, they were important to understanding, precisely because they allowed for a critique of the biological, heterosexual family.

14. The term "ethnic" does not imply a homogeneous group. Instead, I refer to those who culturally identify as, or identified as, German. Germanness was often constructed in multiple ways and in opposition not only to "non-Germans," but also to people and groups conventionally considered culturally internal to Germany.

15. Following Mannheim (1952), I use the term "generation" as a heuristic device. Thus, it does not imply a positivist notion of time that progresses in a unilinear direction through set objective stages determined by chronological age. Instead, Mannheim (ibid.: 292) conceives of generational identity as related to a common location (*Lagerung*) in the social and historical process that determines participation in "a temporally limited section of the historical process." Generational location in

the objective sense then points to "certain definite modes of behavior, feeling and thought" (ibid. 291). Yet people who share generational location may not *belong* to a generation. The sense of belonging is a process by which a bond or some form of identification is created between members due to exposure to and remembering of social changes in similar terms; this is when generational location can give rise to different generation units. I interpret my interlocutors' narrations from the point of view of generation units.

16. A 2015 report by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs states that 29 percent of 30 to 50-year-olds are childless; 22 percent of these are women and 36 percent are men. This study designated childlessness as a *Massenphänomen* (mass phenomenon) in Germany. Subsequent research on childlessness in Europe reports that more than 20 percent of women from German-speaking countries who are reaching the end of their reproductive period will remain childless (Kreyenfeld and Konietzka 2017). To be clear, Germany is in fact one of the most populous countries in West Europe and has also recorded a higher fertility than in previous decades since the influx of migrants. This debate and anxiety are not so much about numbers per se as much as it is about who is having children and who should have them in order to reproduce Germany.

17. I problematize this distinction in Chapter 3.