# Young adults' perspectives on experiencing unemployment in Germany: insights into well-being and coping – a qualitative study

Inauguraldissertation

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades eines

Doctor rerum politicarum

der Fakultät für Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften

der Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg


vorgelegt von

Christoph Thomas Schlee, M.A.

Bamberg 2024

Diese Arbeit hat der Fakultät für Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften der Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg als Dissertation vorgelegen.

Erstgutachter: Prof. Dr. Michael Gebel (Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg)

Zweitgutachterin: Prof. Dr. Sonia Bertolini (Universität Turin, Italien)

Drittprüferin: Prof. Dr. Corinna Kleinert (Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg)

Tag der mündlichen Prüfung: 16.07.2024




URN: urn:nbn:de:bvb:473-irb-981640

DOI: https://doi.org/10.20378/irb-98164

# Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without several people, whom I would like to thank. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Michael Gebel, for his great guidance and support throughout the years of my dissertation. His feedback was always very valuable, no matter what stage of my dissertation I was at. I greatly benefited from his expertise in sociological labor market research. He not only supervised my dissertation but also created a very productive and supportive work environment at the chair during my project work and my university teaching activities. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with him and for his support and guidance in my personal and professional development.

I am particularly grateful to Prof. Dr. Sonia Bertolini for supervising my thesis and for her great support and very helpful feedback during the preparation of my thesis. Her guidance during the writing process helped me a lot to complete the thesis, for which I am very grateful. I also thank Prof. Dr. Corinna Kleinert for immediately agreeing to act as a third reviewer.

I would also like to thank all my current and former colleagues and friends at the Chair of Sociology, especially Methods of Empirical Social Research, for their unwavering support and enjoyable work environment. Special thanks go to Simon, Paul, Daniel, and Jonas for the great exchange about the thesis and Ulli for the emotional support. I am also grateful to Prof. Dr. Jost Langhorst and my colleagues at the Chair of Integrative Medicine for the professional and interdisciplinary exchange, as well as for their personal support and the flexibility they offered during the final phase of completing my dissertation. I also thank the former working group on qualitative social research, which helped me to focus on my topic at the beginning of my dissertation. I would like to express my gratitude to all colleagues and friends at the University of Bamberg for making my daily life at the university enjoyable. Additionally, I am grateful to my students for providing me with new perspectives and enabling inspiring professional discussions.

In addition, I would also express my gratitude to my former colleagues from the EXCEPT project led by Prof. Dr. Marge Unt for our exciting work and the international and interdisciplinary exchange. I would also like to thank the European Union for funding the project through the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. In particular, I would like to say thank you to the young people who participated in the project, whose willingness to talk about their experiences of unemployment made this dissertation possible.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my family for their love, their support and their understanding of my time commitments while writing my thesis. I would also like to thank Andi for his help during the final stages. Finally, my deepest thanks to Madeleine and Johann, you mean everything to me.

Bamberg, April 2024,

Christoph Thomas Schlee

# Contents

# List of figures and tables

## List of figures



## List of tables



## Appendix

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Unemployment as a global, societal, and individual problem

Unemployment appears as a *worldwide and permanent issue* (Paul et al., 2006, p. 35). It is considered by the public to be *one of the most relevant economic and socio-political problems* in many societies (Kieselbach, 1983, p. 2) due to its negative individual and social consequences (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999, pp. 581–582). In fact, unemployment affects the lives of individuals in psychological (Wanberg, 2012), social and economic terms, as well as the individual's social environment and society as a whole (Allmendinger et al., 2012, p. 320). Governments therefore aim for high employment rates and try to avoid unemployment and inactivity (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999, pp. 581–582).

This thesis examines the effects of unemployment on the well-being of young people in Germany from their subjective perspective. Since unemployment in general can be heterogeneous (Brand, 2015, p. 360), and youth unemployment in particular is characterized by complex situations and experiences (Dietrich, 2012), this research approach considers different situations of youth unemployment. The young people included in the study are the non-registered and registered unemployed, the NEET persons (not in education, employment, or training), including the inactive (e.g., unable to work and/or not looking for work), only marginally employed young people, and people in active labor market policies (ALMPs). The aim is to provide a comprehensive picture of unemployment. In order to gain an understanding of the relevance of this research objective, the general importance of employment and the potential consequences of unemployment are outlined first, before the situation of young (unemployed) people in Germany (chapter 1.2) and the qualitative research approach are discussed in more detail (chapter 1.3).

Pursuing *gainful employment can be seen as essential* for people. They require paid work to obtain the *financial means* necessary to live, as this is the norm in society (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999, pp. 581–582). Unemployment as a life event can increase the risk of experiencing poverty (McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005; Vandecasteele, 2011). In this regard, income transfers and family support can be a relevant compensation for reduced (household) income and therefore prevent poverty, depending on their availability and use in different countries (Ehlert, 2012).

In addition to potential financial consequences, unemployment can lead to *social decline* and *exclusion from society*. It may cause individuals to feel a loss of control over their lives, put

them at risk of social isolation, make planning difficult, and result in a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. Long-term unemployment in particular can create feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and/or depression, apathy, etc. (Kieselbach, 1983, pp. 5–6). Gallie et al. (2003) consider unemployment in the context of social exclusion, which can constitute a spiral of disadvantages. They conclude that unemployment is a major risk of poverty in many European countries, but that social isolation does not occur automatically as a consequence of unemployment, but is rather culture and country-specific (Gallie et al., 2003, pp. 26–28). Although several factors, such as reduced financial resources, limited contacts and uncertainty about the future can be psychosocial burdens during unemployment, this period can be perceived and dealt with very differently by individuals, e.g., due to support from their social environment. This also reflects the complexity of the underlying processes and individual backgrounds or contexts for individual well-being (Brinkmann & Wiedemann, 1994, p. 182).

Individual health can be considered one of the most important areas of concern and value in our society (A. Hinz et al., 2010). There has been extensive international research on the *psychological consequences* of unemployment since the 1970s (Strandh, 2000, p. 9). Several empirical meta-studies and systematic reviews (e.g., Gedikli et al., 2023; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999; Paul & Moser, 2009; Picchio & Ubaldi, 2022) indicate negative consequences for unemployed people on their *mental health* or *well-being*. Some possible (theoretical) explanations for the negative effects of unemployment on (mental) health or well-being suggest that various functions of employment, e.g., economic, social or psychological, are lacking during unemployment (Jahoda, 1981, 1982, 1983; Warr, 1987b, 2008). Other approaches see reduced opportunities or unmet goals (Fryer, 1986; Fryer & Payne, 1984; Paul & Moser, 2006) or impacts on one's own social identity (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999, pp. 581–582; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as possible factors for a negative effect of unemployment on well-being.

Qualitative studies provide a *comprehensive picture* of the complex consequences on well-being (Strandh, 2000, p. 6). For instance, they indicate psychological consequences such as impaired self-esteem and strong emotions, e.g., hopelessness (Hiswåls et al., 2017). In addition, they show that reduced income and also social environment and society are an important influence on how the situation is perceived and if stigmatization by the society is experienced (Du Toit et al., 2018).

Although there is a lot of research on the impact of unemployment on well-being, it often focuses on the general population without taking young people into focus (Buttler, 2019, p. 34).

A qualitative study on *youth unemployment* in different European countries, for example, shows that the impact on well-being is generally negative, but varies within and between the countries, indicating the complexity of the issue (Athanasiades & Flouli, 2018). With regard to Germany, the data demonstrate that the situation of unemployment is also characterized by a high degree of complexity. This is partly due to the individual coping and support processes related to well-being but further investigation is required (Schlee et al., 2021, pp. 129–132). Previous research in general indicates that a holistic view on unemployment and it context is needed to understand the situation regarding well-being (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39).

The *duration* of unemployment can moderate the effect of unemployment on well-being (Gedikli et al., 2023; Paul & Moser, 2009; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015). This indicates that well-being can change over time, for example it can deteriorate. However, there is no consistent picture in the literature in this respect. Some research indicates that there do not seem to be notable differences between long-term and short-term unemployment. Instead, it is the presence or absence of unemployment that matters (Picchio & Ubaldi, 2022, pp. 29–30). Moreover, the *number of previous periods of unemployment* may also play a role in the well-being during unemployment (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 20).

In addition, research on the consequences of unemployment suggests that there can be *long-term effects (scarring effects) on individual well-being*, for example on life satisfaction (Eberl et al., 2022; Lucas et al., 2004; Richter et al., 2020). Richter et al. (2020) found that individuals who experience multiple periods of unemployment may have a stronger negative impact on their life satisfaction compared to those having only one spell of unemployment or no experience of unemployment. In other research it becomes clear that both short-term and long-term unemployment experience can impair well-being over the life course (Eberl et al., 2022). Although individuals may vary, on average, people do not seem to regain their previous levels of life satisfaction despite being re-employed (Lucas et al., 2004).

As already mentioned, unemployment can affect the individual and social life. It can have further *social consequences*, such as affecting the social environment, e.g., the family of the person concerned (Voßemer, 2019, pp. 2–3). Through *spillover effects*, for example, the health of the unemployed person's partner may also be affected. These possible effects seem to vary between countries and welfare states, as well as between genders (Baranowska-Rataj & Strandh, 2021a, 2021b). Among young people, the health effects of the partner's unemployment are stronger for women than for men. This is particularly evident in conservative countries and

can be partly explained by the social norms of the prevalent male breadwinner model (Baranowska-Rataj & Strandh, 2021a, pp. 74–75).

*The labor market* as a relevant subsystem of society is determined by social and institutional contexts and strongly linked to society and its norms and values. The position of individuals in society is influenced by their situation in the labor market, which plays a crucial role in social inequality processes (T. Hinz & Abraham, 2018, pp. 9–10). In the conservative welfare state Germany, gainful employment is a relevant factor for living a secure life as well as for participating in social life and experiencing social acceptance. It also enables social security in case of an individual unemployment period through the unemployment insurance system. Individual insurance contributions and taxes from employment also finance (in parts) the social security system as a whole in Germany (Buchholz & Blossfeld, 2011, p. 67).

Moreover, the overall unemployment in Germany incurs *costs for society*. Public budgets are affected by lower income (tax income) due to unemployment on the one hand and higher unemployment expenditure on the other (Brinkmann & Wiedemann, 1994, p. 191). In particular due to social benefits for the unemployed, such as unemployment benefit II [Arbeitslosengeld II][1], which is funded by taxes in Germany (Buscher, 2003, p. 179, 2004, p. 283), or costs for active labor market polices (ALMPs) (Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 24), public budgets are heavily burdened by high expenses. In addition, the social security systems, including health insurance, nursing care insurance, and pension insurance, could also be endangered in case of excessive unemployment (Bach & Spitznagel, 2006, pp. 49–52). Moreover, poor mental health and incapacity of work as possible (individual) consequences of unemployment produce additional high social costs due to the medical costs which must be covered by the public through insurance systems (Frese, 1994, p. 211).

*Macro-economically* unemployment can be a social problem, as it is accompanied by a lack of workers. In particular, young people who do not have a job and cannot be employed or found on the training or labor market are not available to the German economy (for the future) and are therefore unable to realize their full potential and thus contribute to society (Bode & Burdack, 2001, p. 84; Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 6; Tham, 1999, p. 199). Youth unemployment leads to high direct and indirect social costs, especially if it is not possible to integrate the young into the labor market in the long term so that they stay unemployed (Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 41). In addition to the scarring effects already mentioned in relation to well-being,

[1] In 2023, the *citizen's benefit* [Bürgergeld] replaced the *unemployment benefit II.* This thesis refers to the unemployment benefit II as the data was collected during the period in which these benefits were received.

unemployment at the beginning of a working career can have an impact on one's further course of a career (Brand, 2015; Brandt & Hank, 2014; Dieckhoff, 2011; Schmillen & Umkehrer, 2014) and thus have long-term consequences for the individual as well as for society. In general, the integration of young people into the labor market is seen important for the general stability and continuity of society and its structures (Heinemann, 1978, p. 180).

Furthermore, unemployment is assumed to have *further social consequences*, such as an impact on criminality, potentially leading to an increase in criminal activity and a loss of trust in political systems (Brinkmann & Wiedemann, 1994, p. 189; Kieselbach, 1983, p. 6). Long-term unemployment among a large share of society can jeopardize social participation, lead to an instability of democracy, and threaten the social order (Tham, 1999, p. 205). Therefore, one can assume that especially high numbers of long-term unemployed can then lead to high social problems and costs. These can be reduced if governments find a solution to prevent long-term unemployment. It must therefore be the political aim to make any phases of unemployment as short as possible for those affected and to help the unemployed into new work quickly (Frese, 1994, pp. 211–212). Understanding the individual circumstances of unemployment can help to provide appropriate support.

Unemployment has been a highly relevant issue in Germany for many decades (Allmendinger et al., 2012, pp. 320–321). However, in today's discussions and research focus, (youth) unemployment does not seem to be as present as it was in the past. Low, rather decreasing unemployment rates for several years as well as the good performance of the German labor market during the financial crisis in 2008, i.e., low negative effects on the unemployment rate, can be the reason for this. Nevertheless, unemployment has still high relevance in Germany and is a necessary phenomenon to investigate. Moreover, unemployment problems are present in many modern countries, e.g., in southern Europe (Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2018, pp. 155–156). This study, however, does not offer a country comparison, but an in-depth-analysis of the individual situations of young adults experiencing unemployment in Germany, which may help understand the situation better in certain social and institutional (welfare) contexts.

## 1.2 The vulnerability of young (unemployed) people in Germany

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) measurement, the *general unemployment rate* in Germany was 2.9 percent in 2022 (Destatis, 2023b, p. 14). The data underlying this thesis had been collected in 2015 and 2016. The general unemployment rate in

Germany was 4.3 percent in 2015 and 4.0 percent in 2016 (Destatis, 2017). The *youth unemployment rate* (15-24 years old) was 7.2 percent in Germany in 2015 (EU-27 average 21.8%), 7.1 percent in 2016 (EU-27 average 20.1%) and 6 percent in 2022 (EU-27 14.5%) (Destatis, 2023a). In Germany therefore youth unemployment (ILO) is significantly higher than in the total population, but proof lower compared to many other European countries. However, a high rate of young unemployed people compared to the general population imply a *problematic transition from school to work* (Scherer & Kogan, 2004, p. 135). From a life course perspective, young people are particularly affected by unemployment during the school-to-work transition – the age of transition from school to work is usually between 15 and 24 (Dietrich, 2012, pp. 8–9, 2013, p. 573). However, when discussing the issue of unemployment, it is important to consider additional factors. The length of unemployment and whether it is a first-time job search or not can significantly impact how problematic the situation is perceived. While young people are more commonly affected by unemployment, they are less frequently affected by long-term unemployment compared to older individuals with more labor market experience (Scherer & Kogan, 2004, pp. 135–136).

Although previous studies indicate that young people are at *higher risk of exclusion from the labor market*, e.g., experiencing unemployment (Gebel, 2015, pp. 2–3), people in countries with a labor market that is strongly linked to occupational specification and institutionalization, such as Germany with its dual education system, generally have a *smoother transition from school to work* than other countries that have a more unspecific and generalized education system (Scherer & Kogan, 2004, pp. 148–149). However, in Germany, which is characterized by a typically smooth transition from school to work, unemployment, illness, dropout (from vocational training), etc. can occur and delay the transition (Achatz, Reims, et al., 2022). The transition in general can be very complex and can vary (Achatz, Jahn, & Schels, 2022). Since the school-to-work transition in Germany is characterized by two relevant steps, from school to training and after training to work (Kleinert & Jacob, 2013, pp. 65–66), problems can arise at either step. In addition, young people are at high risk of becoming unemployed due to the prevalence of fixed-term contracts during the first years of employment. Young people do not (yet) have sufficient work experience and seniority rights in companies. This then increases the risk of becoming unemployed at the end of these contracts (Dietrich, 2013, p. 573).

The unemployed in general and young people without employment transitioning into the labor market can be seen as *outsiders* concerning the labor market who are more likely to be exposed to labor market risks than other groups of *insiders*, i.e., employed people with work experience

and secure jobs (Buchholz & Blossfeld, 2011, pp. 67–68). However, it is important to differentiate between different groups of young people. Not all of them are automatically outsiders. Specifically, young people who are transitioning from school to vocational training or from vocational training to employment can often rather be considered *entrants* (Lindbeck & Snower, 1984, p. 3), because they are not excluded in such a way as the long-term unemployed. When young unemployed people (as outsiders) get a job, they become entrants and take an important step towards becoming insiders, having a secure employment situation and being integrated into the labor market (Lindbeck & Snower, 2001, pp. 166–167). In this context, it is again important to consider whether individuals are experiencing short-term search unemployment while transitioning to a training position or gainful employment, or whether they are facing prolonged difficulties in entering the labor market and are long-term unemployed. As previously mentioned, the length of unemployment experience can exacerbate the situation (psychologically, financially) and worsen well-being.

In general, the possibility of labor market integration is distributed unequally in Germany. In contrast to those who make a smooth transition from school to the labor market, some other young people experience risks in the labor market and must overcome obstacles in this transition phase to integrate themselves into the labor market (Mansel & Speck, 2012, pp. 22–23). Some people find themselves in the educational transition system [Übergangssystem] which can provide an alternative to regular work if the transition into the labor market has failed. This can be seen as a waiting period until a vocational training place can be obtained or employment can be secured (Allmendinger et al., 2012, p. 334). In addition to its positive effects, it has been criticized as a waiting loop or for stigmatizing participants, which can be an obstacle to finding a job later (Achatz, Reims, et al., 2022).

Gaining a foothold in the German labor market and finding a job can be challenging, particularly without the necessary qualifications. The German education system places a strong emphasis on specific vocational qualifications, making it easier for those with the adequate education to integrate smoothly (Scherer & Kogan, 2004, p. 139).

In recent decades, the school-to-work transition in Germany has always been characterized by change, such as a later entry into the labor market and greater variety in the transition due to, among others, the educational expansion [Bildungsexpansion] (Scherer & Kogan, 2004, pp. 133–134). Although the Bologna reform has also led to an earlier transition in the group of higher educated in Germany (Dietrich, 2013, p. 573), the expansion of education and the increasing number of high general education qualifications have led to more and more young

people over 24 years of age still not being integrated fully into the labor market (Dietrich, 2015, p. 5). Furthermore, for younger cohorts compared to older cohorts, the entry into the labor market or vocational training is characterized by *increasing uncertainties and problems*, such as longer search times before starting vocational training and after training before finding a job. In addition, a higher risk of temporary employment at the beginning of the career as well as a higher risk of becoming unemployed after starting with temporary employment or becoming unemployed after entering the labor market is visible. Generally, the length of time until full integration into the labor market has increased (Buchholz & Blossfeld, 2011, p. 83).

The transition from school to work is a *central stage in the life course* (Gebel, 2015, p. 1) and cannot only have negative implications for one's well-being (Dietrich et al., 2022) but can also have a negative impact on the further *working path* (Allmendinger & Hinz, 1997; Blossfeld, 1986). It can also affect *other areas in life* such as becoming an adult or family formation (Scherer & Kogan, 2004, p. 133). For young people who experience the consequences of unemployment, e.g., financial insecurities, the dependency on their parents can be prolonged and the identity development can be restricted (Kieselbach, 1983, p. 6). In problematic situations it is assumed that unemployment can even lead to social exclusion due to multidimensional consequences and cumulative disadvantages in psychological, social, and economic domains (Gallie et al., 2003).

Thus, in general, the unemployment of young people in their early stages of their lives can be regarded as a *critical life event*. In addition to the brief mention of qualitative findings on youth unemployment presented above, a study conducted in Germany shows that a serious social problem may arise, with consequences for those affected, particularly in terms of their (mental) health and social situation. However, the extent and intensity of the impact can vary greatly, because young unemployed people are a heterogeneous group with different experiences and ways of *dealing with unemployment*, which are influenced by the (social) environment, e.g., through support opportunities (Beelmann, 2003, p. 199). For instance, families and their support can operate as safety nets (Manzoni & Gebel, 2023). In addition, research indicates possibilities for welfare states to cushion a part of the negative effects on well-being. However, there is a lack of research on whether this is also the case for young people, particularly in relation to their entitlement to benefits (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 38). Although there has already been research on the consequences of unemployment on well-being or mental health for young people, and a negative impact is assumed, there is still a lack of research to understand the causal processes and underlying mechanisms of the assumed relation to well-being

(Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015). It therefore seems appropriate to look more closely at what exactly influences well-being in the unemployment situation.

In this regard it is important to consider the unemployment of young people as a phenomenon in its own and not a subproblem of general unemployment, because adolescents and young adults are a specific group within the life course. The reasons for and consequences of unemployment could be different from those of older people because of their stage in the life course (Heinemann, 1978, p. 180). Unemployment *can have different reasons* or *functions*, such as a waiting period before starting first vocational training and/or finding vocational training or employment, voluntary job search, job loss, occupational reorientation. As a result, young adults unemployment can take on various forms (Dietrich, 2012, pp. 8–9; Schels, 2018, pp. 245–246). In this context, young people may be registered as jobseekers or unregistered, as well as inactive NEET persons who are unable to work. Others may be working marginally while looking for a job, and others may have experienced short or long spells of unemployment or recurrent unemployment, as well as people participating in ALMPs, the educational transition system, etc. In addition, the group of young unemployed is very *heterogeneous* in terms of educational background, social environment, and the experience of the situation of unemployment per se as well as future aims and expectations (Heinemann, 1978, pp. 180–181; Schels, 2018, pp. 245–246).

Hence, youth unemployment is a complex phenomenon due to its various compositions of people, forms and experiences of unemployment, and the phase of school-to-work transition as a process with varying opportunities (Dietrich, 2012, p. 35). It is manifested in its multidimensional nature, and it has only been rudimentarily investigated so far into its causal structure. Economic aspects, as well as social and psychological aspects and their interactions determine this complexity (Dietrich, 2015, p. 25).

## 1.3 A rationale for a qualitative research approach

This thesis examines the effects of unemployment on the well-being of young people in Germany from the perspective of those affected. In the following, the chosen qualitative approach and its suitability for the research interest and research subject is explained.

The previous explanations indicate that there has been *insufficient investigation* into the topic of youth unemployment in Germany, including its consequences (on well-being) and how young people deal with them (for more discussion on this see chapter 3). Moreover, the

unemployment of young people is a relevant phenomenon and could be accompanied by far-reaching consequences, both individually, e.g., on health and well-being, and socially, e.g., in terms of costs for citizens and stability of society. However, the group of young unemployed people is *very heterogeneous*, i.e., the individual unemployment situations can differ widely. Furthermore, the *support and coping* situations can be very individual and play an important role for the well-being during unemployment. Although there has already been research on the consequences of unemployment on well-being or mental health for young people, indicating negative effects on well-being, the causal structures and underlying mechanisms in this *relationship between unemployment of young people and well-being are not fully understood yet* (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39). This complex field and heterogeneity require further, deeper investigation, which is precisely why a qualitative research with its inductive perspective can help to shed more light on the mechanisms associated with the situation of unemployment.

Due to missing data, i.e., the lack of knowledge, and of studies in this field, an *open research approach* is useful for discovering new ideas and exploring new insights (Miles et al., 2020, pp. 7–8). Unemployment can be a complex and individual situation, involving various social and psychological interactions (Dietrich, 2012, pp. 7–8), which can affect well-being and coping strategies. To make *complex* phenomena in society, such as youth unemployment in Germany, tangible and understandable, a qualitative research approach is beneficial, employing *interpretative procedures* to address the meaning people attach to their unemployment experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 10). Young adults' *subjective meanings* of and *experiences* with unemployment can be examined with interviews (Flick et al., 2004, pp. 5–7), since the interviewees can provide the researcher with the necessary information about what exactly determines their well-being from their point of view, e.g., pointing out concrete consequences such as financial hardship. They can describe their experiences with unemployment and narrate how they feel, and how they perceive their situation. They can depict their efforts, coping strategies, and attitudes towards the situation, from their own perspective. Thus, an understanding can be achieved through communication (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, pp. 57–68; Reinders, 2016, pp. 7–8). Since there is a lack of focus in research on the subjective experience of unemployment, i.e., a comprehensive perspective that takes sufficient account of the social and institutional context and thus also coping strategies, this approach can help to understand the unemployment situation of young people and how they think and act in this context.

Hence, the aim of this thesis is to answer the following *general research questions* related to unemployment of young people, based on the motivation and preliminary considerations with *a qualitative research approach*: How do young people in Germany perceive their situation during unemployment and how is their well-being? How do they deal with their situation in terms of well-being? These broad and open research-guiding questions are further differentiated and complemented during this thesis as the development of research questions has been a process (see chapter 4).

With this interest in knowledge, the qualitative approach shows itself advantageous and appropriate, e.g., especially by being open and flexible as well as considering single cases (Flick, 2009, pp. 14–17). One of the main aims of this thesis is to investigate the group of unemployed young people and their coping strategies as broadly as possible. Above all, the avoidance of a fixed definition of unemployment and the restriction to the concepts of well-being or coping have made it possible to depict the people's individuality in social reality in order to do justice to the overall complexity. In order to maintain a high degree of openness in qualitative research, it is important to avoid pre-assumptions, e.g., in the form of hypotheses (Reinders, 2016, p. 28). This also distinguishes the research approach from stronger standardized procedures and at the same time goes into greater depth in order to capture the underlying complexity. Using qualitative social research methods and interview data in the study of youth unemployment provides a deep understanding of the views and relevance structures of the unemployed. This makes it possible to reconstruct typical forms of unemployment experience on a case-by-case basis (Vonderach et al., 1992, p. 10). If the situation of young unemployed individuals is understood in this manner, appropriate measures or support programs can be offered if the situation appears problematic for young people. Sustainable economic, employment and education policies play an important role in each country to conquer youth unemployment (Dietrich, 2013, p. 574).

This interview study of this thesis is based on data from the *EXCEPT project* (EXCEPT: Social Exclusion of Youth in Europe: Cumulative Disadvantage, Coping Strategies, Effective Policies and Transfer), which has investigated the consequences and management of labor market exclusion and insecurities among young people across Europe (Unt et al., 2021). This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 649496 (EXCEPT Project, n.d.).

This thesis can be described as a further in-depth investigation based on the semi-structured interviews with young people in Germany which I conducted during the EXCEPT project. In

this context, interviews were conducted across all participating countries, i.e., project partners, using a common research approach and interview guideline. It is important to note that the conceptual focus of the EXCEPT project was on labor market insecurity and exclusion, e.g., job insecurity and unemployment, and its consequences (on dimensions of social exclusion). The EXCEPT project understood social exclusion as a multidimensional concept (Gebel et al., 2021, pp. 8–9), including inter alia, well-being and health, financial situation and autonomy on the microlevel. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to proceed theory driven with additional openness and a common interview guideline was used to better identify commonalities and differences between the cases as well as between countries with regard to certain research topics (Flick, 2009, pp. 156–165). This qualitative approach in the project allowed for previously unexpected insights and enabled participants to contribute their own topics and opinions (Saldaña, 2011, pp. 32–33). Although all countries in this project followed a common approach, the data collection was country-specific, with a justified focus on specific risk groups (for social exclusion) in each country. This thesis is based on 45 interviews conducted in the context of the project.

The aim of the overarching EXCEPT project was to give young adults a voice in insecure labor market and life situations, which was also intended in the thesis here. Of course, the topics of EXCEPT and this thesis are strongly connected. Although, the research interest in the present study is somewhat different it thus ties in with the research already conducted. It can be seen as a further investigation and in-depth study focusing on unemployment of young adults in Germany and their well-being and coping. The comprehensive data from the EXCEPT project made this in-depth investigation of the phenomenon unemployment of young adults – 18-30 years old – possible. Apart from the comprehensive empirical results and valuable contribution to the current research on social exclusion of young people in Europe (Unt et al., 2021; Unt & Gebel, 2018) as well as general implications for future research that arose from the entire EXCEPT project (Gebel et al., 2018), some phenomena could not be fully understood yet and still need more investigation. The German results show that, although indicating a negative impact on well-being, the situation of unemployment is very complex, as is the coping process of unemployment and well-being with multiple, interlinked coping mechanisms in different areas (with different intentions). These relationships still need to be investigated in greater depth (Schlee, 2018; Schlee et al., 2021). The data and the framework of EXCEPT provide a very suitable basis for this research interest. In this thesis, the interviews are not examined in terms of labor market insecurity and exclusion (temporary employment and unemployment) as in the EXCEPT project but focused on the experience of unemployment.

This focus was possible and particularly appropriate, since all study participants in the German sample, regardless of whether they were currently in temporary employment or unemployed at the time of the interview, had already experienced unemployment. Therefore, it was possible to adopt both a current and a retrospective perspective on the topic, benefiting from past experiences of unemployment (that had already been overcome). This thesis turned away in parts from the approach of social exclusion of the EXCEPT project to ensure even greater openness, especially regarding the analyses. An openness, i.e., in parts inductive approach in research process, e.g., during the analyses, allowed for new aspects which had not been considered before. This openness constitutes qualitative social research (Lamnek & Krell, 2016, pp. 33–34; Mey & Ruppel, 2018, p. 209).

For a better comprehensibility and transparency when reading this thesis, a linear structure of documenting the research process is used, which is employed in quantitative research more often due to its natural research logic (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2014, pp. 406–409). The simplification here serves to ease the presentation of the general process and results. It thus makes the research project comprehensible with consideration of the technical and methodological framework requirements at the same time. Nevertheless, the research process of data collection (in EXCEPT) and especially the interpretation process was not completely linear but in parts iterative in a circulating process. The phases were interrelated (Witt, 2001, §§ 15–20).

This thesis has the following structure: The theoretical and conceptual framework of this study is presented in chapter 2. In this section, relevant concepts of the approach are explained and existing theories on the topic are shown and discussed to frame the research. Then, in chapter 3, the current state of research on consequences of unemployment among young people is presented. These two areas, theory, and concepts, as well as the current state of research create the necessary framework and transparency of the procedure to classify the present study and to show the prior knowledge and scientific findings on this topic. It also sets out a rationale for the approach to the empirical investigation. Chapter 4 shows the general methods of the research approach, including methodology, the sampling and data collection process, and the analysis process. Chapters 5 and 6 highlight the results of this thesis. The thesis ends with discussion of the results and final conclusions (chapter 7).

# 2 Theoretical and conceptual framework

In the literature, the two terms theoretical framework and conceptual framework are either used synonymously or differentiated in terms of content, depending on the methodological orientation (Miles et al., 2020, p. 15). In this chapter, the two terms, considered together, are intended to reflect the framework of the thesis, i.e., of the entire research process. This framework provides both an insight and overview of what is the focus of the research and what potential relationships exist. These basic considerations underwent changes during the research process but had provided the main idea and starting point of the research and its rationale. The rationale was developed on the one hand from theoretical ideas from existing theories and on the other hand from the state of the research (see chapter 3). In addition, concepts and definitions that were fundamental before and throughout the research process, e.g., during the analysis, are explained (Miles et al., 2020, pp. 15–20). These ideas are expressed, among other things, in the research questions, the sampling, the analysis, and other methodological decisions and procedures (see chapters 4 –7).

Although the research process of this study is based on a high degree of openness (compared to standardized quantitative research), which is one characteristic of qualitative research (Lamnek & Krell, 2016, pp. 33–34), prior knowledge [Vorwissen] plays a crucial role as a frame (Reinders, 2016, p. 22). In this study prior knowledge means the aspects and information about the research topic, which are relevant to consider for an adequate research procedure, e.g., regarding structure, contextualization, and interpretation. Although the procedure in the qualitative field is characterized by a great openness, it is important to consult a certain prior knowledge to implement the research (Mey & Ruppel, 2018, p. 209), e.g., for the question formulation (for the interview outline), for the determination of the research group, category formation (if no purely inductive category formation is used), etc. Thus, this chapter presents the prior knowledge that guided the research process. Its aim is also to make this process more transparent and comprehensible and to provide a rationale for the research-strategic approach. However, in this respect, this section does not only represent the prior knowledge on which the study is based. It also presents, in part, concepts and theories that are referred to or play a role in the analysis. It is important to emphasize that no hypotheses and assumptions derive from these considerations, but rather that these considerations served as an orientation and framework during the research process. The presentation aims to make the procedure and results transparent and understandable. However, it does not follow the chronology of the research process, which would be too complex due to its non-linearity.

This study is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted within a mixed methods approach of the EXCEPT project (see chapter 4). It is important to note that the complete framework of this project is not presented in this thesis, but only those aspects that are relevant to the specific research approach of this thesis. The EXCEPT project was framed in terms of the multidimensional concept of social exclusion and examined labor market insecurity and exclusion and their impact on young people's lives in Europe (Unt et al., 2021; Unt & Gebel, 2018). This thesis examines in detail the experience of unemployment and its consequences for well-being, as well as the coping strategies used in this context. The chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis provide additional explanations that further outline the differences and similarities with the EXCEPT project in terms of the theoretical approach and methodology.

In the EXCEPT project, a theory-driven approach was used, with (partly) predefined concepts and terminology. These were sometimes unavoidable and necessary, due to the transnational structure of the project, which involved multiple researchers, and a mixed methods approach (Miles et al., 2020, p. 15). The theory-driven approach of the qualitative part was limited to some extent to some concepts and certain terminology, whereas, in contrast to quantitative theory-driven research, no hypotheses (about causal effects) were derived to be tested empirically. That means, specific relevant topics for observation were considered, e.g., current societal developments, such as youth unemployment in Europe, as well as relevant theories in this context and the current state of research. In this way, for example, definitions of "youth unemployment" were made or considered to frame the study group and identify the subject of the study. However, the qualitative approach is characterized by openness, primarily due to country-specific adjustments, e.g., regarding common sampling criteria, such as the focus on risk groups for social exclusion or, the geographical context relevant in each country (Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018). In this sense, the procedure of approaching the object of study and the phenomenon of interest ensured flexibility in the entire research process, including the analysis process. The research approach was based on theoretical and conceptual considerations on the one hand and on the other hand on a flexible and process-oriented strategy, e.g., in the use of sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1954), which means that, in comparison to purely deductive, hypothesis-testing procedures, the concepts used were not fully operationalized in advance (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 30). All in all, this project approach can be seen as a deductive-inductive approach, with high amount of flexible and open qualitative elements. This overall approach enabled it to implement a qualitative research project across countries.

The following subsections present relevant considerations for the research goal of this thesis, such as theories and concepts of youth unemployment and its consequences for well-being and the coping process. They serve as a kind of *contextualization*. The subsequent section (chapter 3) presents and discusses the current state of research and important empirical findings on the central research topic.

## 2.1 Young people in Germany and their experience of unemployment

### 2.1.1 Life course and youth

*Life course* can be described as a social institution, as a system of rules which structures life and thus contains decisive areas of life (Kohli, 1985, p. 1). More precisely, in sociology life course signifies "the sequence of activities or states and events in various life domains spanning from birth to death. The life course is thus seen as the embedding of individual lives into social structures primarily in the form of their partaking in social positions and roles, that is, in regard to their membership in institutional orders" (K. U. Mayer, 2004, p. 163). Life course research considers the influence of events on later events in life, i.e., causes and consequences of specific events in the life course. There are, inter alia, institutional factors that determine individual life courses, e.g., the educational system, occupational structure/labor law, social security system, or family (K. U. Mayer, 2001, pp. 446–448).

*Life courses in Germany* for men and women have undergone several changes in history but in modern society many life courses are still standardized and institutionalized (K. U. Mayer, 2001, pp. 458–459). In Germany, they are strongly oriented towards the standard biography [Normalbiographie], which is characterized by the structuring of the state or social policy and constant transitions (Leibfried et al., 1995, pp. 56–58). However, aside from standardized life courses, some significant changes of life courses and especially *changes in employment biographies* occur (Raithel, 2012, pp. 135–136). Employment biographies used to be standardized. The so-called standard employment relationship [Normalarbeitsverhältnis] refers to a situation of employment that enables livelihood security and social participation (Mückenberger, 1985, pp. 420–421) and stands for social security, as it enables integration into the employment and the social security system (Buchholz & Blossfeld, 2011, p. 69). This typical employment is characterized by full-time permanent employment (Mückenberger, 1989, p. 211). In general, atypical employment has increased (Keller & Seifert, 2006, pp. 235–237).

Although there are certain changes in the entire working society, this can lead to heavy burdens, especially for youth at the beginning of an employment career (Raithel, 2012, pp. 135–136).

*Youth* can be seen as a *period in the life course* of a person. It includes important steps and transitions that are accompanied by decisions by the young people that have a strong impact on the rest of their lives und can extend well beyond the age of 18 (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, n.d.). In this context, *education* is an important part of youth and the whole life course, which is linked to processes of inequality. In a person's life, there are different domains of educational attainment, such as school education and vocational education, and transitions that shape the life course (Hillmert, 2020, pp. 17–19). Germany has a highly stratified school system, which allows for a certain higher or lower level of vocational training depending on individual school attainment. The standardization of the vocational training system, also known as the dual system in Germany, then plays a major role in the transition from training to the labor market in order to maximize the chances of finding a job. The education and employment systems are closely interlinked and the vocational qualifications serve as a signal for the employees (Allmendinger & Hinz, 1997, pp. 253–254). In Germany, vocational qualifications are crucial for the access to the labor market and facilitate successful integration into the labor market for those with appropriate training (Scherer & Kogan, 2004, p. 148). In this context, the vocational education and training system is discussed in terms of reinforcing social inequalities, i.e., socially disadvantaged and low-educated people tend to remain in lower occupations and positions on the labor market (Kleinert & Jacob, 2019, p. 284).

Furthermore, unemployment may occur at different transitions in early life. Critical transitions, e.g., from school to work, are seen as central stages in life and can determine the future life course (Gebel et al., 2021, p. 5). In Germany, regarding the *school-to-work transition* a distinction can be made between two transition phases: the transition from school to vocational training (or higher education such as university studies) and the transition to the labor market (employment) following this vocational qualification (Kleinert & Jacob, 2013, p. 65). Both transitions are seen as important periods with relevant life choices and positioning in society (Schels & Wöhrer, 2022, p. 222) and appear multifaceted and complex for young people (Dietrich, 2018, p. 236). This thesis therefore relates to both young people who experience unemployment leaving the school system and looking for a vocational training place, and to young people who have already completed vocational training or higher education and then have become unemployed. Here the thesis focuses on comprehensively examining the

unemployment of youth after leaving school. For this reason, a broader view on school-to-work transition is used that covers both areas and considers these as a transition into the labor market.

It is important to note that the term *youth* is not defined uniformly and can vary regarding age definitions. The term youth unemployment rate, for example, refers to people between 15 and 24 years old (Destatis, 2023a). Equally, the United Nations define youth as people between 15 and 24 (United Nations, n.d.). Sometimes, however, the age range used is extended to 29 or 30 years (ILOSTAT, 2023). According to the Youth Welfare Act in Germany [Jugendhilfegesetz] (SGBIII, §1), 18–27-year-olds are defined as young adults [junger Volljähriger] and persons are generally considered a young person [junger Mensch] if they have not reached the age of 27 yet.

The EXCEPT project defines youth as young people between 18-30. Among other things, this has to do with the fact that young people are in the education system for a longer time, e.g., in tertiary education (Dietrich, 2015, p. 5). Although the Bologna reform generally leads to an earlier transition into the labor market (Dietrich, 2013, p. 573), the expansion of education and the increasing number of higher educational qualifications, result in an growing number of young people over 25 years of age who are still not fully integrated into the labor market. They stay longer in the educational system than the lower educated. The concept of youth unemployment which covers people up to 24 years of age therefore does not cover all young people in the terms of labor market exclusion (Dietrich, 2015, p. 5). One would not take into account people who are still in the (vocational) education system being 25 or 26 years of age, such as university graduates because of their later transition into employment compared to other young people (DIW, 2019). Therefore, it was decided to include older people in the EXCEPT project and also in this thesis, in order to adequately cover the relevant group. The terms *youth*, *young people*, and *young adults* are used as synonyms here when analyzing and interpreting the underlying data on people between the ages of 18 and 30. When these concepts are mentioned while referring to the state of research or to the theories, the underlying concepts are mostly used to avoid any misunderstandings between the concepts due to their different age concepts.

If one regards *youth as a specific life-period*, there has been a prolongation of this phase over time – age norms have lost their validity in this context – which at the same time is now characterized by risky transitions with unknown outcomes. Although the trend is towards longer transitions, these are heterogeneous. The transitions generally seem more discontinuous than in previous generations. The path to adulthood, including the work life, is also more variable and shows many faces, i.e., that some young people pass through measures first or that they are

more severely affected by unemployment in comparison to earlier cohorts (Heinz, 2011, pp. 15–17). The opportunities to organize the transition from school to work as an alternative to "normal" vocational training in the transitional system vary. For example, it is possible to attend the compulsory vocational school year [Berufsgrundbildungsjahr, BGJ], which is then later partly credited to vocational training. Alternatively, vocational preparation [berufsvorbereitende Maßnahmen, BvB] measures of the Federal Employment Agency can be used. In addition, there are vocational schools where young people can catch up on general school-leaving qualifications or acquire other competences useful for their later occupation and labor market. This alternative transfer system has gained importance due to the lack of training places in the past and due to the lack of competence acquisition at schools that is necessary to start training. It is also referred to as a waiting loop (Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung, 2006, pp. 81–82).

The transitions of young people into the labor market therefore offer *diverse and complex possibilities and paths*. The labor and training market (supply and demand), the institutional context conditions of the (training) educational and employment system, the labor market policy measures, and the diverse individual patterns of action of young people result in various dynamic transitions. These can also be characterized by involuntary and voluntary phases of unemployment and hardly correspond to the idea of a normal biography. Therefore, it is important to examine youth unemployment from a perspective of school-to-work transition (Dietrich, 2001, p. 432). From life course perspective, these phases of unemployment are seen as a consequence of individual action in the context of labor market and institutional contexts. School-to-work transitions are seen as status episodes with deviation between groups or individuals (Dietrich, 2012, p. 8).

In Germany, the situation on the training market has often been the focus of discussions, because if there are not enough training places or the necessary qualifications are lacking, the situation of young people often leads to unemployment at this first transition. This aspect is even more strongly determined by the fact that the training system is of great importance in Germany (Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 5).

Compared to other countries, however, the *German labor market entry* can be described as fast but generally stable (Scherer, 2005, pp. 437–438). Basically, the transition into the labor market in conservative welfare states is smooth and steady due to a vocational educational system. This form of educational system also determines a longer stay in the educational system (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011, p. 493). For many people in Germany, compared to people from other countries,

there is a kind of straight transition into the labor market, whereas, e.g., Italy is characterized by longer search unemployment. In this international context, unemployment is rather rare in the first years on the labor market in Germany (Scherer & Kogan, 2004, p. 149), but this period is characterized by job-to-job mobility without hierarchic changes and young women who take a break for family reasons in the first years of their working career (Scherer, 2005, pp. 437–438). In Germany, a temporary job at the beginning of a career is connected with financial wage disadvantages and the risk of further temporary employment. However, these disadvantages are reduced after a few years on the labor market in relation to permanent employment career starters (Gebel, 2010). Buchholz et al. (2008) show that especially young people experience strong uncertainties on the transition from school into labor market, e.g., atypical and precarious forms of employment, such an increase of short-term employments, part-time etc.). This can be explained, inter alia, by the missing working experience of young people, by the fact that conservative welfare states like Germany show strong insider-outsider market (Buchholz et al., 2008, pp. 57–60), but mainly due to the (partial) deregulation of temporary contracts in the context of the reforms of the employment protection legislation (Gebel & Giesecke, 2016). In contrast to older people, young people's lives are affected by the transition from school or vocational training to work. They may experience unemployment because the transition from school or vocational training is often on a fixed-term contract, which puts them at risk of becoming unemployed with no seniority rights (Dietrich, 2012, p. 9, 2013, p. 572). In addition, the transition from training to the labor market can also lead to uncertainties and unpredictability, such as unemployment or recurrent unemployment (Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 5). Moreover, macro factors, such as business cycles, influence young people and their transition stronger, and therefore the risk of becoming unemployed, than they influence older adults who have already gained a foothold in the labor market (Dietrich, 2012, p. 9).

### 2.1.2 Youth unemployment

The concept of *unemployment* is not unambiguous as it used differently within and between different countries. Therefore, the underlying understanding of unemployment in this thesis is shown and different understandings of the concept and usages are discussed.

In Germany, unemployment [Arbeitslosigkeit] is defined by social law. People are considered unemployed when they are not in employment, seek employment that is subject to compulsory insurance, are available to the placement efforts of the Federal Employment Agency [Bundesagentur für Arbeit], and are registered as being unemployed with the Federal

Employment Agency (§16 SGB III). They are allowed to work up to 15 hours per week and still count as unemployed (§138 SGB III). This definition excludes, inter alia, people in active labor market measures (ALMP) (§16 SGB III).

All people who are at least 15 years old, able to work (employable), in need of assistance, and who have their habitual residence in Germany are allowed to receive basic social security benefits, the unemployment benefit II [Arbeitslosengeld II] (§7 SGB II)[2]. Employable are all people who are not ill or disabled and able to work a minimum of three hours per day on the labor market (§8 SGB II). The Federal Employment Agency uses this definition in the context of the social security system and for the unemployment statistics of the Institute for Employment Research [Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung], the research institute of the Federal Employment Agency.

Due to the different definitions and measurements of unemployment across Europe, there is another international common definition of unemployment, which makes it very important for international comparisons due to a standardized concept of unemployment (Hartmann & Riede, 2005). This definition is based on the International Labour Organization (ILO) statistics (ILOSTAT, 2024) and used by the Federal Statistical Office in Germany for unemployment statistics [Erwerbslosenstatistik] (Destatis, 2019). This concept differs from the definition according to social legislation in Germany. According to the ILO definition, individuals are unemployed if they are without work, are available for work, and seeking work. In this context, work is understood to mean both paid employment and self-employment. Persons who already have a job in prospect and are therefore not currently looking for work or persons in employment promotion programs or persons actively trying to find a job abroad also count as unemployed. Compared to the definition of unemployment by social legislation (§16 SGB III), the ILO definition does not require official registration as unemployed (Hartmann & Riede, 2005, pp. 304–305).

The total unemployment according to the definition of the Federal Employment Agency (§16 SGB III), is higher than the total unemployment according to ILO because the concepts are defined differently, e.g., regarding the conception of job search, age group definition, availability on the labor market, the one-hour employment criterion, and participation in ALMPs, and they vary in their methodological data collection. The Federal Employment Agency receives information from its own agency's data, while the ILO uses labor force

[2] In 2023, the *citizen's benefits* [Bürgergeld] replaced the *unemployment benefits II*. Since the data of this study originate from the time before the citizen's benefits, reference to unemployment benefits II is made here.

statistics from sample surveys of the population [Mikrozensus] (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2024b).

Overall, the ILO statistics can attribute a rather economic perspective, as they clearly distinguish between the employed and the unemployed, and include, among other criteria, persons who are not registered as unemployed. The concept of the Federal Employment Agency holds a more sociopolitical view and persons count as unemployed although they work marginally (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2024b; Konle-Seidl, 2009, pp. 1–2).

Persons who have been unemployed for at least 12 months are defined as *long-term unemployed.* Participation in measures or diseases do not interrupt this period of long-term unemployment by definition (SGB III, §18, Abs. 1). The international definition of long-term unemployment also covers people who have been unemployed for 12 months or more (OECD, 2019). However, as already mentioned in the description of the various concepts of unemployment, these concepts of long-term unemployment refer to different definitions of unemployment in general. In Germany, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately 33 percent of unemployed individuals were long-term unemployed in 2022. This rate has decreased over the years, as in 2007 it was approximately 56.6 percent (OECD, 2024).

Similar to the concept of unemployment, the use of the term *youth unemployment* is also inconsistent. Focusing on youth unemployment rates in Germany, the most widely used statistics are from the Federal Statistical Office [Statistisches Bundesamt] which provides youth employment rates with ILO definition as a basis, or youth unemployment rates of the Federal Employment Agency [Bundesagentur für Arbeit], which uses its own statistics (Mansel & Speck, 2012, p. 15).

The *NEET* concept (Eurofound, 2012, pp. 22–23; OECD, 2023) is another important concept in the context of youth unemployment. While the concepts of unemployment include people who are looking for work/vocational training but cannot find it, NEET refers to those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). “It records the share of the population of all young people currently disengaged from the labour market and education, namely unemployed and inactive young people who are not in education or training” (Eurofound, 2012, p. 22). The amount of NEET individuals in Europe is greater than the quantity of young people who are unemployed (Eurofound, 2012, pp. 22–23). NEET is different from the unemployment concept because it includes inactive individuals. Furthermore, it excludes individuals who are attending training (OECD, 2023). However, since the group of NEET is heterogeneous, which can be

interpreted as both an advantage and a disadvantage of the conceptualization (Schels, 2018, pp. 245–248), young people are not automatically in precarious life situations. For example they can be voluntarily joblessness or without training (Schels, 2018, p. 250).

*Youth unemployment* in Germany is lower compared to other EU-countries. One reason for this can be the vocational education system, which is strongly linked to specific occupational qualifications (Allmendinger et al., 2012, p. 334; Scherer & Kogan, 2004, pp. 134–139). Another reason can be labor market measures for young people, such as vocational preparation training [Berufsvorbereitende Bildungsmaßnahmen, BvB], the vocational preparation year [Berufsvorbereitungsjahr, BVJ], or the compulsory vocational school year [Berufsgrundbildungsjahr, BGJ], which enable an alternative to regular work when a normal and successful transition into the labor market (into the vocational training) fails. This can be seen as waiting loop until a vocational training place or employment can be started (Allmendinger et al., 2012, p. 334).

According to the ILO measurement, the youth unemployment rate (15-24 years old) in Germany was 7.2 percent in 2015 (EU-27 average 21.8%), 7.1 percent in 2016 (EU-27 average 20.1%) and 6 percent in 2022 (EU-27 14.5%) (Destatis, 2023a). The youth unemployment rate as defined by the Federal Employment Agency was lower than the unemployment rate as defined by the ILO. This could be, since young people in job measures are not considered unemployed according to the Employment Agency's definition. In addition, some young people do not register as unemployed because they are not entitled to benefits (DIW, 2019).

Although the German absolute unemployment figures show a decline for several years (Mansel & Speck, 2012, p. 15), the unemployment rate varies according to the definitions of unemployment and data used in the computation. In general, a pure focus on the official statistical data has a clear disadvantage. Depending on the definition of unemployment, there are several groups who are not considered (hidden unemployment). These people do not meet the criteria for being defined unemployed. Thus, depending on the definition, it can be that people in labor market policy measures as well as people who do not register as unemployed for various reasons (for example, young people who are not entitled to financial support/benefits) are not considered in the official statistics (Frese & Mohr, 1978, pp. 282–283) and therefore do not officially count as unemployed. Furthermore, there may be additional unemployed individuals who are not actively seeking work for various reasons, such as a perceived lack of job opportunities or responsibilities related to household activities (ILOSTAT, 2024). For example, women stay at home and take on the role of a housewife.

Certain groups fall through the grid, also sometimes NEET, who could not find training or employment after school, therefore are still (financially) dependent on their parents (Kieselbach, 1983, p. 3) and, for example, may still be living at parental home. These and other groups are sometimes not recorded in the system and therefore do not appear in the statistics, which means that the number is often underestimated.

Moreover, *unemployment rates* and the total count of unemployed in Germany suggest that there are only two groups: the employed and the unemployed. However, it is important to consider that here is not something like "the unemployed" (Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2018, pp. 183–185). The unemployment population is a dynamic category. Besides the long-term unemployed, who have the status "unemployed" for a longer time, there is also a large part who enters and leaves unemployment (Mutz et al., 1995, p. 24). Some individuals experience short-term unemployment while others face long-term unemployment. Thus, more people are affected by unemployment over time than the rate indicates. Therefore, it is crucial to consider individuals who are at risk of becoming unemployed as well as those who are at risk of remaining unemployed. Personal characteristics can play a decisive role in determining success or failure in finding employment (Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2018, pp. 183–185). This shows the necessity of orienting towards the biography and life course of the individual (Mutz et al., 1995, p. 31).

The previous explanations show that the transition from school to work is a special phase in the life course during which unemployment can occur with consequences for later life, such as the working career (Brand, 2015; Brandt & Hank, 2014; Dieckhoff, 2011). Unemployment as such is a heterogeneous situation (Brand, 2015, p. 360). Depending on the definition, unemployment can be considered differently. The consequence is that sometimes young people are excluded due to specific definitions.

For this thesis on the experience of unemployment among young adults, the study group is selected using an open approach (implemented in the context of the EXCEPT project). Individuals aged between 18 and 30 are examined, and a broad understanding of the concept of unemployment is adopted to depict many facets and complexities, in order to better understand the phenomenon. Therefore, unemployment during the time of transition from school to vocational training and from vocational training to the labor market (employment) as well as the experience of job loss since leaving school at an early age, is considered. Young people can experience unemployment in different ways, regardless of fixed definitions or concepts. Therefore, the present study takes into account young people who may or may not be officially

registered as unemployed. They may be participating in official ALMPs measures and/or education/training measures, or they may not be. The individuals may be seeking employment or vocational training or not. Additionally, some individuals may have been employed for a few hours per week but still be officially registered as unemployed (according to social law). Generally, it is important to note that individuals must describe themselves as unemployed. One could say that both unemployment concepts (ILO and social law) were taken into account together, including the NEET perspective, the inactive. To examine young people appropriately, this study considers unemployed people between the ages of 18 and 30. Of course, such an age definition of youth in the context of unemployment does not consider the group of under 18-year-olds. However, this decision was made in the EXCEPT project due to ethical considerations. In general, the complexity and heterogeneity of young people's life situations during unemployment calls for an examination of the subjective perspectives of those affected, in order to shed light on the situation and gain a better understanding of the multifaceted situations.

## 2.2 Consequences of (youth) unemployment on well-being

Unemployment and its consequences have been extensively studied across various disciplines and countries for decades. Further research will be necessary to fully understand this worldwide and persistent issue in modern societies (Paul et al., 2006, p. 35). However, numerous theories and explanatory approaches have been proposed regarding the individual consequences of unemployment on health. The impact on well-being is the central topic of this thesis, considering social and psychological aspects. Thus, relevant theories on the causal effect of unemployment on subjective well-being are highlighted and selection effects (e.g., Mastekaasa, 1996) are not considered.

### 2.2.1 The concept of well-being

This work focuses on well-being, specifically *subjective well-being*, which is a multidimensional concept from psychology. It comprises affective elements, such as emotions and feelings, and cognitive elements, such as judgments of life satisfaction or satisfaction in certain areas of life (Diener, 1984, pp. 542–544; Diener et al., 1999, pp. 276–277). In this context, when investigating well-being, there are three characteristics that can be emphasized: the subjective, individuum focused perspective, which is relevant to capture well-being; the

negative and positive aspects of the dimensions that determine well-being; all areas of life, since multiple areas can influence on well-being (Diener, 1984, pp. 543–544). The emotional level and the cognitive level are not always distinct or separable. They are strongly interdependent. Together they form the well-being (Suh et al., 1998, p. 484). To understand the well-being of individuals, it is necessary to examine both positive and negative emotions (and the range of these emotions). In addition, it can be important to consider well-being as a broad category, but with knowledge of specific dimensions that should be captured, i.e., as a field of interest in knowledge rather than a concrete (single) construct, because it can be advantageous to better grasp the complexity and interrelationships (Diener et al., 1999, pp. 276–277). There are various definitions of subjective well-being. One possible theoretical basis of many is that individuals continuously evaluate and assess their life events and circumstances, which triggers certain emotions. Those with high levels of well-being tend to assess life events and circumstances more positively, while those with low levels of well-being tend to assess them more negatively (Diener, 1994, pp. 106–107).

This thesis aims to address the complexity and multidimensionality of well-being by taking into account its various important aspects and dimensions. The aim is to get a comprehensive picture of the overall well-being in the context of unemployment and not to focus specifically only on individual life domains, such as relationships, family, friends, school, work, leisure, or mental health (Ryff & Heidrich, 1997). Unemployment may also affect some of these domains (see chapter 2.2.2). If they are relevant to the overall well-being of young people, they are included and addressed in the analysis and interpretation.

Voßemer and Eunicke (2015) conclude in their literature review that quantitative studies pre-define well-being, e.g., by focusing exclusively on one component of well-being, whereas qualitative studies in the context of unemployment tend not to define specific dimensions and domains of well-being in order to openly elaborate the individual meaning of well-being in the area of labor market exclusion and to do justice to the importance of the subjective perspective (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 5). The differences between the research areas are due to their methodological orientation and research aims.

This study follows a rather open approach, by using a subjective well-being framework but analyzing all domains to provide a complete picture of young adults' well-being from their perspective. In this context the subjective well-being (Diener, 1984, pp. 542–544; Diener et al., 1999, pp. 276–277) provides a framework and orientation. The EXCEPT project also focused on the concept of subjective well-being, which is also due to the theory-based approach of the

EXCEPT project (mixed-methods approach), which investigated well-being and health (e.g., Unt et al., 2021; Unt & Gebel, 2018; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015), but in the qualitative research approach it was applied flexibly with the necessary adjustments depending on the object of investigation.

This study examines each case separately, considering the meaning of well-being and the context of young adults' lives. To implement the study and analyze the interviews for this thesis, it is crucial to maintain an open concept of well-being. This implies that no concept should be predetermined, and instead, a perspective on well-being should be developed through the interviews that aligns with the study's objectives. To achieve openness in the research approach and understand the situation from the interviewees' subjective point of view, it is necessary to address the various areas that can influence well-being during unemployment.

Well-being can also be analyzed as *objective well-being* (Veenhoven, 2007, pp. 214–216; Voukelatou et al., 2021). For instance, good material and living conditions are among the factors that contribute to objective well-being. However, perceiving a situation as good or bad in terms of well-being is not solely determined by objective circumstances. It is important to note that subjective and objective well-being do not always align (Brandstätter, 1991, pp. 195–196; Veenhoven, 2008, p. 44). "Objective" dimensions of well-being, such as the financial situation, the education, the living conditions, the labor market situation/the unemployment experience, are considered (in parts) as explanatory factors, when it is necessary to understand the situation from a subjective perspective. However, focusing solely on well-being from an objective standpoint would not be suitable for this study. The young people examined in this thesis are objectively in an insecure situation due to unemployment, lower income, and other factors. It is crucial to analyze whether these criteria subjectively impact their individual well-being. The aim is to understand well-being and its composition in unemployment. An approach that is open and that focuses on the subjective perspective is therefore necessary. The investigation of an individual's well-being assessment (in the context of unemployment experience) can be conducted well through personal conversations, such as qualitative interviews (Reichertz, 2016, pp. 33–39).

In addition, it can be important to note that, subjective well-being has been shown here as a single concept, it is important to bear in mind that it can be understood as part of the overall concept of health. Although there is still no uniform definition or concept for health (Franzkowiak & Hurrelmann, 2022), World Health Organization defines health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or

infirmity" (World Health Organization, 1948). In addition, the psychological concept of subjective well-being is sometimes associated with mental health (Keyes, 2006, p. 7). Mental health can be seen as an important part of health and well-being (World Health Organization, 2022). Although overall health and physical health are important, they are not the primary focus of this study. However, they are taken into account in the analyses, for example, if they have an influence on the subjective well-being.

### 2.2.2 Theories and explanatory approaches

*Functional model*

There are several theories that postulate the connection between unemployment and (mental/psychological) health. One of the best-known and pioneering studies in the field of unemployment research is probably the study "die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal" (Jahoda et al., 1978 [1933]), first published in 1933. This study and its empirical results on the topic of long-term unemployment served as the basis for probably one of the best-known, frequently adapted and much discussed theories on the consequences of unemployment: the *functional model* (Jahoda, 1981, 1982, 1983) or also known, among others, as the deprivation theory (Paul et al., 2006, p. 36), latent deprivation model (Paul & Batinic, 2009), or the latent functions approach (Strandh, 2000, p. 20).

Accordingly, work has *two central functions*: earning a livelihood and unintended side functions that positively influence the psychological state. These five latent functions are time structure, social relations beyond those of family and acquaintances, a collective purpose or meaning of work, social status and identity, and activity (Jahoda, 1981, pp. 189–190, 1982, pp. 83–84).

These latent functions, and their loss, for example through unemployment, can be perceived differently and vary in their individual meaning. However, they are relevant to most people and indicate basic needs. If these needs are no longer met, affected individuals may experience negative changes in their psychological well-being. Thus, the psychological effects of unemployment are not solely determined by financial circumstances, but also by latent aspects of work, such as its by-products (Jahoda, 1982, pp. 83–84).

Unemployment can disrupt an individual's daily routine (habits) and social relationships. Without the structure provided by regular work and a scheduled working day, the unemployed may lose their fixed time structure. Even children are accustomed to a structured day and task through early education and school (Jahoda, 1982, pp. 22–23). According to this theory, the

absence of a structured daily routine is one of the main problems of unemployment, and young adults can be particularly affected because they often do not know what to do with their time. The effects of unemployment and its consequences vary among different groups. For some, the loss of social connections is detrimental, while for others, it is the loss of status. If individuals are unable to fulfill these functions that represent their needs, this has a negative outcome. However, it is important to note that when these latent functions are present, such as through work, they are not automatically evaluated as good. The quality of the functions can play an essential part in that (Jahoda, 1982, pp. 85–86).

Functions related to employment can also have the opposite effect if they exist in a certain way, e.g., through too strict and stressful time structure, unacceptable purpose of the activity or harmful social relations (Jahoda, 1981, pp. 189–190). Thus, unemployment not only negatively impacts psychological well-being by the absence of latent functions, but also by the inadequate occurrence of these functions if they do not meet personal preferences and needs. A similar situation can arise when attempting to compensate for work functions with non-employment activities, such as leisure or unemployment benefits. Incomplete or insufficient occurrence of this process is better than its complete absence. An inadequate occurrence, however, has a negative impact on well-being (Jahoda, 1981, pp. 189–190). Generally, the compensation through other activities outside of work often does not seem possible. The relevance of work can be seen mainly in the psychological meaning of work. When these functions are absent due to unemployment, it can lead to individual psycho-social stress. Not all jobs fulfill all functions equally, and not every individual requires all functions in the same manner to attain psychological well-being (Kieselbach, 1983, pp. 4–5).

The functional model primarily relates the work functions with job loss, meaning that functions are lost when one becomes unemployed. This thesis focuses on young adults who are transitioning from school or training to work. While some have already worked, many have not yet experienced employment, which means that they do not lose the functions of work. It is important to note that even without employment, these individuals may still have functions from their previous institution of school, such as daily routine and meaningful activity. Of course, if one takes a broader view of the aspect of loss and generally assumes important functions provided by employment, the young unemployed naturally lack these functions. In addition, for example, in this study, individuals who are unemployed but have marginal jobs or are participating in ALMP may considered unemployed, but they may be fulfilling at least some of the functions of work or serving as a substitute for work, such as training. The definition of

unemployment therefore plays a major role in this approach about functions of work. Moreover, Jahoda's general approach has been subject to various criticisms. Here are a few examples: Nordenmark and Strandh (1999) criticize the functional point of view regarding the relationship between unemployment and well-being. This approach ignores the individual (psychological) needs of the person and the possibilities of changing needs over time for individuals, as well as the consideration of social change (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999, p. 578). It neglects the individual situations, experiences, and conditions of work and unemployment and the underlying mechanisms (Ezzy, 1993, pp. 44–45). It also ignores differences in the impact on the unemployed and the agency of the affected unemployed (Rogge, 2013, pp. 55–56). This approach can be helpful in understanding the situation in this study but considering the definition of unemployment and the circumstances are important. For example, since in this study people in ALMP or working marginally are considered as unemployed one can assume they may have at least partly the functions of work or compensate them.

*Vitamin analogy model*

Warr's (1987b) *vitamin analogy model* demonstrates a comparable approach to emphasizing the relation between employment (or unemployment) and mental health. The term "mental health" can have varying meanings, depending, for example, on the research perspective (Warr 1987b, p. 277). It may be viewed as a medical term associated with illness or as a term focused on a positive health perspective. Warr (1987b) uses the latter approach. Basic dimensions in this approach are "affective well-being, competence, autonomy, aspiration, and integrated functioning" (Warr, 1987b, pp. 277–278). This vitamin model considers functions of work similar to latent functions (Jahoda, 1981, 1982, 1983), but expands and complements them (Warr, 1987b, pp. 281–283), to close a gap, e.g., with regard to the individual meaning of work and unemployment (Ezzy, 1993, p. 45).

Like Jahoda (1981, 1982, 1983) it goes beyond purely internal and intrinsic aspects of work, such as in the job characteristic model (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1980, pp. 89–98) and also takes into account of environmental factors and determinants outside the actual job (Warr, 1987b, pp. 282–283). These context factors can positively or negatively affect mental health depending on their intensity and duration (Warr, 1987b, p. 283), in analogy to vitamins, which can also be harmful in excessive doses (Warr, 1987b, pp. 286–289). In this vitamin approach, which is situation-centered, mental health is determined by nine characteristics of the environment. These, labeled vitamins, do not act linearly, and differ in their effects. They

interact with the environment. The nine vitamins are availability of money, physical security, valued social position opportunity for control, opportunity for skill use, externally generated goals, variety, environmental clarity, and opportunity for interpersonal contact (Warr, 1987b, pp. 279–283). It is later assumed that there are twelve characteristics that constitute a good job and determine whether someone is happy or unhappy and thus be determinants of a person's psychological well-being (Warr, 2008, pp. 6–7). The twelve vitamins are desire for autonomy and influence, desire for skill use, desire for goals and challenge, desire for variety, need for clarity, concern for social relationships, desire for money, concern for physical comfort and security, desire for a significant role, desire for supervisory support, concern about the career outlook, and concern for fairness. People attach different importance to these aspects (vitamins), which also means that the need differs from person to person (Warr, 2008, pp. 22–24). This basic model can be generalized to employment, unemployment and retirement (Warr, 2008, p. 6). The vitamin analogy model is more differentiated, taking the environment into account, than Jahoda's model's dichotomous distinction between work and unemployment (Ezzy, 1993, p. 46; Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2006, p. 16). However, the model has limitations, including a lack of consideration for individual experiences within the social environment (Ezzy, 1993, p. 46).

*Agency restriction model*

In comparison to Jahoda's deprivation model and Warr's vitamin model, which represent situation-based explanatory models, Fryer's agency restriction model takes a stronger interest-based approach (Paul & Moser, 2006, p. 597). The agency theory (Fryer, 1986) is another alternative explanation for possible consequences of unemployment on well-being. Accordingly, individuals are intrinsically motivated, autonomous, active, and independent. If financial constraints restrict these possibilities for action, those affected will experience dissatisfaction and lead an unsatisfactory life. Personal agency is a feature of both the unemployed and the employed and describes, among other things, the (possibility of) activity in actions (Fryer & Payne, 1984). If they are unable to actively change events, e.g., due to unemployment, these possibilities are limited, which leads to an impaired well-being (Fryer, 1988, pp. 227–228).

*Incongruence approach*

Paul and Moser (2006) argue that Fryer's agency approach neglects the fact that many unemployed people aspire to a job and feel attached to employment. According to the *incongruence approach*, unemployment can cause a person's values, ambitions, and employment-related goals to become imbalanced, leading to unfulfilled aspirations and needs. This leads to harmful stress, which has a negative effect on the individual's well-being (Paul & Moser, 2006). In contrast to the deprivation model or the vitamin model, the incongruence model does not focus on psychological needs. Instead, it explains the effects of unemployment on mental health through the values of employment that are embedded in society (Paul, Zechmann, & Moser, 2016, p. 374). This approach implies that unemployed and employed people have quite similar life goals, and that life goals do not change when one becomes unemployed. However, the lack of employment makes it harder for the unemployed to achieve these goals, leading to reduced psychological well-being. This suggests a mediating effect of unachieved or unattainable life goals (Paul, Vastamäki, & Moser, 2016).

*Social identity Theory*

The social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) assumes that a person defines his or her identity, i.e., who he or she is, is based on his or her sense of belonging to a particular social group. By distinguishing oneself from and comparing oneself to the out-group, i.e., to those who have different characteristics and to whom one does not feel a sense of belonging, individuals determine their own actions, self-esteem, and prestige. Social groups compare themselves with each other and assign characteristics to the other groups. The prestige of a group depends on the value assigned to it. The perception and ranking of one's own group depend on how the out-group is evaluated. It is assumed, that people strive to achieve or maintain a positive social identity, or, if they are dissatisfied with the group and thus with their own social identification, they try to leave the group and join a "better" one (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, pp. 40–43). Negative identity can be associated with low self-esteem and prestige in terms of unemployment when compared to employed individuals. The feeling that one does not belong to the group of the unemployed and to the characteristics of the unemployed present in society, and that one is dissatisfied with them, can have a negative impact on one's own well-being. In addition, the actions and attributions of the other group could also be harmful. This concept is related to the theory of stigmatization.

*Concept of stigmatization*

Stigma concepts such as Goffman (1986) can help to understand the relationship between unemployment and impaired well-being. According to Goffman, stigma is a deviation from the norm that carries negative connotations. People often anticipate certain characteristics in others based on normative expectations, which leads to the categorization or pigeonholing of individuals without knowing them. If these characteristics and assignments are interpreted as particularly negative in society and produce negative effects, such as discrediting, they can be considered stigmatizing (Goffman, 1986, pp. 11–15). In social situations and interactions, people can assume both the normal and stigmatized roles. This process involves two perspectives and can occur in different areas and phases of life (Goffman, 1986, pp. 163–165).

There are three different forms or reasons of stigmatization that influence the interaction between the "normal" and the "stigmatized", the physiological deformation, the defective or problematic characteristics, including unemployment, and the social origin (Goffman, 1986, pp. 14–15). Thus, according to this theory, they may be self-inflicted, as in long-term unemployment, or not, as in social origin or congenital physical limitations. Being discredited because of unemployment, e.g., being called lazy or a scrounger, can have a negative impact on well-being and self-identity. In the case of the long-term unemployed in particular, it is likely that their well-being will be negatively affected by the public and personal perceptions of the unemployed (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2006, p. 17). In current stigma research, however, the stigmatized are not labeled as helpless, as they are considered in former research, but as acting, i.e., seen and responding with certain options (Rogge, 2013, p. 59). Overall, it is also important to note that, especially with regard to stigmatization theories, in certain contexts, such as Germany with low unemployment rates, the stigmatization of the unemployed can increase (Biewen & Steffes, 2008). This has also been seen in other countries, such as Switzerland, with a qualitative research approach (Lorenzini & Giugni, 2016, p. 84). For instance, individuals who are unemployed and reside in regions or countries with low unemployment rates may face less tolerance of their unemployment status and increased exposure to discrimination, which can further impact their well-being (Staiger et al., 2018, pp. 1095–1096).

In addition, the social psychological *attribution theories* (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2006, p. 17) which attempt to explain people's behavior on the basis of information obtained from other people, are also closely related to the stigmatization concepts and can explain the negative consequences of unemployment in respect to public and self-perception. Heider (1958) for example, distinguishes between internal and external attributes, i.e., given internal

characteristics of a person and externally influenced causes that affect the person's behavior. There are a number of attribution theories. What they have in common is the assumption that people classify certain behavior in relation to the causes and then, based on this, the behavior is determined as a reaction (Kelley & Michela, 1980, p. 458).

*Stress theories*

*Stress* during unemployment can have a substantial impact on well-being, as the following approaches show. While there are different definitions and approaches to examining stress in research, it is generally understood as a difficulty in life that affects one's overall well-being (Pearlin, 1991, p. 261). Stress is a multifaceted phenomenon that can elicit (negative) emotions, frustration, or anxiety, among other effects. It can also impact the behavior of those affected. Given its complexity, stress must be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective (Lazarus, 1966, pp. 1–3). Stress can be examined as a phenomenon that is differentiated on sociological, physiological, and psychological levels. This means that stress is generated by certain problems acting as stimuli (Lazarus, 1966, p. 27). Although the different levels are distinguishable, they are strongly interconnected. A stimulus can affect a level, such as having a psychological effect, but it is not always the case. For instance, social events, like experiencing unemployment, can trigger stress (Lazarus, 1966, pp. 401–402). In this context, appraisal theories, e.g., the *transactional stress model* (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987), are important because they take into account an individual evaluation of the situation, i.e., the subjective view on objective threats. Traditional stress research using stimulus-response-oriented approaches did not allow for statements about which stress situations can be compensated for by other areas of life or events, or what interactions exist between stress and other areas or events. This is one reason why it may be necessary to adapt these models to account for individual cognition. Stimuli can be perceived and evaluated subjectively as stress or not. In this context, intra- and interindividual stress coping skills and coping strategies are also important (Katz & Schmidt, 1991, pp. 9–10).

In addition, the *cumulative stress model* can explain how the duration of unemployment affects psychological health. Cumulative stresses in various areas, such as psychological, social, and economic, lead to increasing impairment in psychological health (Jackson & Warr, 1984). Possible stress triggers include desire for employment and economic stress. However, life adjustments and coping strategies can stabilize or improve psychological health after a period of time (Jackson & Warr, 1984, pp. 612–613). Similar approaches and assumptions of

adaptation over time, e.g., in the case of unemployment, can also be found in further literature (e.g., De Witte et al., 2010; Lazarus, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Warr, 1987a).

*Phases or stages models*

As mentioned, there are adaptation models in psychology that consider the psychological impact of unemployment over time. Phase or stage models can also help to understand the impact of unemployment on individual well-being by examining the duration of unemployment.

In the study "Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal", Jahoda et al. (1978 [1933]) examined a town that was severely impacted by unemployment. The researchers used both qualitative and quantitative methods to identify specific attitudes among the population. Four types of people have been identified as having different psychological effects as a result of lack of financial income or economic deprivation due to unemployment: the (morally) unbroken, the resigned, the desperate, and the apathetic (Jahoda, 1982, p. 21). However, this study from the 1930s focuses on families affected by long-term unemployment and severe structural unemployment. It does not address the group of young adults who are unemployed.

Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld (1938) concluded on the basis of several studies on unemployment, e.g., on Jahoda et al. (1978 [1933]), that psychological consequences of unemployment of the persons concerned change over the period of unemployment, i.e., they proceed in certain *phases*. During the first phase of unemployment, individuals may experience a shock, their well-being is impaired, but they actively seek new employment with optimism for the future. In the second phase, if employment is not found, individuals may experience worry and despair, leading to a pessimistic outlook on the future and a substantial decline in well-being can appear. The third phase describes individuals who have a broken attitude towards their situation but have come to accept it. However, these phases differ from individual to individual, and other factors, such as the attitude with which one begins the phase of unemployment and the duration of the phases (Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938, pp. 377–379). These phases represent possible psychological consequences during unemployment and can show different influences and changes on well-being (Strandh, 2000, p. 5).

However, models based on phases or stages have been extensively discussed and criticized (Ezzy, 1993, pp. 43–45; Fryer, 1985). Some phase models have for example the shortcoming that they do not adequately consider the complexity of the unemployment process and the

heterogeneity of the unemployed people. This is because these models often portray the affected person as helpless and passive, who automatically experiences the burden of unemployment and therefore assume an automated process of psychological processes. The individual context, i.e., life situation, social processes and other mechanisms that have an influence on the situation are not taken into account (Strehmel & Halsig, 1988, pp. 63–64). The model proposed by Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld (1938) is considered more as a descriptive framework that does not explain the underlying patterns. Additionally, it also does not consider the individuality of the unemployed, i.e., the heterogeneity of the group, and oversimplifies the experience of unemployment (Ezzy, 1993, p. 44).

*Social Exclusion*

Social exclusion – see for example Kronauer et al. (1993), Kronauer (2010), Castel (2000) for initial approaches and concepts on social exclusion – is another important theoretical approach and perspective in the context of unemployment and well-being. It was also the framework for the underlying data collection of this thesis. There are different approaches of social exclusion. The EXCEPT project understood social exclusion as a multidimensional concept (Gebel et al., 2021, pp. 8–9), including inter alia the dimensions of the well-being and health, the financial situation and the autonomy of the unemployed. Especially long-term unemployment can occur as decisive risk factor for experiencing social exclusion (Kieselbach, 2001, 2003). It is assumed that unemployment can have multidimensional consequences and cumulative disadvantages (Gallie et al., 2003), affecting psychological, social, and economic domains. For instance, the concept of social exclusion is proposed as a comprehensive perspective on the various strains experienced during unemployment (Beelmann et al., 2001, p. 146). All of these factors can have direct or indirect effects on subjective well-being. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the consequences, it can be helpful to look at social exclusion to grasp the complexity of these effects.

### 2.2.3 Causes of unemployment

The focus of this thesis is not on the causes of unemployment; therefore, they are only briefly discussed at a theoretical level. However, it may be useful to consider reasons for unemployment when examining the subjective perspective and experiences of the impact of youth unemployment on well-being. The perception of the situation by those affected can be

influenced by the reasons for unemployment, which can also be relevant for the coping process. This is a form of effect moderation, which means that the effect of unemployment on well-being varies depending on the reason for unemployment. These considerations, if relevant, will then be taken up in the results and in the discussion.

There are two main areas to consider: first, there are the *institutional, conjunctural, or macrostructural* reasons (Dietrich, 2015, pp. 8–11; Dietrich & Möller, 2016). Possible reasons for unemployment in this context may be a lack of vocational training places on the labor market/vocational training market (Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 5) or lack of protection against dismissal (Buchholz & Blossfeld, 2011, p. 83). In this context, structural circumstances prevent young people from changing their unemployment situation. This area is a complex interplay of many factors influencing the labor market (situation) (Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2018).

Secondly, there are *individual level and action level approaches* (Dietrich, 2015, pp. 7–8) that attempt to explain unemployment. These approaches view affected individuals as neutral actors who may have caused the situation themselves or are responsible for it, and who may also be able to resolve it on their own. In this context, reasons for unemployment could be, inter alia, insufficient educational or vocational qualifications (Dietrich & Möller, 2016; Kieselbach, 2001, p. 19; Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 5) or a lack of practical experience (Brenke, 2012, p. 11).

In addition to the reasons for unemployment outlined and the stated effects of unemployment on well-being, individual coping can also play an important role in determining well-being during unemployment.

## 2.3 Coping (youth) unemployment and its consequences (on well-being)

This section on coping introduces the concepts of coping to clarify their intended meaning in this thesis. Individual coping may be an important moderator of the effect of unemployment on well-being. To illustrate this further, a closer examination of the various existing theories and concepts in the field of coping is necessary.

As a *complex* and *multifaceted (multidimensional) process*, coping can be considered from different perspectives and theoretical approaches. Depending on the research interest, the concept of coping can be designed with a different focus. Coping approaches generally come mainly from psychology and sociology (Marten-Mittag, 2004, p. 35). In the following, some of these central coping approaches serve as a framework for this work. These concepts, along with

their underlying mechanisms in the context of unemployment and coping, were (partially) considered during the analyses and development of categories or served as general guidance. Approaches from various disciplines, such as sociology or psychology, were used and found to be relevant to the current research interest. However, it is important to note that the analytic approach was designed as an inductive and deductive interplay, starting inductively and then linking to existing theories, studies, and concepts in a next step, in order not to disregard existing research (see also chapter 4).

### 2.3.1 Psychological approaches

Coping plays a particularly important role in stress research, where it has its origins (Reißig, 2010, pp. 56–57). It is also essential in health research (Lazarus, 1993, p. 234), medicine, psychology, and sociology (Katz & Schmidt, 1991, pp. 10–11). Stress is considered a result of the relationship between a person and his or her environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Unemployment and its consequences can cause stress if they are experienced as life difficulties (Pearlin, 1991, p. 261). This stress can lead to negative emotions such as frustration or anxiety, which can affect well-being (Lazarus, 1966, pp. 1–3).

To get an insight into the broad field of coping approaches, different approaches are presented, starting with the field of psychology. The most well-known and common approach is probably the one by Lazarus and Folkman (1984, 1987). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe coping "as realistic and flexible thoughts and acts that solve problems and thereby reduce stress" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 118). They later refer more specifically to coping with emotions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987, p. 142). Compared to earlier models, this coping model by Lazarus and Folkman focuses on how individuals perceive and evaluate their social environment, prioritizing cognition over behavior. It examines the coping processes considering the individual's relationship with his/her environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, pp. 118–119). Coping processes are applied in an attempt to mitigate a threat. Primary appraisal involves cognitive evaluation of the trigger (possible threat), while secondary appraisal involves the use of specific coping processes to address the stressor. Factors such as identification of the trigger, possible alternatives, or possible actions influence the coping process (Lazarus, 1966, pp. 208–209).

In addition, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasize the processual nature of coping, which distinguishes it from previous approaches. This means that the coping process can be adapted over time to match the context or life situation of the individual. However, certain fixed coping

patterns, such as consistencies in or certain constant preferences for dealing with a stressor, are possible (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, pp. 128–130). From this process characteristic coping is understood "as ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus, 1993, p. 237).

In general, two basic coping approaches can be distinguished: action to confront the source of the threat to mitigate or eliminate the effects (direct-action tendencies); cognitive efforts to improve the situation without acting, i.e., defense (defensive reappraisal). Action-based coping, for example, can be action to change the current situation, avoidance, attack, or inaction (Lazarus, 1966, pp. 258–318). In this context, coping mechanisms that maintain positive emotions or prospects are also considered. That means that rather passive form of dealing, such as tolerating, accepting, or ignoring the situation, as well as more active focused coping strategies that target the problem have to be taken into account (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 138–140). Hence, this approach to stress and coping distinguishes between two main functions of coping: emotion-focused and problem-focused. The approach sometimes also includes the idea of cognitive coping (through reappraisal) (Lazarus, 2006, pp. 77–78; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987, p. 147). According to this approach, addressing the source of the problem, such as changing person-environment relationships, e.g., overcoming unemployment, i.e., starting an employment, is considered problem-focused, while managing or improving the negative emotions arising from the situation is emotion-focused.

Coping styles and their differentiation are useful for conceptualizing individual coping processes and understanding the complex relationship between coping and changes in various areas, such as personal health (in relation to stress) and social relationship (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 126). Later, it was suggested that the coping process should not be limited to problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. This is because the process cannot be interpreted as distinct strategies, as they interrelate in the coping process. To fully understand the coping process of an individual, it is necessary to examine these interdependent strategies and mechanisms, and it is necessary to examine how these factors influence each other and contribute to a specific coping outcome (Lazarus, 2000, p. 669). An outcome can be, for example, an improvement in well-being during unemployment. The success of coping strategies, however, depend, inter alia, on the proceeding adequacy for situations (needs and opportunities) which can change over time (Lazarus, 2006, p. 122). Thus, coping does not

automatically mean success. Social conditions, individual needs, and social support are the key factors that play a decisive role (Haan, 1977, p. 63).

In addition, there may be maladaptive coping styles that are formed in childhood and then used unconsciously later in life to avoid certain emotions, e.g., by overcompensating, avoiding and conforming (Young et al., 2005, pp. 67–71). If a certain defense mechanism is permanently used in different life situations and events, it can have a maladaptive effect (Seiffge-Krenke, 2017, p. 40). The general difference between coping and automatic reactions to certain events is not always possible to locate in life situations. Automatic reactions in behavior, including the cognitive type, are mostly learned processes that are then applied in daily life. Coping must be performed when these processes and resources are no longer sufficient (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 131). *Adaptive processes* cannot be assigned to coping automatically, but coping is considered as a sub form or composition of different focused adaptive mechanisms (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 132).

In the literature, there is no uniform term for behavior to reduce the effects of stress (Marten-Mittag, 2004, p. 33). Therefore, it is important to note that in psychology, there are several concepts who are related to coping, that can partly overlap with coping concepts or are mentioned in this context. Among others, the concepts of *resistance [Widerstand] and defense [Abwehr],* derived from psychoanalysis, are complex and have changed over time. They are often broadly defined or used as synonyms. However, they play a major role in coping and provide clues to personal structural traits or conditions such as emotional regulation. Research on coping with stressors or illness originated as defense process research [Abwehrprozessforschung] and has since been developed under the construct of coping research (Seiffge-Krenke, 2017, pp. 33–35).

During times of stress, such as unemployment, people may experience vicious circles as part of their coping process. One such circle is the *motivational* vicious circle, where individuals lose interest in employment or work during unemployment. This can hinder them from finding suitable and satisfying employment and from motivating themselves to search for new opportunities. In addition, a *cognitive* vicious circle can develop in which the unemployed person already personally perceives low or poor chances of finding a new job and then passively and reluctantly tries to find a new job (Strehmel & Halsig, 1988, pp. 73–74). Another type is the *actional* vicious circle (Strehmel & Halsig, 1988, p. 73), which can be damaging when coping fails, leading to resignation and avoidance of further applications due to frustration (Frese & Mohr, 1978, pp. 319–320). The *emotional* vicious circle (Strehmel & Halsig, 1988,

p. 73) is characterized by emotional stress that makes it difficult to get out of unemployment (Ulich, 1995, pp. 186–206).

### 2.3.2 Sociological approaches

In addition to stress research approaches, coping can also be presented in the context of critical life events, which can have an impact on one's well-being, e.g., due to emotional stress (Filipp & Aymanns, 2018, p. 27). These approaches are closely related to concepts in stress research and extend or focus on social behavior. The discrepancy between desire and reality, i.e., the failure to achieve personal goals, such as the unavailability of a training place during the transition from school to work and/or unemployment, can be described as a critical life event. It can be understood as a disturbance in the person's environmental structure. Therefore, not only individual conditions, such as individual education, but also general conditions, such as the unemployment rate, the labor market situation, etc., can influence the life event. Thus, in addition to personal factors, environmental factors may need to be adapted or overcome in order to cope with these critical life events (Reißig, 2010, pp. 55–56).

In social science research, the idea of coping is generally based on a transactional relationship between the person and his or her environment (Faltermaier, 1987, pp. 60–61; Reißig, 2010, p. 64). Gerhardt (1979) proposes a sociological perspective for coping in the context of life events research and calls for the integration and consideration of social action within the framework of existing theoretical approaches. She was one of the first to indicate that coping needs to be considered as a social action (Faltermaier, 1987, p. 85). Gerhardt (1979) suggested in an early approach a three-level differentiation of coping strategies for specific life events, developed in the context of patient research and health improvement. These levels – psychological, social, and psychophysiological – are independent but linked to specific life events. This coping approach is based on causal models, i.e., physiological, psychological, and social conditions or events create the individual's condition and coping. The meaning of a live event and the personal emotions it evokes are crucial in determining how an individual feels and copes. People may rearrange their social environment by changing or adapting parts of it (Gerhardt, 1979, p. 214).

Events can be, for instance, the loss of meaningful objects (e.g., certain resources or people) or social roles. Another case would be problematic events or conditions (e.g., unemployment periods) which last for a long time and cannot be overcome by purely psychological coping, but require interaction with the social environment, i.e., social coping. Depending on the

specific life event, certain forms of coping are necessary. These forms are successful when they address the relevant aspects of the event, such as the psychological or social components (Gerhardt, 1979, pp. 208–210). When discussing unemployment and its impact on well-being, various issues may arise at different levels, including financial and psychological problems. These issues need to be addressed in different ways according to this approach. Psychological coping and social coping can be seen as two distinct ways of dealing with the situation. Psychological coping involves cognitive strategies, while social coping involves taking action (Gerhardt, 1986, pp. 34–39). The concept of two forms of coping (psychological and social) shows similarity to the basic distinction between emotion-focused and problem-focused coping, e.g., in the previous discussed approach of Lazarus and Folkman (Reißig, 2010, p. 58). Moreover, Gerhardt (1986) used the term socioeconomic coping, to describe a form of social action to maintain or restore socioeconomic aspects of life, such as employment and income (Gerhardt, 1986, pp. 34–39).

In addition, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) describe a sociological approach to stress and coping, where individuals take action to protect themselves from potentially stressful life events that can damage their (psychological) well-being. There are three ways to implement coping: changing or eliminating the cause of the problem; or cognitively changing the perception of the cause so that it is no longer perceived as problematic, thus changing its meaning; or controlling emotions in the problematic situation.

According to this approach, *resources* play a decisive role. Social resources, psychological resources, and specific coping responses can be differentiated as dimensions of coping. Social resources are anchored in the social network, e.g., family and friends. Psychological resources are personality traits (e.g., self-esteem) and specific coping responses are certain behaviors and cognitions (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, pp. 4–5).

The more coping resources a person has and the more broadly they are distributed, the more likely he or she is to be protected from stress and thus from reduced well-being, e.g., during unemployment. However, it is important to always consider the context in which these resources are utilized, as coping processes are highly individualized and can have varying degrees of success for different individuals, thus affecting well-being in different ways (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 18). In general, stress research indicates that people who are exposed to similar stress stimuli, i.e., stressors, respond differently to this stress and are thus affected by negative consequences to a different extent (Pearlin, 1991, p. 262; Pearlin & Skaff, 1996, p. 242). The moderating role of mastery, support from the social network (social support), and

coping resources can be one possible explanation. The access to these resources and the application of these therefore play a decisive role in the stress process with regard to the well-being of the individual (Pearlin & Skaff, 1996, p. 242).

Overall, the construct of coping and the study of it are very complex. Therefore, it is suggested to not focus only on coping for explaining different outcomes (Pearlin, 1991, p. 262). To understand coping, it seems crucial to look at the causes and conditions of stress (Pearlin, 1991, p. 267). Stressors can be specific conditions, events, or permanent role strains, or other unknown forms or combinations of several stressors that may influence each other. Specific life situations may be experienced as stressors by some individuals and not by others. This depends on the meaning that individuals attach to specific conditions, which in turn influences coping behavior (Pearlin, 1991, pp. 263–265). Thus, it is essential first to examine the meaning that a person ascribes to a particular event or condition (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987), and then as a next step, to examine and better understand coping. Thus, it is relevant to examine each case individually and to understand what determines the individual situation from the perspective of the individual (Pearlin, 1991, p. 266).

Given the individual and complex nature of stressful situations, it is important to take a *holistic view* of the coping process (Pearlin & Aneshensel, 1986, pp. 434–435). To understand the coping process and its effects on well-being, it is advantageous to take a broad and open approach. In addition to positive effects, it is important to consider negative effects, including both direct and indirect consequences that may be immediately visible or initially invisible. The time dimension should also be taken into account, including short-term and long-term consequences. Additionally, it is important to consider the source of coping mechanisms, whether they come from the individual, are planned or spontaneous, or are provided formally from external sources, and how these areas are related (Pearlin, 1991, p. 275).

The coping approaches of Gerhardt, Pearlin, and Lazarus and Folkman share similarities in terms of the forms and functions of their strategies. However, Pearlin emphasizes the importance of taking a comprehensive view of the situation and assessing it thoroughly. This can be particularly beneficial given the complexity of unemployment and its impact on individual well-being. While psychological approaches tend to focus on different psychological processes, sociological approaches postulate that social support is of great relevance during the coping process.

### 2.3.3 The role of social support

The above-described coping approaches, especially the sociological approaches, have addressed the importance of *social support* in the coping process. This section will now clarify what is meant by social support, particularly in relation to the coping process in the context of unemployment and well-being. Thoits (1986) considers social support as an assistance during the coping process because there are strong similarities and overlaps between individual coping behavior (and its functions) under stress, i.e., by the person him or herself, and the support (and its functions) provided externally to the affected individuals (Thoits, 1986, p. 416). One advantage of this view of social support and coping could be that it can partially resolve the complexity of coping processes and thus identify clear helpful resources in the coping process (Thoits, 1986, pp. 421–422). The (potential) resources from an individual's social network can also be attributed to social capital (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 191).

Considering the resources used during the coping process can be crucial to understand the coping process. A differentiation can be made, for example, between subjective resources, such as personal resources, and objective resources, such as social resources (social support, social network) or material resources (financial means or goods) (Faltermaier, 1987, pp. 105–106). The effects of the stressors on health are moderated by opportunities for social support and suitable coping mechanisms (Cobb, 1976; Thoits, 2013, p. 368).

Coping assistance can take different forms (Thoits, 1986, pp. 419–420), e.g., specific functions can be instrumental, emotional, and informational help or assistance (House, 1983, pp. 22–26). Emotional support can improve a person's well-being and self-esteem (Aymanns, 1992, p. 221). Cobb (1976) generally regards social support "as information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations" (Cobb, 1976, p. 18). As social support is considered a process, it can change over time, as can the coping process (Marten-Mittag, 2004, p. 32).

Social support is defined in different ways in the literature. In the context of unemployment, it can be seen as a resource from one's social network, such as family, friends, or a partner. This resource can take various forms and fulfill different functions, such as overcoming the financial and psychological problems that unemployment can bring. It is important to note that these forms of support can overlap and be used together.

### 2.3.4 The life-facet model of coping with job loss

In addition to the general approaches about coping or social support described so far, there is another model that can help to understand unemployment, more precisely job loss, and the coping of well-being impacts (McKee-Ryan & Kinicki, 2002).

"The life-facet model of coping with job loss" is based on previous models, such as from Latack et al. (1995) and refers to the individual level perspective. The aim of this model is to enhance comprehension of the coping process for unemployed individuals, by revealing their evaluation (appraisal) of the life event. The model focuses on individual coping aims, which are crucial for determining coping efforts and mechanisms. According to the authors, coping aims and coping are important for the individual well-being during unemployment (McKee-Ryan & Kinicki, 2002, p. 22). In addition, they point out the importance of the personal meaning of the job loss situation. These coping goals can be determined by individual needs or new opportunities after becoming unemployed. Therefore, the outcome, e.g., the financial situation or psychological impacts, plays an important role. There is heterogeneity of how people are affected of consequences of job loss and how they appraise the situation (McKee-Ryan & Kinicki, 2002, pp. 11–14).

As previously stated, this model based on considerations of Latack et al. (1995), but the authors have extended the model. It is assumed that when individuals become unemployed, they compare their status with others in specific life facets (psychological, physiological, spiritual, daily routine, sense of purpose, social, financial) and evaluate whether this deviation is problematic or not. This evaluation is influenced by the work-role centrality, the coping resources (personal, social, financial), and the socio-demographic characteristics (age, education, occupation, gender). Depending on the outcome of the assessment, certain coping elements are selected which then lead to specific coping mechanisms within these facets. Coping efficacy also plays a role here. The subjective well-being in the unemployment situation depends on the alignment between coping goals and coping (McKee-Ryan & Kinicki, 2002, pp. 15–16).

In addition to general (stress) coping models, this model is advantageous due to its direct reference to unemployment (job loss). Like other models, it places great value on the individual's perception of the situation (and its specific life facets), and the importance of coping resources in assessing the situation and determining well-being during unemployment. However, not all young people experience job loss, as some become unemployed during the transition into vocational training or the labor market.

## 2.4 Concluding remarks

The previous presentation of the theoretical approaches and considerations is not intended to be complete, but rather to provide a brief insight into possible explanations for the relationship between (youth) unemployment and well-being, which is the topic of this thesis. In addition, this presentation is intended to provide transparency regarding the prior knowledge considered for this study and the research process. For instance, if categories or themes resulting from the analysis or interpretation process are shown, these descriptions may help to understand the thinking behind it. It also emphasizes the importance of the research topic and the rationale for using a qualitative research approach.

The existing explanatory theories about the impact of unemployment on well-being and health are multifaceted. However, they may not (fully) capture the complexity of the consequences of unemployment on well-being and may not adequately consider the experiences of young people during their transition from school to work. They focus on job-loss and do not consider different shapes of unemployment, e.g., during the transition process from school to work.

While there are two main areas of theories, the context-oriented, such as functional models, and the individual-oriented, such as agency approaches (Rogge, 2013, pp. 55–60), it could be relevant to combine the perspectives of these approaches. This is because the different approaches and their discussion show that it is important to include and consider psychological and social aspects (Ezzy, 1993, p. 47), e.g., the meanings that individuals attach to their situation and the interactions with their social environment, such as society or on institutions to properly understand the mental health or well-being during unemployment.

In this regard the literature shows that it is also important to take into account coping processes. General coping approaches refer to strategies for dealing with stress and critical life events, which could be helpful in understanding the coping process of unemployed young people regarding their well-being. McKee-Ryan and Kinicki (2002) show with their life facet model of coping with job loss a focus on labor market exclusion, but they do not focus on young people. Newer coping approaches focus on the interaction with the environment (Katz & Schmidt, 1991, p. 11). However, generally, the coping process of young unemployed people with unemployment and their well-being is neglected.

The previous considerations have shown the *complexity* of the whole topic of "coping". People may respond very differently to difficulties and are thus affected to varying degrees. Reasons for this can be several factors (e.g., individual stressors) or specific coping mechanisms. Among

others, individual stressors may be specific conditions, events, or other, perhaps unknown forms, or combinations of several stressors that may influence each other (Pearlin, 1991, pp. 262–264).

The literature presents varying perspectives and understandings of coping, which are reflected in the different dimensions of the concepts, e.g., psychological, and social. This also illustrates the interdisciplinary nature of coping research, and there are commonalities and overlaps. It is important to note that these approaches are not necessarily contradictory or distinct, as they are often interrelated due to the complexity of the coping process.

In order to understand the complex process of coping and its impact on well-being, it is therefore relevant to take a broad and comprehensive view of coping (Pearlin, 1991, p. 275). Therefore, this study takes a comprehensive view of coping, using it in both data collection and analysis to conduct a adequate research on this topic. To understand the process fully, it is necessary to adopt an open and inductive approach. This is because excluding too much in advance could hinder the understanding. In addition, previous theories on the subject have not taken young people into account. Although the focus of this study was established from a stronger sociological perspective, a purely action-oriented approach would not have been adequate for this research interest, since the interest lies in the well-being of young people. Therefore this approach includes a view on individual cases and their meaning they give to unemployment and their current consequences first (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; McKee-Ryan & Kinicki, 2002; Pearlin, 1991, pp. 264–266) and then a comprehensive view on coping (e.g., Pearlin, 1991, p. 275). The existing theories provide valuable insights into potential explanatory relationships but are limited by their lack of focus on unemployed youth. Therefore, a complementary inductive approach is required to generate specific insights based on a qualitative study. In the following, the empirical findings to date are discussed, which can also provide a deeper understanding of the research topic and show the necessity for additional (qualitative) research.

# 3 State of research

## 3.1 Unemployment of young people in Germany and its consequences on well-being

Both the introduction and the theoretical framework of this thesis have already provided insights into the potential consequences of unemployment. This chapter aims to give a more detailed overview of the relevant state of research in this area and place this research approach in the scientific context. It does not intend to be a full discussion of the research field, as this would be beyond the scope of the thesis.

Unemployment and its consequences in general have been the object of almost countless national and international studies over many decades, as the phenomenon and its constant relevance for societies and individuals is omnipresent (Paul et al., 2006, p. 35). As this thesis focuses on young adults, it is important to present previous empirical findings about this group. However, this thesis also discusses the empirical results and theories on the general consequences of unemployment and coping, as necessary. In order to understand the relationship between unemployment and well-being, previous research on possible causal mechanisms is considered. This section provides the empirical findings on young people in Germany in this regard, starting with a look at unemployment in general and then focusing on young unemployed people in section 3.1.2.

It is important to note that both theories and empirical studies' results function as prior knowledge and cannot always be separated in this research approach. Therefore, it is crucial to consider them as a whole construct and frame for this study.

### 3.1.1 Overview of the general state of research on unemployment and well-being

There are several *meta-analyses* and *systematic reviews* in this field. Overall, it has been much examined and also confirmed that unemployment can have a negative impact on well-being (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 128). Most studies that focus on this relation, generally look at adults without a specific emphasis on young people or younger adults (especially NEETs) (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 60; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 11). In addition, most studies in this field of health research refer to mental health consequences of unemployment (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 66).

Picchio and Ubaldi (2022) show in their meta-analysis about the relationship between unemployment and health – based on 65 articles between 1990 and 2021 – that unemployment has negative effects on health, especially on the psychological level. Although this meta-analysis is the first to examine health as a whole concept, unemployment seems to have a small effect on general health, depending on the specific health measurement. In psychological measurements of health, the effect is stronger than on the physical level (Picchio & Ubaldi, 2022, pp. 29–30). An older study examined sixteen longitudinal studies from 1980s and 1990s regarding the effect of employment status on mental well-being. Most of these studies show negative impact of unemployment on mental health (Murphy & Athanasou, 1999, p. 89). In a meta-analysis by McKee-Ryan et al. (2005), which is widely cited and recognized in the literature, the results of more than 100 mostly cross-sectional empirical studies indicate that unemployed people have a lower level of well-being (psychological and physical) than employed people (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). In addition, the meta-analysis by Paul and Moser (2009) examined more than 300 studies (cross-sectional and longitudinal) and also indicate that unemployment impairs mental health. Compared to employed people, unemployed people have more psychological problems (34% vs. 16%). They additionally show, that in the last decades this effect was similar for the unemployed (Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278). To my knowledge, the most recent meta-analysis on the effect of unemployment on well-being is by Gedikli et al. (2023) which includes 26 longitudinal studies from European Union, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Australia between 1990 and 2020. There, well-being is considered as a broader concept, considering subjective well-being and mental health together. The results indicate a negative effect on mental health and life satisfaction, too. The authors even confirm that "unemployment is a bad experience for everyone" (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 139) concerning their well-being, i.e., for young and old as well as for low and high educated, etc. In addition, a long periods of unemployment are found to be worse than shorter unemployment periods (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 139).

*Cross sectional studies*, who compare unemployed and employed people, show lower mental health for unemployed people (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 61). *Longitudinal studies* indicate a decrease in mental health when job loss occurs and an increase in mental health when new employment starts again (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, pp. 61–63; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999, p. 97; Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278). These results support the assumption of causal effects of unemployment on mental health (Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278). To sum up, the presented meta-studies are based on various international studies, both cross-sectional and longitudinal, and conclude that unemployment has a causal negative effect on mental health or

well-being (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 67; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999, p. 95; Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278).

The examination of the effect of unemployment on (mental) health is complex because the relationship between cause and effect is usually not entirely clear (Kieselbach, 2000, p. 108). In general, the literature presents two explanatory approaches: the *causal effect* and the *selection effect* for both youth and adult unemployed (Beelmann, 2003, p. 46; Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2006, p. 13). According to the causality assumption, unemployment leads to poorer health, whereas the selection assumption suggests that certain living conditions or life situations lead to unemployment and poorer health (Beelmann, 2003, p. 49). However, it can also be, that people with poor (mental) health are at higher risk becoming unemployed than healthy people (reversed causality), but this seems not the main reason for poor health of most of the unemployed (Wanberg, 2012, p. 376).

When looking more closely at possible effects of unemployment on well-being or mental health, different moderator variables can be considered. While the literature states that individual experience of unemployment and effects are heterogeneous, due to moderators (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 67), it is not yet fully clear what the impact on well-being is for different groups and what the reasons are (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 128). For a more comprehensive discussion of potential moderators and overviews of research results in this context, see for example Voßemer and Eunicke (2015) for a literature review, and McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) and Paul and Moser (2009) for meta-analyses. Some meta-analyses, e.g., the one by Gedikli et al. (2023), are limited in case of relevant moderators, e.g., education, age, etc., due to low number of studies the analysis is based on (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 140).

Regarding the *duration of unemployment,* there is a heterogeneous picture in the literature. The general moderating role on the effect of unemployment on mental health or well-being is noted in several meta-studies and reviews (e.g., Gedikli et al., 2023; Paul & Moser, 2009; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015). Long-term unemployment is examined to be worse for well-being than shorter unemployment periods (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 139). In the meta study by Paul and Moser (2009) the duration appears as moderator for well-being during unemployment, showing stabilization in the second year of unemployment and an increase after several years of being unemployed (Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278). Hollederer (2002) shows in his review on empirical results of international meta analyses and surveys from Germany, e.g., unemployment and health insurance statistics [Krankenkassenstatistiken], the relation between unemployment and health. He concludes that unemployment has a negative effect on one's health. Especially

experiencing a long duration can even cause them psychological problems and intensify, e.g., mental illness. Other research shows, that long-term and short-term unemployment do not seem to show notable differences, it is rather crucial whether unemployment is there or not (Picchio & Ubaldi, 2022, pp. 29–30). On the one hand long-term unemployment can lead to financial restrictions and problems (e.g., financial debts) and psycho-social burden (e.g., problems with time, personal identity, social relations). On the other hand, positive aspects about having more free time for activities with time with family can occur. This is perceived as easing and is especially true for groups who are financially secure or have alternative tasks which are socially accepted (Brinkmann, 1984). In this regard literature shows phase or stages models – in this thesis, for example, there was already a reference to the phase model of Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld (1938) – which take into account the duration of unemployment. Stages models in the literature are often rather descriptions of the course of the unemployment, i.e., focus on the duration, but without explaining the individual correlations and patterns (Ezzy, 1993, pp. 43–44). There is much criticism in this regard and no uniform opinion on the role of duration of unemployment, what current research also shows. Moreover, the number of previous periods of unemployment may also play a role in the well-being during unemployment (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 20).

In addition, newer meta-analyses and literature reviews highlight different consequences on well-being or mental health for *men and women*. In this regard they indicate a stronger negative effect for men (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 139; Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278; Picchio & Ubaldi, 2022, pp. 29–30; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39), sometimes explained by traditional gender roles and alternative role by women. Non-financial reasons such as the different labor market attachment can be confirmed for Germany (Heyne & Voßemer, 2023).

Furthermore, *age* can moderate the effect of mental health or well-being during unemployment (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Age and the associated life phase, e.g., transition from school to work, thus play a role. Picchio and Ubaldi (2022) conclude in their meta-analysis that negative consequences on health decrease with age (Picchio & Ubaldi, 2022, pp. 29–30). Voßemer and Eunicke (2015) show different results on the effect heterogeneity of adult population, i.e., research shows unemployment impact on well-being very different, for age groups, e.g., for young, mid age or old (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39). In some studies, older people are more affected by restricted well-being due to unemployment and sometimes the younger ones; thus a heterogeneous picture is drawn (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 12–13).

In addition, the *socio-economic status,* e.g., high or low, of the unemployed affected moderates the effect on well-being (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39). In this regard, the results of the role of education seem not consistent (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 69). Moreover, people working in blue collar jobs compared to white collar jobs are more distressed (Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278). For many of the factors mentioned so far, e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status, there do not seem to be definitive results yet (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 17).

Regarding several *macro or context factors*, overviews of empirical studies also indicate no consistent results. Unemployment rates in countries do not seem to play no or no big role regarding the impact on well-being (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009, p. 278; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39). In the literature, however, there seems to be no conclusion, since in various research both directions are conceivable, e.g., less self-blame, since many others are also affected, as well as worse chances due to poor labor market situation. For a more detailed discussion see Voßemer and Eunicke (2015, pp. 17–18). Negative effects on mental health seem stronger in economically less developed countries (Paul & Moser, 2009, p. 278). While Paul and Moser (2009) also show that unemployment protection systems appear as moderators for mental health during unemployment and negative effects on mental health are stronger in countries with weak unemployment protection system (Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278), McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) report that unemployment benefits seem to be no moderator. Voßemer and Eunicke (2015) highlight in their review that welfare states can protect well-being due to unemployment protection/benefits, but it is not clear if it is also for the young due to often missing eligibility for young people (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39). Further moderators for consequences of unemployment on well-being could be work norms and employment protection (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 139).

In addition to these moderating effects, there are further multiple influences (moderating, mediating effects) on well-being in unemployment that are not always immediate in nature. The relationship between unemployment and well-being is complex and many interrelated factors, e.g., social, and institutional, need to be taken into consideration to understand the consequences of unemployment. The important point is that due to the multidimensionality of factors and characteristics, well-being may be more impaired for some people affected by unemployment and less impaired for others (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 140). Overall, this also points to the heterogeneity of the effects on well-being.

Several factors for an impact on well-being can be, e.g., the *financial situation* (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 67). The material situation is relevant for the perception of situation in

unemployment and their psychosocial and health-related consequences (Brinkmann, 1984, pp. 469–470). Brinkmann and Wiedemann (1994) highlight, that in general there are negative financial consequences of unemployment, but in individual cases there can be strong differences, in particular the subjective perception appears inconsistent (Brinkmann & Wiedemann, 1994, p. 182).

In the context of unemployment and well-being, literature highlights the importance to consider *subjective perspectives* of the affected (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 20; Wanberg, 2012, p. 376). Although there is a general picture of bad experiences, some are not affected negatively. This heterogeneity could also be explained by the individual experience of unemployment itself (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 20).

In addition*, work* can be of different *individual importance*, depending on its purpose and how important it is to achieve certain goals, so an agency approach would be better to explain the consequences of unemployment, as it takes into account the heterogeneity of the individual meanings of work (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999). Since unemployment indicates a general negative effect on well-being, it shows the importance of work, i.e., that employment is needed to achieve individual goals, which are often set by society (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999, p. 581). Frustration of the unachieved or unachievable life goals can have negative effect on well-being (Paul, Vastamäki, & Moser, 2016).

Although some research suggests that unemployment has a negative impact on the lives of all those affected (Gedikli et al., 2023, p. 139), the overview on empirical results so far indicates heterogeneity in the consequences on well-being. Compared to (mostly quantitative) research presented so far, the *qualitative studies* are often more likely to include a *comprehensive picture* of the complex consequences on well-being. In this respect, classical studies on the consequences of unemployment for individuals, e.g., Jahoda et al. (1978 [1933]) benefited from their methodology, which was close to the object of the study. This means that they examine the experience of unemployment for individuals through interviews, everyday conversations, document analysis, observations. This comprehensive view helped to understand their situation and well-being (Strandh, 2000, p. 6). As a result, four types were developed that describe the different psychological states of the unemployed the (morally) unbroken, the resigned, the desperate, and the apathetic (Jahoda, 1982, p. 21).

Overall, qualitative studies reveal complex and interrelated influences of unemployment on well-being. In a review of 13 qualitative interview studies from the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, China, South Africa, Israel and Finland, which addresses the consequences

of unemployment, Du Toit et al. (2018) show that the context of the unemployed, such as *society and the social environment*, has an important influence on how the situation is perceived. In the social environment (and society), employment is seen as important because of financial income. If this is not the case, it can lead to shame and stigmatization by the society (Du Toit et al., 2018). Giuntoli et al. (2015) show in their qualitative study negative effects on the identity, for example through stigma, when one becomes (involuntarily) unemployed in England.

Another qualitative interview study of involuntary job loss in Sweden states a clear impairment in well-being due to involuntary job-loss. This impairment is visible in *psychological consequences* such as impaired self-esteem and strong emotions, e.g., of hopelessness. There is also a picture of a change in the social life, e.g., in the form of social isolation due to financial shortcomings what can be burdensome (Hiswåls et al., 2017). The financial situation during unemployment can be perceived as problematic, and cause psychological burden on the lives of the unemployed (Giuntoli et al., 2015; D. Mayer & Hollederer, 2022). Stress can also be caused by problems in structuring the day and boredom. In addition, qualitative studies indicate that social support in its different variations is important in coping with psychosocial stresses during unemployment (D. Mayer & Hollederer, 2022).

Moreover, in a qualitative longitudinal study in Germany, Rogge (2013) examined the psychological consequences of unemployment and develops certain identity modes that indicate strain. The situation of unemployment is perceived as stressful in different ways, depending on many factors such as a sense of security, the social relationships, the status, or the mental health. The experience varies from severe suffering to positive emotions being unemployed, in different cases, which may be caused by different individual contexts (Rogge, 2013, pp. 321–322). This clearly shows that unemployment can be experienced very differently, even positive (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 24).

In general, qualitative studies also show that unemployment often can have an impact on the well-being of those affected. However, the picture varies according to contextual factors. In this respect, as previous qualitative research suggests, and as the findings on the heterogeneity of experiences and effects of unemployment also indicate, the whole context needs to be taken into account, not, for example, just single moderators (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39).

### 3.1.2 Consequences and risk factors for young unemployed people's well-being

The previous discussions indicate general negative consequences of unemployment on well-being. The following sections present additional empirical studies and reviews that focus on young unemployed people.

Young people naturally find themselves at some point in their young life at the transition from the education system into the labor market. When becoming unemployed in this phase, both privately in terms of family, and professionally in terms of employment and financial situation, they are in a specific and often different situation than older unemployed people (Heinemann, 1978, pp. 180–182). When they become unemployed at this stage youth unemployment appears multidimensional and complex. Less is known about the causal structure of different dimensions, such as economic, social, and psychological (Dietrich, 2012, p. 8, 2015, p. 25). Although the causality of unemployment on well-being in young people has not yet been conclusively confirmed, which may be due to, among others, the complexity of reciprocal relationships (Dietrich, 2015, p. 22), the heterogeneity of the group of the unemployed (Heinemann, 1978, pp. 180–181), and missing (longitudinal) data and heterogeneity of existing data (Bartelink et al., 2020, p. 556; Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, p. 129), there is empirical evidence of this causal relationship in the literature.

Some reviews of national and international unemployment research indicate that unemployment of young people leads to *mental health impairment* (Bartelink et al., 2020; Hammarström, 1994; Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, 2006, p. 27; Reneflot & Evensen, 2014; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015). For youth this causal effect – an impact of unemployment on mental health – can be confirmed in the meta-analyses by Paul and Moser (2009). Mental health improves when young people at the transition from school to work find a job but when they become unemployed, mental health decreases (Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278). Interestingly, although countries show different social, cultural, and institutional contexts regarding work (Kieselbach et al., 2000, pp. 20–22), several studies about youth unemployment in different countries have drawn these similar conclusions; compared to employed young people at the transition from school to work, those who transition to unemployment have poorer state of mental health (Fryer, 1997, p. 335). In their study involving six European countries, Kieselbach et al. (2000) revealed a general homogeneous picture of the negative relationship between youth unemployment and health in all countries, i.e., mental health problems due to unemployment are observable. In addition, a higher risk of suicidal and risky health behavior was visible in the interviews (Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 32). A newer systematic review also

suggests the relation between unemployment of young people and their mental health problems, anxiety disorders, and depression. However, it is not possible to conclude with certainty whether it is a causal relationship (Bartelink et al., 2020, p. 556). However, earlier reviews of international unemployment research indicate that youth unemployment causes health problems for those affected (Beelmann, 2003, p. 46; Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2006, pp. 24–27).

Kieselbach and Beelmann (2000) highlighted in their literature review about research conducted in Germany a general negative effect of youth unemployment on health. Subjective health appears to be worse among unemployed than among employed young people (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, p. 129). Quantitative studies suggest an improvement in the mean mental health of the employed or a decline in the mental health of the unemployed as possible reasons for this relationship. Both arguments could be together possible explanations. Besides many studies that indicate that unemployment is particularly bad for young people, there are studies that show that the psychological consequences of unemployment are not worse for young people than for older people (Fryer, 1997, pp. 335–340).

Overall, the consequences of unemployment are varying and individual. A number of *(risk) factors* for well-being play a role in this context (Fryer, 1997, p. 334). The relationships are very complex, and the factors can play a moderating and/or mediating role.

One of the main reasons for impaired well-being can be *financial restrictions* during unemployment. Both, an employment, e.g., a successful entry into the labor market, and a good (satisfactory) financial situation after entering the labor market are seen as crucial for the well-being of young people. Longitudinal data shows the high importance of work, because when people get into work, their well-being increases. In this context, the influence of financial resources and the perceived financial burdens during unemployment are decisive for well-being (Schels, 2007).

The *length of unemployment* can be a moderator in this regard (Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 33). The longer young people stay out of the labor market, the more severe the financial problems and lack of social integration can be (Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 41). Living in poverty and experiencing deprivation can lead to several negative effects for young people (Popp & Schels, 2008, p. 168). In particular, young people also have little opportunity to build up a financial buffer as they are relatively new to working and earning money (Schels, 2021, p. 62).

A further consequence that can result from financial problems is the increasing *dependency on other people* (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, p. 129). The transition from school to work often coincides with the period of becoming an adult. This life phase is often accompanied by, or

associated with, financial independence. Quantitative and qualitative studies show that financial constrains and/or problems caused by job insecurity and unemployment, are among the main factors affecting young adults' housing autonomy or the (decision to) leave the parental home (Bertolini, 2011; Bertolini, Hofäcker, & Torrioni, 2018; Jacob & Kleinert, 2008; Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 32; Nilsson & Strandh, 1999). Consequently, unemployed young people stay longer in parental home and therefore are dependent on their parents for a longer time. The housing autonomy, can be a desired goal or element of growing up for many (in Germany) (Berngruber, 2021, p. 145), and can then have a negative impact on well-being when it remains unattained. In addition, conflicts due to dependency on parents can occur in the family (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, p. 129). Family support therefore can be important to prevent from bigger problems during unemployment but can also be an obstacle for becoming adult in regard to their financial independence (Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 32). In Germany, living in a relationship can affect the impact of moving out of the parental home, i.e., unemployed singles have a delayed housing autonomy, while unemployed people with partners do not (Jacob & Kleinert, 2008).

In addition to the financial disadvantages that can be burdensome, a qualitative study shows, that the *lack of the value of work* has an emotional impact and can lead to "vulnerability, inferiority, worthlessness and uselessness" (Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 33) and also depression, which cause life dissatisfaction (Kieselbach et al., 2000, pp. 32–33). Young people in Germany have a strong orientation towards work, and therefore, employment is an essential aspect of their well-being (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, p. 129), what could also be found for young people in other countries in the north and south of Europe (Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 32).

Additional *psychological stresses* can occur, e.g., boredom, missing day structure, and/or fear of career problems (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, p. 129). In addition, due to unemployment at a young age, there may be problems in personal and professional development (Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 41) and therefore can lead to identity development disorders (Kieselbach, 1983, pp. 5–7) as well as labor market problems in the future (Hammarström, 1994). In addition, a lack of confidence or self-esteem can occur (Hammarström & Janlert, 1997; Morrell et al., 1998). Further mechanisms between unemployment and mental health can be self-blame, lack of control, resignation (Hammarström & Janlert, 1997), and inability to plan and lack of prospects (Kieselbach, 1983, pp. 5–7). In general, psychological burdens can lead to nervous symptoms and/or depression in young people (Hammarström & Janlert, 1997; Morrell et al., 1998). In an interview study about young Finnish men, it emerged that unemployment leads to

feelings of shame, guilt, withdrawal, exclusion from society, and concerns. Even people with shorter periods of unemployment show impaired well-being, such as in terms of identity (Björklund et al., 2015).

In terms of *gender*, previous research shows that unemployment among young adults has a stronger negative effect on men's well-being than on women's, but an overall moderate effect. For men, employment is already important and has stronger personal value, while for women, the function of earning money seems more relevant (Schels, 2007). In this regard, men are more mentally burdened by unemployment due to male breadwinner role (De Witte, 1999, p. 161). However, this must be seen critically, because women can also be discriminated due to traditional gender roles (Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 33). Physiological health is more limited in young women. It is assumed that health-related behaviors such as alcohol consumption (especially among young men tobacco and illicit drug use) play a role among young unemployed people (Hammarström, 1994; Morrell et al., 1998). Mortality rates are also increased (Hammarström, 1994), which may be due in part to more suicides at a young age among the unemployed (Hammarström, 1994; Morrell et al., 1998).

In addition, education can be a very important factor for the effect of youth unemployment on health (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000). Schaufeli (1997) found in her study in the Netherlands a causal relationship between unemployment and mental health in school leavers but not in university graduates. However, the studies show different results with regard to the level of education. Further investigations are required in this regard (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 16).

In addition, some qualitative research (Grimmer, 2016; Kieselbach et al., 2000; Schlee et al., 2021) point to the aspect of *stigmatization* in Germany. In a study about young people in Cologne (Germany) the financial situation and the experience of stigmatization seem to be the most important factors in how long-term unemployment is experienced (Grimmer, 2016, pp. 64–65). The problem of stigmatization due to unemployment for the mental health of young adults in Germany could also already be shown by Kieselbach et al. (2000, pp. 32–33). The aspect of stigmatization of young unemployed people may depend on the country context (Giugni & Lahusen, 2016, p. 212). When comparing the narratives of unemployed young people from Italy and Germany, it became apparent that especially in Germany there are strong signs of stigmatization, whereas in Italy, presumably because of the high proportion of this generation are affected by unemployment, it is rather seen as a common fate (Schlee et al., 2021).

In addition, various studies have shown that social isolation (Hammarström & Janlert, 1997; Kieselbach, 1983, pp. 5–7) or social alienation (Hammarström, 1994) poses a risk to mental health due to its mediating role. A qualitative study found that long-term unemployment among young adults in different European countries affects social relationships. This includes reduced contacts and social isolation, which are perceived as problematic. The study highlights economic shortcomings as a possible mechanism for the social consequences (Giugni & Lahusen, 2016, pp. 210–211).

Moreover, youth unemployment can affect multiple domains, i.e., psychological, social, and economic domains, and then lead to *social exclusion* as a dynamic process of multidimensional consequences and disadvantages (Gallie et al., 2003). The EXCEPT project also understood social exclusion as a multidimensional concept (Gebel et al., 2021, pp. 8–9) and showed impacts of labor market exclusion on the mental health or subjective well-being of young people across the European countries studied (for further information on the project and its results, see e.g., Unt et al., 2021). In addition to well-being and health, autonomy and socio-economic consequences were selected and examined as risks for social exclusion in the EXCEPT project (Bertolini et al., 2021). In some studies, social exclusion is seen as a holistic view of various social, economic and psychological stresses in experienced unemployment (Beelmann et al., 2001, p. 146). Especially long-term unemployment can therefore occur as decisive risk factor for experiencing social exclusion (Kieselbach, 2001, 2003). Kieselbach (2003) demonstrated that those young people who have a high risk of being socially excluded have significantly poorer mental health than people who only have an increased or low risk of social exclusion (Kieselbach, 2003, p. 71–74).

In general, research shows that there are both *short-term effects* of unemployment on young adults, such as longer transition periods, and *long-term effects (scarring effects)* that affect future labor market situations, such as recurrent periods of unemployment or income loss, and health (Dietrich, 2015, pp. 24–25; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 14). A review article of the empirical results (including a meta-analysis conducted) suggests the presence of scarring effects of unemployment in terms of wage losses, future unemployment, and dependence on the state (Filomena, 2023). In industrialized countries, high earners, older people and women are particularly affected by a reduction in wages if they have previously experienced unemployment (Gangl, 2006). In Germany and the USA, it has been shown that, for example, unemployment benefits can reduce these negative effects, e.g., a lower income, on later jobs (Gangl, 2004). Youth unemployment in Germany also seems to have an influence on further

unemployment in the working career and can lead to further unemployment. The duration of unemployment experienced at a young age may also have an influence. However, the causality of the relationship could not be clarified. Characteristics such as poorer education could lead to an increased risk of unemployment in adolescence and in later life (Schmillen & Umkehrer, 2014, pp. 5–6). Although it seems that for most young people, the experience of unemployment has only a temporary effect on their later labor market and social position, for people who lack the necessary education, however, it can have a permanent (scarring) effect (Scarpetta et al., 2010, pp. 15–16), which then could have permanent impact on health. In addition, mental stress and mental health impairments can occur in the future. Therefore, a life course perspective becomes relevant in the investigation of unemployment in terms of the effects of unemployment on the health of young adults (Dietrich, 2015, pp. 24–25). However, research on scarring effects of youth unemployment is low, but is already increasing (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 13). For example Brydsten et al. (2015) show that being unemployed during adolescence in Sweden can lead to functional somatic symptoms in adulthood, especially for men. Moreover youth unemployment in Sweden shows effects on later mental health at age 21, 30 and 42 (Strandh et al., 2014). Therefore, research indicates short term and long-term effects of unemployment on young people and their well-being (for further discussions see also Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 14).

## 3.2 Coping in the context of youth unemployment

Research on coping has so far mainly focused on adults in general (Reißig, 2010, p. 59). However, young adults and adolescents should receive special consideration due to certain life events, such as unemployment and challenges during the transition from school-to-work that are linked with stages of life. As already mentioned in the previous chapters, well-being can manifest itself very differently in unemployment. That means that the consequences on well-being are varying and can also be caused by different factors at the same time, inter alia, financial shortcomings, restrictions on leisure time behavior and social contacts, uncertainty about the future, etc. (Brinkmann & Wiedemann, 1994, p. 182).

Research shows that the relationship between unemployment among young people and health is multifaceted and complex. Consequently, a *range of coping mechanisms and support* can be essential in the coping process (Kieselbach et al., 2000, pp. 33–34). As has already been shown theoretically, coping can follow different directions and pursue certain goals, e.g., emotionally overcoming the consequences of unemployment, or the cause of the problems that arise due to

unemployment. Thus, the resources can come from oneself, e.g., financially, or psychologically, but also from outside from one's own social network or institutionally.

A qualitative study about coping with long-term unemployment in Germany was able to identify seven different general types of *biographical coping* for young people, which can be roughly classified into three groups, namely establishing or re-establishing the normality of an employment biography, adapting while unemployment and using available resources, and attempting a new professional or non-professional orientation in life, e.g., regarding women the role of being a mother or housewife (Siebers & Vonderach, 1991; Vonderach et al., 1992). In addition, Beelmann (2003) used an qualitative interview approach to investigate long-term youth unemployment in Germany and young people's opportunities for action (agency), and thus focused on the consequences and on coping. In doing so, he developed different *types of action*: active-initiative agents, inefficient agents, reflected skeptical agents, reactive agents, and resigned agents. The results indicate the *heterogeneity in the experience and management* of long-term unemployment (Beelmann, 2003, pp. 199–200). The individual environmental context, such as social relationships, economic resources from the social network, etc. seem to determine the perceived opportunities for action. This means that social resources are crucial for the perception and coping of the situation (Beelmann, 2003, pp. 201, 227).

There is not always a negative effect on (mental) health of young people, since an intact social network can absorb or prevent these negative effects during unemployment (Beelmann et al., 2001). Kieselbach and Beelmann (2000) show in their review about research conducted in Germany potential moderators for the effect of youth unemployment on health, among others *social support* (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, pp. 126–128). The EXCEPT project examined the consequences of labor market insecurity and exclusion and found that young people in the different countries studied often reported in the qualitative interviews that they benefited from their own social network, particularly the nuclear family, during periods of unemployment and job insecurity (Meo et al., 2021). This was especially evident in Italy, but also in the German interviews. For example, in Italy, the family seems to have a higher priority in terms of coping, whereas in Germany the focus is on financial institutional help (unemployment benefits, etc.), but the family and the social network are also important for example as emotional support and giving advice or assistance in financial emergencies (Meo et al., 2021; Schlee et al., 2021). In addition, Jacob and Kleinert (2014) found living with a partner can affect the transition from unemployment to re-employment due to partner's resources, e.g., education level, employment experience, and income. For men there is an additional positive effect of marriage on re-

employment (Jacob & Kleinert, 2014, pp. 852–857). In general, social support in unemployment, can be especially helpful against emotional distress (Blustein et al., 2013, p. 263). Similar results show that social support from family and friends are very important for young unemployed across Europe, however with different meanings and support resources in the countries. In addition, the family situation, e.g., the education and employment of the parents (Kieselbach et al., 2000, pp. 31–33) and therefore the financial situation of the family (Grimmer, 2016, p. 62) are important regarding the social support opportunities (in Germany). If support is possible it can function as a mediating effect of unemployment on health in young people (Hammarström, 1994). Families and their support can operate as *safety nets* during employment transitions of young people, assuming disadvantage for people who have no family or family support opportunities (Manzoni & Gebel, 2023). Living at parental home due to financial problems (e.g., Bertolini, 2011; Bertolini, Hofäcker, & Torrioni, 2018; Jacob & Kleinert, 2008; Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 32; Nilsson & Strandh, 1999), can also be seen as social support and coping strategy. However, there are many factors at the individual level (e.g., economic situation), relationship level, but also institutionally that can play a role in the decision moving out of the parental home. This step can be seen as very complex but meaningful (Goglio & Bertolini, 2021, pp. 183–184).

In addition to social support, another relevant resource in the coping process can be identified, namely the *state or institutional support*. Unemployment protection, e.g., unemployment insurance/unemployment benefits as well as ALMPs, can be considered in terms of their influence on well-being and health during unemployment (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 18–19). Results of the meta study by Paul and Moser (2009, p. 275) show that the level of unemployment protection has a moderating effect on mental health between the employed and unemployed. Voßemer et al. (2018) investigated the moderating role of ALMPs and PLMPs in the influence of unemployment on well-being. They showed unemployment benefits can significantly mitigate the impact on well-being, but not positive influence health (self-rated). This could be due to psychological areas of health in particular benefit from benefits (Voßemer et al., 2018, p. 1254). McKee-Ryan et al. (2005), on the other hand, found no significant moderating effect of the level of benefits, which could be due to the data basis (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 67). Another study found that life satisfaction is also not moderated by unemployment benefits (Eichhorn, 2014). Regarding ALMPs, Voßemer et al. (2018) show a negative effect on well-being. Although ALMPs imply the idea that they compensate for functions of work and improve job skills, the potential force to attend such measures and/or mismatch in fit can also play a role for individuals and can lead to lowering well-being

(Voßemer et al., 2018, pp. 1254–1255). Wulfgramm (2014) also indicates the moderating effect in life satisfaction regarding generous unemployment benefits, but no robust moderating effects for ALMPs (Wulfgramm, 2014). These results show a mixed picture regarding the role of PLMPs and ALMPs in the context of well-being during unemployment.

Research indicates that *welfare states* can cushion a part of the negative effects on well-being. However, there is a lack of research on whether this is also the case for young people, particularly with regard to their entitlement to benefits (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 38). A large proportion of young people in OECD countries are not entitled to unemployment benefits because they have not yet worked (Scarpetta et al., 2010, p. 4). In Germany, there are two main types of public benefits in terms of unemployment. The two differ mainly in terms of eligibility for young adults. The first is the insurance benefit, unemployment benefit I [Arbeitslosengeld I], which is provided to unemployed people who have paid contributions during a previous period of employment and then receive it when they become unemployed. The second is the means-tested basic benefit, unemployment benefit II [Arbeitslosengeld II]. Unemployment benefit I can be received for six months by contributors who have paid contributions for at least one year. If one has paid contributions for two years, one can generally claim unemployment benefit for one year. Unemployment benefit II can be applied for if the entitlement to unemployment benefit does not exist due to a lack of contribution years or if the entitlement has already been exhausted, e.g., in the case of long-term unemployment. Unemployment benefit II is a fixed amount based on needs (Ehlert, 2016, pp. 71–72). In contrast, unemployment benefit I is approximately 60 per cent of the last net income (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2024a).

There is still little research on the experience of young people with different labor market policies, especially regarding well-being. The EXCEPT project addressed the topic of polices for young people in job insecurity or unemployment. Using a comparative interview approach with young people from Bulgaria, Estonia, Italy, and Poland, Ricucci et al. (2021) showed that experiences with policies were problematic in different European countries. For example, there was a tendency to be dissatisfied with contact with employment agencies and a tendency to prefer not to seek help there. A general lack of assistance in finding a job or support in general (e.g., lack of information) was reported across the countries. Support, e.g., in form of measures, seems not individualized enough and thus runs the risk of not reaching the needs of young people (Ricucci et al., 2021, pp. 287–289). With regard to Germany, insights into this topic can also be given from the EXCEPT project. Overall, in this regard a mixed picture was found.

Depending on their individual situation, the young people perceived both advantages, e.g., feeling of security through PLMPs, development of better prospects through ALMPs, and were grateful, as well as disadvantages or negative experiences with policies. In this context, negative emotions arose due to dependency and obligations, pressure from the agency and stigma experiences using state support. However, this picture is very complex and individual, so it is necessary to look deeper at the individual cases and their contexts (Schlee, 2018, pp. 121–124; Schlee et al., 2021, pp. 129–131). Shore and Tosun (2019) also examined the experiences of young people with public employment services in Germany. Young people evaluated the support received as insufficient. They felt humiliated to register as unemployed, and in some cases, they were not treated fairly and respectfully (Shore & Tosun, 2019, pp. 35–36). Even if ALMPs are the only option for some long-term unemployed young people to improve their situation, they can be associated with both advantages and disadvantages for those affected (Rothe & Tinter, 2007, p. 41). For example, although it was found that most young people attended ALMP program maintained or improved their mental health, there were still those who had poorer mental health than before. Among other things, the type of the measure, the reason for participation, personal characteristics and, above all, the individual's outlook for the future can have an influence on mental health in this context (Behle, 2007). Labor market measures can have a negative impact on mental health. It is also important to note that measures can also become a trap and one can stay there for a very long time or permanently without integration in the labor market (Müller, 2012, p. 60).

In addition, it should also be noted that the transition into the labor market is a particularly challenging situation for some people and is accompanied by insecurities. Therefore, there are also measures for people and their transitions. The many ways, which are possible to enter the labor market result in a variety of complex patterns. There are also phases of unemployment at different points in youth, e.g., from school to training or from training to the labor market. Measures also address such different situations and phases in life. However, it is difficult to gain an overview of the various different measures, as they include different forms such as vocational orientation measures, training preparation, training measures, further education, in-company/outside the workplace vocational training, etc., in many variations (Dietrich, 2001, pp. 432–434). In addition, the available measures are subject to a constant change over time. For a detailed overview and discussion of the programs and measures and their development in Germany, see Geyer (2022, pp. 145–174). He highlights among others, vocational preparation training [Berufsvorbereitende Bildungsmaßnahmen], vocational training outside the workplace [Berufsausbildung in außerbetrieblichen Bildungseinrichtungen], supportive measures during

apprenticeships [Ausbildungsbegleitende Hilfen], work and qualification [Arbeit und Qualifizierung], qualification-employment creation measures [Qualifizierungs-ABM], and integration companions [Berufseinstiegsbegleiter]. Germany and its policymakers set a strong focus on the dual training system and direct the provision of measures primarily towards training measures (Geyer, 2022, p. 145). In this regard, the EXCEPT project identified three good practices on youth labor market inclusion in Germany, namely the introductory training for young people [EQ-Einstiegsqualifizierung], the career start coaching [Berufseinstiegsbegleitung], and the pre-vocational education and training measure (Jeliazkova et al., 2017). However, in general, the institutional level of coping for young people needs to be examined further and can benefit from an inclusion of young people's perspectives (Shore & Tosun, 2019, p. 35).

## 3.3 Concluding remarks

The aim of chapter 3 was to provide an insight into the state of research on the consequences of unemployment on young people's well-being and coping. The presentation does not claim to be complete but intend to rather clarify the relevance of the research topic and describe the prior knowledge of the study.

Overall, one can conclude that there are many studies about the effects of unemployment on health, mostly on mental health. However, research on the experiences of unemployment in young adults is missing (Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, pp. 38–39) compared to research of the overall unemployment (considering all age groups). The causal effects of unemployment of young people on their mental health or well-being is not yet finally clear (Bartelink et al., 2020). However, this insight into existing literature shows that a negative causal relationship between unemployment among young people and well-being can be assumed. But there is still lack of further studies, particularly quantitative longitudinal studies, and qualitative studies.

In the past, there have been already calls for more *qualitative research* on the mechanisms that play a role in the health of young people when they experience unemployment in looking more closely at individuals and their social and institutional contexts (Hammarström & Janlert, 1997, pp. 303–304). The influences and the risks on well-being during unemployment outlined in this chapter indicate a high degree of complexity and the need to look at individual cases. Especially regarding the coping mechanisms, which appear as important for well-being, there is still need for research to understand the underlying processes. Although it has been possible to gain some

insight into young adults' coping with unemployment, research is still lacking. Hence, a subjective perspective and holistic account of those affected could help to understand the complex situation of young people in unemployment, how they cope with it and, above all, what support options they need. Using an inductive approach, this thesis attempts to shed light on the various dimensions, such as individual, social, and institutional, that are relevant to well-being during unemployment and the coping process.

# 4 Research design and methods

In the following sections, relevant aspects of the *research design* and respective *methods* of this study are presented to make the overall approach comprehensible and transparent. Moreover, the rationale and the different decisions that have led to this approach are shown and critically reflected. Certain aspects of the data collection in the context of the EXCEPT project will be discussed, although not the entire process of the data collection project including all decisions will be reflected. Instead, the focus is on those aspects that are relevant to this thesis, and the particularities of this investigation are elaborated.

## 4.1 General methodology and research questions

The term *methodology* is sometimes used as a synonym for methods. However, here methodology means giving a theoretically rationale for the used methods (Strübing, 2013, pp. 27–28). Generally, qualitative social research follows a theory-generating research logic. In doing so, it attempts to reach knowledge through "understanding". With regard to the philosophy of science, it can be classified as interpretative methods, using inductive or abductive processes (Strübing, 2013, pp. 3–9). In general, qualitative research aims to describe life of the research participants from their perspective. With that approach it is possible to better understand social realities while concentrating on people's meanings and on processes (Flick et al., 2004, p. 3). It is more than just showing correlations or evidence of correlations between characteristics. It is about the "how" under certain conditions certain problems or experiences are perceived, expressed and interpreted, and how these problems are continued or solved (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2014, p. 5). Regarding the research perspective, the concept of meaning [Sinnkonzept] and the basic paradigm, on which the study is based, can be classified in a field that focuses on the subjective view. This subjective sense and the life circumstances of the persons under investigation, the unemployed young people, are the focus of the research

interest. The aim is to reconstruct subjective views and experiences and their interpretation. The subjective sense must be recorded, described, and reconstructed. In this context understanding is in the center of interest. As a basic paradigm and framework, the theoretical position is symbolic interactionism, among others (Flick et al., 2004, pp. 5–6; Lamnek & Krell, 2016, p. 42; Mey, 2016, p. 186).

For qualitative social research, especially interpretative social research, it is important to *reflect on the methods* used and the steps of the procedure. This allows for control and prevents arbitrariness in the research. In the broad field of interpretative social research, numerous different approaches and procedures can be distinguished. However, they also can have commonalities, e.g., such as the understanding of sense structures, through interpretation, openness of the approach, empirically based theory formation, and case-comparative analysis and analysis of textual data (Kleemann et al., 2013, pp. 14–31).

Regarding the approach underlying this study, a mixture of loose (inductive) and tight (deductive) design (Miles et al., 2020, pp. 14–15) was chosen for this research design because a completely inductive approach would not have been appropriate here, as there was knowledge about the object of the study, i.e., about unemployed young people in Germany. As already shown, there is knowledge about people being unemployed, about potential risk factors for well-being during unemployment, about young people at the transition into the labor market, about the risk groups of people affected by unemployment, etc. This means that it was not started from scratch, i.e., fishing completely in the dark, but can draw on prior knowledge (see chapters 2 and 3). That knowledge was important for the entire research process, from data collection to interpretation of the results. However, the well-being of young people in the context of unemployment is not yet fully understood and therefore further research is needed.

Furthermore, the data used in this thesis had been already collected in the context of the EXCEPT project (see chapter 4.2) and a further or deeper analysis (see chapter 4.3) has taken place with a different or more specified focus, and could, depending on the definition, be described as a secondary analysis (for discussion on this topic, see e.g., Dargentas, 2006; Medjedovic & Witzel, 2005; Thompson, 2000). However, it is important to mention that I collected the qualitative interview data from the EXCEPT project myself and carried out the analyses as part of the project, which is closely related to the research objective of the present study. I could no longer influence the data collection, and already knew something about the data because I collected it myself and analyzed (most of the data) before in a similar thematic context. Hence, in the following I rather speak of a further, deeper, or continuing analysis, since

I already knew the data and already interpreted it and partly build on it – one cannot artificially exclude the knowledge about the interviews, which is why I rather worked with the experiences from former data analysis and reflected them during the research process.

However, for this reason, a rather open approach was chosen at the beginning of the analysis to ensure openness, and then, in the next step, previous knowledge was included (see chapter 4.3). A completely loose design would generally be at a disadvantage with larger amounts of data and limited time available. In addition, decision for a tighter design is was made to have clarity and focus throughout the process and make case comparisons better feasible (Miles et al., 2020, pp. 14–15). The prior knowledge and the use of data from the EXCEPT project made it possible to choose a theory-based approach to better understand certain mechanisms that underlie these interrelationships. However, this does not mean that the research questions have been formulated in advance without flexible adaptions on it. The research questions were developed and solidified throughout the process. At the same time, however, a strong inductive part was also included here to guarantee the greatest possible openness, i.e., to be open to new ideas. The openness of the analyses, allow for new aspects which were not considered before, or which one did not know before. This openness constitutes qualitative social research (Lamnek & Krell, 2016, pp. 33–34; Mey & Ruppel, 2018, p. 209). In this context this research turned away a in parts from the more theory-based approach of the EXCEPT project, especially regarding the analyses.

The purpose of the EXCEPT project was to study youth in Europe in the context of risk of social exclusion using a mixed methods approach. The aim of the qualitative research in the EXCEPT project was to investigate and understand how young people both perceive their own situation and cope with different financial, institutional, and cultural circumstances in the context of unemployment and job insecurities. In addition, a comparative qualitative approach has been applied across different European countries (Unt & Gebel, 2018, pp. 4–5).

In this present study, the focus is different than in the EXCEPT project, but a related research interest was pursued. It thus ties in with the research already conducted. The data fitted very well in this regard, as they were collected through an adequate theory-driven framework for this research. This means that both unemployment and the consequences for well-being and coping with well-being were covered. Very detailed interviews were conducted in which the contexts of the individuals were considered in depth. In this respect, the present sample of interviews was not examined regarding labor market exclusion and insecurities (unemployment, temporary employment) as in the EXCEPT project, but the focus was now

(only) on the unemployment – both current and past unemployment experience (see chapter 2.1 for the unemployment concept in this thesis). This was possible, and this perspective was particularly appropriate since all study participants, whether currently in temporary employment or unemployed, had already experienced unemployment. Therefore, it was possible to focus on unemployment and to take both a current and a retrospective perspective on the issue, benefiting also from past experiences or experiences of unemployment that had already been overcome. Thus, the topic can be considered even more broadly and help to understand the situation of young unemployed. The focus on unemployment is placed here since this represents a great risk for well-being (see chapters 2 and 3).

Considering all the societal and scientific relevance of the research topic already mentioned, the aim was to improve an understanding of how young unemployed people's well-being in Germany is and how they deal with potential impacts on well-being. The following specific *research questions* arose during the research process and became increasingly detailed:

- How do young people in Germany perceive their situation during unemployment? How is their well-being? How can this be explained?
- How do they deal with their situation in terms of well-being? How do they maintain and improve well-being? What aims are they pursuing within the coping process? Which strategies do young adults use and how? What role do coping resources and (social and institutional) support play in the coping process? Do changes become apparent over time during the coping process?
- Are there patterns among the cases? Can typical cases be identified to enhance an understanding of the situation?

In this thesis, qualitative interview data was used (see chapter 4.2). *Qualitative interviews,* compared to observations and ethnography, are a method of working with the words of the investigators to achieve scientific knowledge. The qualitative interview, in its different forms, is widely used and has a high importance in the field of qualitative sociological research. It can serve as a retrospective re-representation of the interviewee's experienced and remembered events, which other forms, e.g., observations, cannot achieve or can only achieve to a certain extent (Strübing, 2013, pp. 79–83). The group of young people can be studied very well with qualitative methods, especially with the guideline-based interview. In the context of symbolic interactionism, the principle of openness can be considered. Moreover, changes in the meaning of various life issues and areas, e.g., social relationships, can be captured well in retrospective view and investigated in the context of natural communication (Reinders, 2016, pp. 17–20).

Thus, the research in the EXCEPT project was conducted with the guidelines-based interviews, i.e., semi-structured interviews. This approach enabled open narrative generating passages in which the interviewees had the opportunity to introduce and focus on their own topics according to their own assignment of meaning (Creswell, 1998, pp. 120–125; Saldaña, 2011, pp. 32–33) as well as to carry out topics introduced by the interviewer, and therefore consider prior knowledge, to proceed theory driven. A common interview guideline was used to better identify commonalities and differences between the cases as well as between countries with regard to certain research topics (Flick, 2009, pp. 156–165). The transcripts served as a basis for the analysis.

The collection process of qualitative data with interviews leads to a *natural material* for basis of the analysis, which enables the researcher to have an insight in respondents' real lives, i.e., knowledge about their personal experiences and meanings. The data is collected in a natural and specific situation within a local context. It is therefore possible to understand even latent aspects and themes. One additional reason for this is the rich information in words about people's lives and live periods, which have been collected and analyzed in a process. Since the focus is set on individual, specific cases on the outset, it is in parts possible to find something out about the why or how something happens or is perceived by the interviewees. This can enable to understand underlying processes, mechanism, and possible causality (Miles et al., 2020, pp. 7–8).

In order to be able to work adequately on a certain topic with a specific question, prototypes of different designs of research and analysis need to be varied and modified in order to conduct research appropriate to the subject and the research aims (Flick, 2004; Mayring, 2016, p. 65). The following chapters 4.2 and 4.3 provide an insight into the processes and decisions in this context. For further information on the general methodological approach in the qualitative research process of the EXCEPT project and for the German implementation, see also the EXCEPT working papers (Bertolini, 2018b; Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018; Schlee, 2018). As a first short report on the methodological approach in the EXCEPT project for Germany has already been published (Schlee, 2018), there may be some overlapping with this thesis-oriented presentation in the following.

## 4.2 Data collection process

### 4.2.1 Sampling

Although qualitative research usually aims at the special aspects of a case, and thus selects certain cases on the basis of this, it is necessary for a specific research question, to explain the selection of cases and decisions about the composition of the sample (Merkens, 2004, p. 165). The *sampling and recruiting procedure* are often an interdependent and interwoven process in the collection of qualitative interview data (Merkens, 2004, p. 165–167). That requires certain ongoing decisions and considerations throughout the process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This was also the case in the present data collection (see also chapter 4.2.2). However, for simplicity, general sample criteria and the composition of the final sample are presented here first, before the next section outlines how the young participants were found and contacted. In addition, it must be mentioned that no theoretical sampling strategy (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, pp. 420–421; Glaser & Strauss, 1979 [1967]) was used but purposeful sampling strategies were adapted (Patton, 2015).

The data for this thesis are the *interview data from the EXCEPT* project, 40 interviews, plus five additional interviews, conducted using the EXCEPT sampling strategy. Some of them have been conducted immediately after and some during the data collection of the project with the idea to use them later to provide additional information for this thesis. The reason for this was that there was still the opportunity to conduct further interviews with people who have experienced unemployment or will do so in the future, because contact has already been established. One interviewee (person with university degree) took voluntary unemployment due to a career change and is now waiting until he can start his new job. In addition, one person was included to complete the picture of recurrent unemployment as this person has been unemployed on a recurrent basis for 11 years. Three other people were unemployed for shorter periods. These variations and additions (to people already covered with similar experiences) were able to broaden the overall picture of unemployment and improve the analysis of these issues. The additional interviews with particularly young (18 years) and rather older (29 years) people in the sample, as well as variations in between, enabled a further variation regarding the age characteristic. I conducted all 45 interviews.

The EXCEPT project *sampling approach was a common strategy* for all member countries to reach comparability across the interviews. Moreover, it was possible to consider national specificities (Bertolini, 2018b, pp. 50–51; Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018, pp. 6–7; Gebel et al., 2021, p. 17). The dynamic sampling approach of the present study can be described as a

*purposeful (purposive)* (Creswell, 2013, pp. 154–158; Kruse, 2014, pp. 244–252; Patton, 2015, pp. 401–410) and selective (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, pp. 38–39) sampling strategy. It entails a sampling plan (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, pp. 50–55; Kruse, 2014, p. 253) including theoretical pre-considerations, about the risk group and information rich cases (Patton, 2015, pp. 401–410). More precisely, a combination of different purposeful sampling strategies or characteristics of different strategies were used (Patton, 2015). This plan served as a basic framework and orientation, defining common criteria for all involved countries in the project. This plan was implemented flexibly step-by-step, while taking into account national specificities and the phenomenon in the interviews (interview content) (Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018, pp. 6–7). Thus, a form of theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1979 [1967]; Kleemann et al., 2013, p. 25), or content saturation or informational saturation (Guest et al., 2006, p. 65) could be achieved, which resembles aspects of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1979 [1967]). This purposeful, selective sampling strategy has considered common criteria, e.g., age, gender, education level, occupational status, involvement in policies, ethnic minorities, or migrant groups as well as national realities to adequately focus national context in each country. This resulted in a consistent and comparable sample that could flexibly adapted to the respective country (Bertolini, 2018b, pp. 50–51; Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018, pp. 6–7).

The *dynamic sampling process* began with a deductive consideration of which cases should be included in the study, considering current state of research and previous findings, i.e., especially the identified national risk groups (for social exclusion) in the respective countries (Rokicka et al., 2015). For Germany, this means, among others, being unemployed and/or lower educated. It was important to include people with other characteristics who may not have been considered a risk group, e.g., the higher educated in order to obtain a broad understanding of social exclusion (Kieselbach et al., 2001). In addition, when conducting the interviews, previous cases were considered to decide which additional cases should be included next. The successive inclusion of certain individuals in the study consolidated the subject matter. This methodological approach was employed to guarantee the essential information required for the research process to scrutinize and examine pivotal matters regarding the social marginalization of young people. In addition to this dynamic approach, however, specific criteria were defined for the sample.

An additional goal was to conduct interviews with diverse individuals in each instance, encompassing a significant portion of characteristics and bridging gaps in knowledge. This kind

of heterogeneous sample (Helfferich, 2011, pp. 172–175; Kruse, 2014, 244–255; Patton, 2015, pp. 428–429) contains diversity of characteristic values and variance that make it possible to cover many different subjective perspectives and experiences and to identify important common patterns both in the interviews and across the interviews.

The participants were selected based on different characteristics. Common socio-demographic criteria, including gender, age, occupational status, educational level, and legal or migrant status, were considered during the sampling process according to the research group of the EXCEPT (Bertolini, 2018b, pp. 50–51; Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018, pp. 6–7). *Table 1* gives an overview of the composition of the sample. In addition, there are further criteria considered for data collection, which are discussed below.

**Table 1** Sample composition

| Gender | 24 women | | | | | 21 men | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 13 (age 18-24) | | 11 (age 25-30) | | | 11 (age 18-24) | | 10 (age 25-30) | |
| Occupational status (current) | 1 TE | 12 UE | 3 TE | 7 UE | 1 PE | 1 TE | 10 UE | 2 TE | 8 UE |
| Education | 23 ISCED 0-2<br>15 ISCED 3-4<br>7 ISCED 5-8 | | | | | | | | |
| Migrant background | 10 people migrant background | | | | | | | | |

*Notes*: TE [Temorary employment], PE [Permanent employment], UE [Unemployment].
*Source*: Own illustration.

*A total of 21 young men and 24 young women were selected for the sample.* The gender aimed at being balanced to get insights from both women and men. All participants are aged *between 18 and 30 years old*. In this regard, two groups of 18–24-year-olds and 25-30-year-olds were formed to ensure enough young people of different ages in the sample because the aim was to interview people in different life situations, for example, at the transition from school to the training market but also at the transition from vocational training to the labor market.

Regarding the risk group for social exclusion (Rokicka et al., 2015), it was important to include people with the following characteristics in the German sample: no education, i.e., no completed school education, lower secondary education, experience of unemployment, and migration background, to obtain as many information-rich cases and people at risk of social exclusion as possible.

The sampling focused in particular on the *experience of unemployment* as the greatest risk. In this context, the minimum duration of unemployment should be six months in most cases to have not too many young people with (only) frictional phase of unemployment in the sample. Individuals with shorter spells of unemployment were also interviewed in order to take into account the experience of different spells of unemployment of young people. Otherwise, important information and subjective experiences in the area of young people's unemployment or coping would remain unconsidered. In addition, young people who had experienced unemployment in the past were also included. NEET individuals were included in our research as they are at risk of social exclusion due to being not in education, employment, or training (Rokicka et al., 2015). *Temporary employed* were also included in the sample, since they have increased risks of becoming unemployed after the contract ends (Giesecke & Groß, 2003). Temporary workers in the sample are persons with fixed-term employment contracts, including temporary work agency work, seasonal work, and vocational training. In addition to individuals who are unemployed or temporary employed at the time of the interview, one person who has overcome unemployment, and now has a more secure job (permanent contract) has been included.

In general, status changes and in some cases a life course perspective were considered, rather than focusing only on the current occupational status. Some of the interviewees had more than one occupational experience (e.g., several spells of unemployment or alternating unemployment and temporary employment). All participants have had experience of unemployment, either currently or in the past. It was therefore possible to include all interviewees in the sample in order to answer the research questions of this thesis about experiences of unemployment.

In terms of the *educational level*, it was not only about the poorly educated unemployed who are more at risk being socially excluded (Rokicka et al., 2015), but to gain a broad picture of all young adults who are affected by unemployment. Therefore, young adults with different educational background – LE [low level ISCED 0-2], ME [medium level ISCED 3-4], HE [high level ISCED 5-8] – have been included in the study.

The *legal status and nationality* of the young people were also considered. This was due to the high unemployment among people with migrant backgrounds in Germany. For example, at the time of the data collection, more than one third of the registered unemployed individuals in Germany had migrant background (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2014). Young foreigners and young naturalized Germans are one of the groups of people in Germany who are most affected by the phenomenon of youth unemployment (Raithel, 2012, p. 35). Individuals with a broader concept of migration background such as those with own foreign citizenship and/or with foreign parent(s) (minimum one parent with foreign citizenship) are considered as people with migrant background in this thesis (Destatis, 2024). Thus, ten people can be seen as individuals with migrant background, although there are probably more in the sample, as some individuals sometimes had no contact with their parents or sometimes did not know the citizenship of their parents. Refugees from the 2015/2016 refugee crisis in Europe were not included in this sample.

Moreover, a specific *geographic context* has been considered for each country, to account regional particularities in the respective countries. The plan was to include German federal states with varying structures and levels of unemployment. In 2015, at the start of data collection, the unemployment rates for North Rhine-Westphalia (8.0%), Saxony (8.2%), and Saxony-Anhalt (10.2%) were more than twice as high as those for Bavaria (3.6%) and Baden-Wuerttemberg (3.8%) (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2016, p. 193). Youth joblessness differs across regions, with some areas in the East of Germany experiencing approximately double the rate of unemployment as those in the West (BMAS, 2014, p. 9). However, there are differences between the federal states. Therefore, it was decided to conduct interviews with young adults residing in federal states with lower unemployment rates as well as in federal states with higher rate. In this decision, consideration was also given to the idea that training markets differ between federal states or regions, for example due to the presence of large local training enterprises, which can lead to different structural conditions for young people entering the training market (Heineck et al., 2011). The purpose of including this geographical context was not to compare two or more groups of federal states, but to ensure that the different situations in the labor market were adequately considered and that there was variation in the sample in this respect. The final sample consists of 21 interviews with young people from Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, and Hamburg, representing states with lower unemployment rates, and 24 interviews with young people from North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, and Saxony-Anhalt, representing states with higher unemployment rates. In addition, interviews were conducted in both urban and rural areas.

According to EXCEPT sampling procedure, at least 20 people should be involved in *policies*. Here in the sample, the majority have had experience with different types of policies, i.e., passive (PLMPs) and/or active (ALMPs). Approximately half were involved in ALMPs at the time of the interview to be able to examine the relevance of the active labor market measures from the perspective of those affected. A large proportion also had experienced income support, mostly unemployment benefit II. Overall, it can be said that the majority of the sample already had experience of some kind of policy.

The EXCEPT sampling plan with the presented characteristics (Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018, pp. 6–7) served as an orientation and could be adapted during the survey process to be able to react flexibly to previously unnoticed aspects, theoretical or information saturation (V. Braun & Clarke, 2022a, pp. 15–16), etc. that arose during the survey. Thus, there were a few deviations, but the framework of the theoretical specifications was adhered to. *Table 2* gives an overview of the full sample by different characteristics.

**Table 2** Overview of the sample

| Number of interview[1] | Alias | Gender[2] | Year of birth | Age | Migrant background[3] | Education (ISCED) | Occupational status | Geographical context[4] | Involvement in policies | Access point recruiting |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1* | Tina | F | 1997 | 18 | nc | 2 | Temporary employed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *2* | Tom | M | 1995 | 20 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *3* | Fabian | M | 1993 | 22 | nc | 3 | Temporary employed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *4* | Daniel | M | 1994 | 21 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *5* | Andreas | M | 1988 | 27 | nc | 4 | Unemployed | 1 | Yes | Informal |
| *6* | Miriam | F | 1990 | 25 | nc | 6 | Temporary employed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *7* | Katrin | F | 1988 | 27 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *8* | Katharina | F | 1989 | 26 | nc | 3 | Temporary employed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *9* | Klaus | M | 1986 | 29 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *10* | Sophia | F | 1991 | 25 | Kosovan | 2 | Unemployed | 1 | Yes | Institutional |
| *11* | Lisa | F | 1990 | 25 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 1 | Yes | Informal |
| *12* | Julia | F | 1988 | 27 | nc | 7 | Unemployed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *13* | Maria | F | 1988 | 27 | nc | 7 | Temporary employed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *14* | Marc | M | 1991 | 24 | nc and USA | 2 | Unemployed | 1 | Yes | Institutional |
| *15* | Eva | F | 1997 | 18 | Bulgarian | 2 | Unemployed | 1 | Yes | Institutional |
| *16* | Sven | M | 1991 | 25 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 1 | Yes | Institutional |
| *17* | Ben | M | 1995 | 21 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 1 | Yes | Institutional |
| *18* | Maja | F | 1992 | 24 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | No | Informal |
| *19* | Nadja | F | 1987 | 29 | Jordanian/Russian | 7 | Unemployed | 2 | No | Institutional |
| *20* | Igor | M | 1988 | 28 | Russian | 7 | Unemployed | 2 | No | Institutional |
| *21* | Jana | F | 1986 | 29 | nc since 2001, born in Kazakhstan | 3 | Permanent employed | 2 | No | Institutional |
| *22* | Lena | F | 1994 | 21 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 1 | No | Institutional |
| *23* | Simon | M | 1991 | 25 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *24* | Tobias | M | 1991 | 24 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *25* | Peter | M | 1993 | 22 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |

| Number of interview[1] | Alias | Gender[2] | Year of birth | Age | Migrant background[3] | Education (ISCED) | Occupational status | Geographical context[4] | Involvement in policies | Access point recruiting |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *26* | Anna | F | 1992 | 23 | nc and Polish | 3 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *27* | Alina | F | 1994 | 21 | nc, parents Turkish citizens | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *28* | Finn | M | 1998 | 18 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *29* | Irina | F | 1991 | 24 | Serbian | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *30* | Hans | M | 1990 | 26 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *31* | Ali | M | 1987 | 28 | nc since 2012 (former Turkish) | 7 | Temporary employed | 1 | No | Informal |
| *32* | Tanja | F | 1997 | 19 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | No | Institutional |
| *33* | Kai | M | 1991 | 25 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *34* | Thea | F | 1995 | 21 | nc | 2 | Temporary employed | 1 | No | Institutional |
| *35* | Max | M | 1995 | 21 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *36* | Luke | M | 1985 | 30 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *37* | Franz | M | 1992 | 24 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *38* | Laura | F | 1991 | 25 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *39* | Emil | M | 1993 | 23 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *40* | Kerstin | F | 1992 | 23 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | No | Institutional |
| *41* | Nina | F | 1994 | 21 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *42* | Vera | F | 1991 | 24 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *43* | Sina | F | 1997 | 18 | nc | 2 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *44* | Nora | F | 1986 | 29 | nc | 3 | Unemployed | 2 | Yes | Institutional |
| *45* | Ole | M | 1988 | 27 | nc | 7 | Temporary employed | 1 | No | Informal |

*Notes*: [1]Not in chronological order of interview implementation; [2]F (female), M (male); [3]nc (national citizenship), [4]1 = regions with lower unemployment rate, 2 = higher unemployment rate.

*Source*: Own illustration.

### 4.2.2 Recruiting

A total of 45 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Germany and now serve as basis for this study. For the recruitment, *institutional (formal) and informal ways* have been used. Fifteen out of 45 participants were recruited through informal ways. Thirty interviewees were recruited through formal channels. On the one hand, institutions, such as Federal Employment Agencies/Jobcenter, career counseling services, measure providers, training institutions, and social workers were contacted who helped in establishing the contact with potential participants. They served as *gatekeepers* (Reinders, 2016, pp. 122–123) and/or made it possible to display information about the study in the *institution*. On the other hand, *informal ways* were also chosen via the social network of the researcher, and the *snowballing procedure* (Reinders, 2016, pp. 125–126), especially to get a first access to the study group. In addition, *self-activation* (Reinders, 2016, pp. 124–125) was used. After reading the study information provided on the internet or on-site, people could then contact the researcher for the next steps. Several informal recruitment methods have also been utilized, such as *social media* through social networking platforms, job boards, and discussion forums on the internet. Moreover, young people have been targeted by distributing flyers and placing them in various *local institutions* like youth meeting points, which has proven to be an effective approach. At the end of the interview survey phase, *more than 100 institutions and persons* in relevant positions in *approximately 25 cities and administrative districts [Landkreise]* were contacted via email or telephone. Posters were placed and flyers distributed to inform the young people about the study and their possibility for participation. This information was distributed both online in various social networks (e.g., on Facebook) and via social media channels or via email, as well as on site in institutes and youth centers.

In order to successfully carry out the project, I collaborated with institutional gatekeepers to recruit potential participants from different German federal states and participants involved in labor market policies. In this regard, I requested collaboration with various employment centers (Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter) in different regions and other public institutions across several federal states. Additionally, I made connections with organizations and training and education centers for different access points to ensure diversity. Since not all people who are not employed or do not have work are officially registered as unemployed, it was necessary to recruit through informal channels and not exclusively through institutions where young people are officially registered as unemployed. Administrative registers were not used.

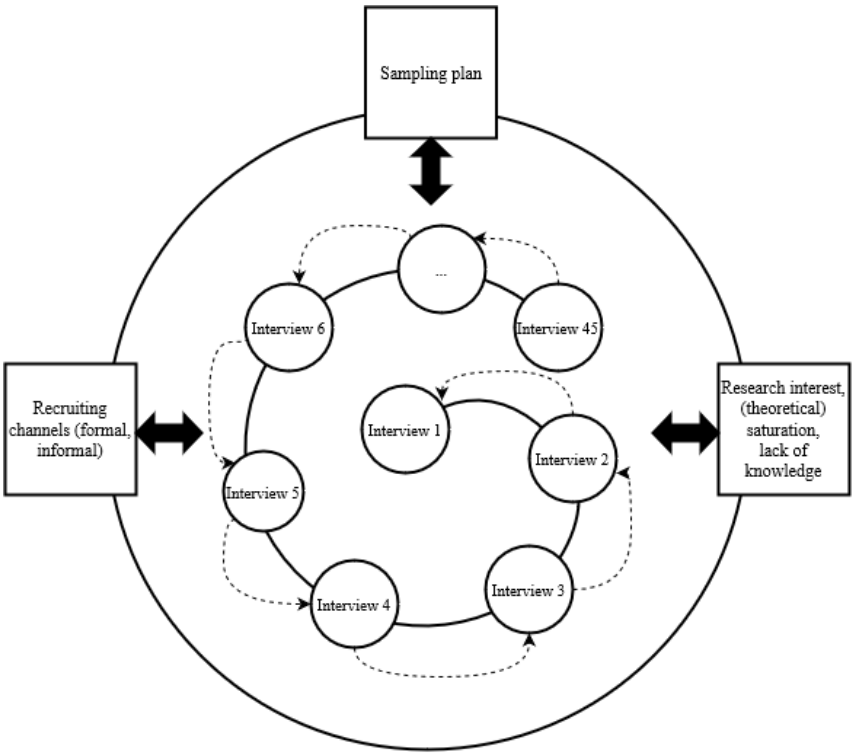
Since access to unemployed young adults is difficult, *gatekeepers* as key persons in institutions (Reinders, 2016, pp. 160–165), helped to establish contact (formal recruiting). In some cases, the organizations contacted young people and then clarified the potential participation with me. In other cases, the organizations contacted the young people and asked them if they were interested in participating, whereupon the young people called me and confirmed the possibility of participating. Other potential interviewees contacted me by email or telephone after becoming aware of the study, e.g., through flyers. In each case, I decided on the participation and ensured that the young people belonged fitted into the sample. After explaining the project and the procedure for the survey (including the ethical procedure, consent form, data security), appointments were made for the survey.

Overall, the *different approaches* were combined because each has advantages and disadvantages, and therefore the advantages of each method should be used, and the disadvantages minimized. For example, the gatekeeper may have good access, but may be selective in pre-selecting suitable young people, which would bias the sample, e.g., due to his/her own interests. The snowball method also provides good access, as trust and motivation can be created by other young people, but there is a risk that the sample will be too homogeneous, as peers may have similar characteristics. Self-activation also provided good access, showing a high level of motivation to participate, but the hurdle to approach the researcher directly is higher (Reinders, 2016, pp. 122–134). Overall, formal, and informal approaches in combination, via three channels (self-activation, gatekeeper, snowball), were considered valuable and purposeful for this study.

After a *pretest* with two young people in insecure labor market situations, and an adaptation of the guideline (see chapter 4.2.3) in consultation with the partner countries of the project, which also implemented a pretest with the common guideline, the actual survey process, i.e., the field phase for the German team, started in *November 2015* and ended in *June 2016.*

The interviewing process (data collection) (see Figure 1) must be seen as an *ongoing process*, with reflection on the sampling strategy, considering saturation (lack of necessary information for the research process) and adaptions due to reactions to the step-by-step interview implementation. In addition, different ways of recruiting were used in parallel, and geographical circumstances and requirements had to be considered. I have conducted interviews with young people from different towns and areas in or close to Bamberg, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Leipzig, Chemnitz, Halle (Saale), and Gelsenkirchen. A total of 45 interviews were included in the study in the context of the EXCEPT project.

**Figure 1** Data collection process




*Source*: Own illustration.

The procedure was based on the sampling plan but was carried out *flexibly*. On the one hand, this ensured that relevant persons from the relevant target group were included in the sample (information-rich cases), which are crucial for answering the research questions and have emerged from theoretical preliminary considerations. On the other hand, a flexible approach was taken. The aim was to include different cases within the formal characteristics, even those that had not been previously considered theoretically or appeared relevant, to enable a sampling that takes into account the young adults affected by unemployment as adequately as possible (Helfferich, 2011, pp. 172–174). Thus, through flexibility in the sampling procedure, the sampling plan could be used as a guidance and aspects, perspectives, and new theoretical considerations and research questions/aims that arose during the research process, could be spontaneously included, and examined in new interviews through flexible, step-by-step recruiting.

The data collection phase was *challenging* and required considerable effort and time. Agreements with institutions in different federal states were made through email and phone calls, which generally worked well. However, long distances between the researcher and

interviewees posed an issue. Therefore, it was essential to organize interview appointments ahead of time and group individuals who lived nearby together. A significant amount of time was spent on preparation and planning, but with the assistance of various institutions, the researcher successfully addressed the challenges. This included organizing interviews across multiple regions in Germany. The institutional support also provided crucial assistance by offering office space for conducting interviews and informing young adults about the research project (EXCEPT).

In addition to the posters and flyers, which were displayed in institutions, there were personal meetings and telephone calls with the gatekeepers, social workers, and institutions on site. In addition, institutions, or gatekeepers such as the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter or measure providers, youth associations were also contacted for the recruitment of participants in other federal states. Apart from many supportive institutions, which made the study possible in the end, there were often no response on e-mail requests or after personal telephone conversations. In some cases, some Federal Employment Agencies showed little readiness to support the project in the form of announcements or the passing of information to young adults. Perhaps more personal appointments on site in the individual federal states at the institutions could have increased the willingness to support. However, this could not be realized due to financial and time constraints. The experience was that those social institutions, such as counseling centers for young people, providers of measures for unemployed young people, and social workers, were more willing to assist in the study and made this interview study across Germany possible. In general, the feedback was very positive. The participants and their social workers or supporters (gatekeepers) reported that the interview situation and the interest in the situation of young people was perceived in most cases very positively by the young people.

### 4.2.3 Interview implementation – interview situation, ethics, and data security

In addition to sampling and recruitment, the reflection of the interview situation and the ethical procedure are important to make the data collection (and the later results) transparent (Flick, 2014, pp. 420–421).

After the initial contact through the different channels, information about the project and the interviews (e.g., the purpose of the project, data protection, ethical procedures, etc., see Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al. (2018) and A 1 and A 2 in the Appendix for more detailed information) was provided and the interview date and the interview location were arranged. All interviews were conducted *face to face on site*. The aim was, inter alia, to create a pleasant atmosphere in

which the interviewees feel comfortable since the interview situation itself is an unusual situation for most of the interviewees (Hermanns, 2004; Reinders, 2016, pp. 167–168). In this respect, places were offered to the young people who they knew, which gave them a sense of security. As a result, many interviews have been implemented at the interviewees' homes. Additionally, some interviews were conducted *at institutions*, at the *interviewer's office*, or at *public places*. In interviews in the different federal states, where contact was often established through different institutions, interviews were often conducted on site at the institution. The reason for this was to create a good atmosphere due to the already known location and to avoid additional time and financial expenses for the participants for ethical reasons, as they were already on site for a measure or a coaching session. A visit to the interviewees at home had the same reasons. Additionally, the interviews took place at other locations, such as the interviewer's office or in more public spaces, e.g., study rooms of student residences.

The interviews were conducted in the German language. German was the native language of most of the participants. There were also migrants and foreigners in the sample, but care was always taken to ensure that all questions during the interview were understood or that there were no major hurdles in the conversation that would have made an interview impossible. Quotations from the interviews are translated literally into English for this work and adjustments are made to reflect the content of what is said as accurately as possible.

The interview situations were all very pleasant and the scheduling worked out well. Very few participants were unable to keep appointments or were late. Although the interview situation was planned and temporary, some disturbances occurred during the interview phase, for example, due to the interviewee's own children or other persons, such as parents or other family members at the interviewee's home. At no time, however, did these interruptions pose a problem or significantly hinder the conduct of the interviews.

The *durations of the interviews varied*. The interviews lasted approximately 35 to 120 minutes. Among the reasons for this variation can be the participants different individual motivations, labor market experiences, language skills, and willingness, and interest to talk openly about their own situation and about the interview topics. In most cases the interviews worked well and the readiness to talk was unexpectedly high.

The data collection process, as well as the general handling of the collected data, followed *ethical standards* at all times (Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018). In concrete terms, this means that when data was collected, care was taken to ensure that contact details and interview data were handled securely, and that informed consent was obtained from the participants before the

(see A 1 and A 2 in the Appendix). The handling of the data collected was always monitored and documented. During the interview implementation situation, attention was also paid to ethically correct procedures, e.g., information was given regarding the voluntary nature of participation, the possibility of not answering, the cancelling the interview, the withdrawing the participation later. The participants received a written assurance of the correct handling of their data, information on the storage of the data, etc. and have actively confirmed with their signature that they have understood all the general conditions and agree to participate voluntarily in the interview. There were no refusals to answer questions during the interviews, nor were there any subsequent withdrawals. This also shows that a pleasant and trusting interview situation was created. The data was stored securely on data carriers/external hard drives at the Chair of Sociology, especially Methods of Empirical Social Research (University of Bamberg) and project partners from the University of Turin monitored this process. Data were not passed on to third parties. Transcription and anonymization of the data were also only carried out within the department. For example, names and locations were anonymized so that no conclusions could be drawn about the person (for more information on the transcription procedure, see chapter 4.2.5). Anonymized data (transcripts) and audio recordings were processed separately.

In addition, the participants were paid an *expense allowance* of 15 euro per hour, which varied according to the duration of the interview. On the one hand this financial appreciation can be seen as an incentive. On the other hand, and the much more decisive aspect and reason for this payment was to compensate the effort for the participation for ethical reasons. The participants not only spent their time for the interviews, which lasted up to two hours, but in some cases, depending on the interview location, also spent time and money (e.g., for public transportation expenses) to get to the interview location. Moreover, these interviewees can be affected by financial shortcomings due to their labor market situation. For these reasons, the research group considered compensation essential, which was also highly welcomed and appreciated by the participants.

### 4.2.4 Interview guideline and questionnaire

The *interview guideline* (see A 3 in the Appendix) used during the semi-structured interviews was constructed in joint work by the EXCEPT researchers (for more details on the procedure see Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018). It consisted of the different topics of the research project

to answer the research questions concerning the various dimensions of social exclusion in the context of youth's lives.

On the one hand, the guideline was developed on a *theoretical basis* (deductively) to adequately consider previous knowledge (theories and state of research) in this area and to specify the research topics (Helfferich, 2011, pp. 182–185; Reinders, 2016, pp. 143–144). Topics, among others, were the educational paths, the labor market experience, the financial situation, the living situation, the autonomy, the well-being, the experiences with policies, and the received support. On the other hand, the guideline was flexible enough to guarantee openness in its implementation. That means that during the implementation in the interview situation, it was paid particular attention to the fact that to give interviewees the necessary opportunity to attach value on their individual life situations regarding their own meanings and perceptions. The guideline was used to guide through the interview situation and to make sure that the topics the research team was interested in were covered in the interview, without asking for a specific order and formulation, so the interviewees had the opportunity to set focus for themselves, based on their individual meanings. The topics and questions arose were depending on the actual interview process, while always bearing in mind the guideline and the necessary topics for our research, to answer the research questions. Mostly open-ended questions were used to develop narrative passages and the opportunities for young people to focus on from their point of view relevant (sub)topics (Helfferich, 2011, pp. 179–180).

In many of the interviews, the order of the previously considered topics was automatically kept for the most part. This is due, among other things, to the natural order of the topics considered beforehand, some of which are chronologically (i.e., life course oriented) arranged and then lead into adjacent topic areas through transition questions or partly related topics (Helfferich, 2011, p. 180).

Regarding the *structure of the guideline* (e.g., Kruse, 2014, pp. 213–229) the following aspects can be highlighted to make the process of data collection even more transparent and comprehensible. Even before the recording of the interview, an attempt was made to create a pleasant situation by small talk and providing information about the project and the interview to taking away all remaining doubts of the interviewee. In addition, however, an opening question was consciously chosen, which served as a warm-up in addition to the already interesting content information. A question was chosen that young adults can answer easily and openly to create a narrative passage and thus introduce them to the mode of a qualitative interview. For this reason, questions were asked at the beginning about the educational career

and experience, and work experience up to now, as these events are not far back in young adults' lives and can therefore be easily answered. In addition, a thematic introduction and transition to the main objective was achieved. This was simultaneously illustrated with a timeline on paper, which was available and filled in by the interviewer. This served not only as confirmation by the interviewee but also as orientation for the interviewer for the further interview situation, which was especially helpful in the case of many status changes.

Towards the end of the interview, the future perspective was examined, of course only if it was not discussed earlier. This was very important, on the one hand to complete the chronological process, but above all, on the other hand to cover future wishes and actual expectations in family (private domain) and career. This enabled an even better understanding of young people's current situation, also regarding their well-being. Decisive for this were areas such as the perception of individual labor market opportunities and the achievement of goals, wishes and dreams. At the end of the interview, the participant had the opportunity to address additional aspects that had not been mentioned before, to guarantee the possibility of an independent setting of meaning.

As far as the general structure of the guide is concerned, it can be said that the first step has always been to try to activate a narrative passage by addressing an open question on a specific topic. This means that new topics were always started with a narrative question in a flowing transition and during the topic or the conversation, then questions or supplementary questions were asked. They served on the one hand to deepen the topic and on the other hand to maintain the conversational situation.

The used interview guideline (see again A 3 in the Appendix) may appear at first glance to be extensive and detailed, and thus appear to guide and structure the interview very strongly. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the interviews were conducted in a very flexible way to create an open interview situation. However, the reason for this illustration was the joint data collection in several countries and the theory-based approach of EXCEPT project. It was important to cover many possible topics and questions as different interviewers from different countries and backgrounds have applied it. A framework was set up and possibilities were identified, so that all researchers were aware of which areas should and could be covered. A focus was necessary especially for the cross-national qualitative analytic steps of the cases within the project. The guide was translated and adapted to the German context (Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018).

In addition to the actual qualitative interview, a *standardized questionnaire* was used to record socio-demographic characteristics of the participants as additional background information for the analyses (Witzel, 2000, §§ 5–6) to better understand the individual situation, view, perceptions, feelings, etc., which would probably not be possible (or not so good) without the context. The research group of the EXCEPT project has decided to use an additional standardized questionnaire after the interview, to not disrupt the flow of the interview if these "facts" had to be asked separately during the interview situation if they were not automatically addressed during the narrative. A great advantage of this questionnaire became apparent when it was carried out. By an inquiry of relevant data, e.g., socio-demographic characteristics, further relevant communication situations developed. Sometimes topics were taken up again and reported in detail by the interviewees themselves, who may have missed out on their opinion in the interviews or were not addressed at all. Thus, further narratives could be created, in which the interviewees could attach their own relevance. It turned out that the decision to let run the recording device when querying the questionnaire was a good one, as one would otherwise have lost such important information or would have been possible only through a memory protocol.

### 4.2.5 Data preparation and transcription

After the interviews were conducted, they were prepared and transcribed using the *f4 transcript* transcription program to make the conversation and its meaning analyzable (Kowal & O'Connell, 2004, p. 248). In addition to the anonymization procedures already mentioned, a simple transcription scheme was chosen. It based on a common scheme of the research consortium in EXCEPT and can be regarded as similar to the *simple procedure* by Dresing and Pehl (2015). For a better accountability, see the transcription scheme (see A 4 in the Appendix). It is a literal writing of what has been said, with partial smoothing. Moreover, special features such as gestures or other non-verbal expressions that lead to a better understanding and comprehension of the interview situation were also transcribed. A simple transcription was chosen, as it plays a decisive role in this investigation of the content of what was said (Dresing & Pehl, 2015, p. 20). Therefore, a more detailed transcription, which is used, for example in linguistic, was not necessary.

All in all, the data consists of 45 semi-structured interviews. These interviews have a total duration of 2728 minutes, that is approximately 45.5 hours of interview material, on mean approximately one hour per interview. After the transcription, a total of 858 pages (single line

spacing, Times New Roman (12pt.)) of interview material was available and basis for this thesis.

## 4.3 Analysis

### 4.3.1 General procedure of the analysis

The specific choice of the analytical approach underlying this thesis was made to achieve the interest in knowledge and, at the same time, to use a procedure that addresses the object of research in order to reach a deeper understanding. The aim was to gain an understanding of young people's experiences with unemployment in Germany and their well-being and coping. Thus, an approach is needed that provides the possibility to adequately interpret communication contents (based on interview transcripts) and to examine the general personal view and experiences of the young adults (Mey & Ruppel, 2018, pp. 207–208). Therefore, an approach based on the theoretical position of the symbolic interactionism or the phenomenology may serve to get access and to understand their subjective meaning (Flick et al., 2004, pp. 5–6; Reichertz, 2016, pp. 36–37).

This is possible with the method of the *thematic analysis* (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the decision to use a form of reflexive thematic analysis is based on the fact that it is not a (full) methodology, but rather a flexible method that can be applied to a wide range of (already existing) data (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006), similar to some forms of qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022; Mayring, 2015). This is important because, unlike other methods such as the grounded theory methodology who consider the collection and analysis of the data as one process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), the underlying data for this thesis had already been collected during the EXCEPT project. One advantage over other thematic analyses, such as more codebook-oriented approaches, is its flexibility and openness during the analysis process (V. Braun & Clarke, 2022a).

To better comprehend how the analysis for this research was implemented and how the procedure was motivated, it is first necessary to give a short insight into the procedure of the EXCEPT project (see previous chapters 4.1 and 4.2). This thesis follows a new approach in the analysis, with somewhat different research questions and objectives. However, it is of course partially based and naturally related on the data and its underlying theoretical project approach. Since I collected the data as a researcher in the EXCEPT project and have already analyzed them in relation to the project's research interest, this approach generally represents a mixture

of primary and secondary analysis, or some form of continuing analysis, since it is not possible to "exclude" completely existing findings. The previous analyses and findings from the EXCEPT project (Meo et al., 2021; Schlee, 2018; Schlee et al., 2021) therefore played a role in the overall research process for this thesis. This is seen as an advantage because the cases and their contexts are already known. Moreover, the present topic can theoretically be located within the original study and is not seen as independent from the EXCEPT approach due to its theoretical and conceptual embeddedness. Although it is rather a continuing analysis, the coding has been done from the beginning again to ensure openness and not to leave out relevant aspects due to previous focus of the EXCEPT approach.

In this regard, the coding and the development of the categories were more oriented on the text than in the EXCEPT project, where a stronger theory-driven approach had been used (Bertolini, 2018b; Gebel et al., 2021). The analyzing procedure of the qualitative interviews in EXCEPT (Bertolini, 2018a, 2018b; Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018; Bolzoni et al., 2018; Gebel et al., 2021; Schlee, 2018; Schlee et al., 2021) was also a form of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; V. Braun & Clarke, 2006; Grunow & Evertsson, 2016). Overall, this more deductive approach – i.e., a codebook common to all countries was created in advance by the research group and used as a basis for the comparative analysis – was combined with a necessary openness to the object of study during the coding process. That means that inductive codes were included to be appropriate to the research subject and the country context. Although the research group of EXCEPT had previously jointly developed a code system with common main and subcategories, the scheme was adapted and supplemented in the analysis process during iterative coding rounds and inductive coding processes. Synopses for each case were used to support the analysis (Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018). The EXCEPT project researchers chose this mix of theory-driven (deductive, top-down) and inductive (bottom-up) analytical approach to conduct a cross-national comparative analysis of a total of 386 interviews conducted in nine countries, to give young people their voice and examine their subjective view of their situation (Bertolini, 2018b; Bertolini, Bolzoni, et al., 2018).

Since the EXCEPT project and its data can be seen as *starting point* and origin for this thesis, it was logically not possible to choose a completely new inductive approach, as would be the case, for example, within a full grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1979 [1967]) or other stronger interpretative or reconstructive approaches of qualitative social research (Reichertz, 2016). A method for the analysis was chosen that adds value to the specific research interest, as it analyses the existing data more openly at the beginning of the analysis, i.e., by

developing certain categories related to the empirical material, i.e., the cases of young unemployed people. The aim of the present study was to extend the approach of the project and to focus on specific issues of unemployment and well-being and their interrelationships, but no longer within the full framework of social exclusion (see chapter 2). Thus, despite the theory-driven nature of the original data collection, a more open analysis approach to this specific topic was used, which is necessary due to the lack of studies on this topic. This approach was therefore open for new insights (Flick et al., 2004, p. 5; Flick, 2009, p. 31) and for the complex structures of the research topic (Flick, 2009, p. 15). The intention of this is to move to a more open and flexible, i.e., inductive analysis without using fixed, pre-structured categories to be able to act appropriately on the subject (unemployed young adults and their subjective well-being) in the analysis. The aim was to go deeper, i.e., further level of understanding of the meaning (including the latent meaning) of the data resulting from the communication, as well as to elaborate new aspects and phenomenon that have not been considered so far. In addition, as already mentioned in the chapter 3, previous research during EXCEPT indicates that coping and coping mechanisms in young people's lives during unemployment or job insecurity are very complex, therefore further research is still necessary in this regard (Schlee, 2018; Schlee et al., 2021).

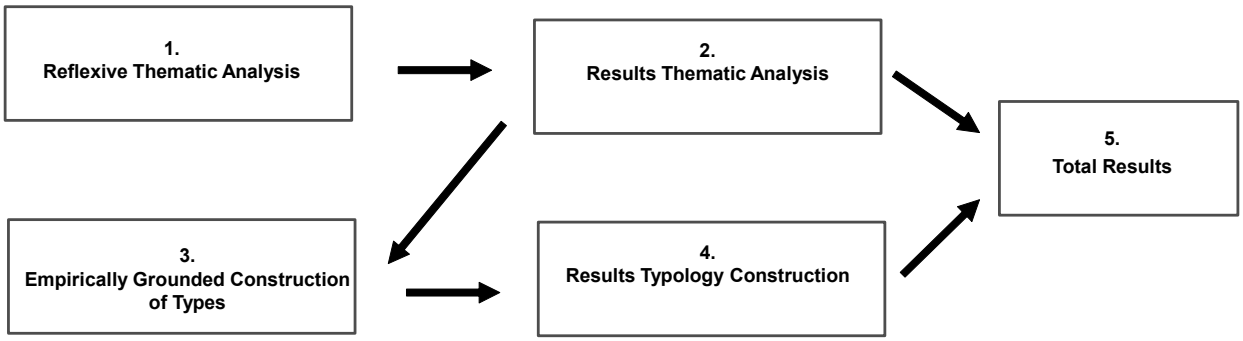
In this thesis an approach based on reflexive thematic analysis (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022b) and empirically based type building methods (Kelle & Kluge, 2010; Kluge, 1999, 2000) was applied to make complex social phenomena tangible by reducing and abstracting the existing empirical data about the object of study to understand them. Thematic analysis was applied to first analyze step by step and interpret the cases in detail in relation to the research topic. The next step was to identify themes and patterns of meaning across the cases to elaborate commonalities and differences. In this regard, through cross-case analysis, a higher generalizability of the results can be achieved than with single case studies. By considering and comparing several cases, e.g., identifying commonalities or differences, it is possible to achieve a greater understanding and substantial explanations within the cases as well as about the whole research field by considering the context of the individual cases (Miles et al. 2020, p. 95).

The developed themes and patterns were interpreted and represent the first results of the study (see chapter 5). The themes then formed the basis for the relevant comparative dimensions of a "coping typology" in the context of unemployment and well-being. This typology enables the results of the cases to be abstracted again for better understanding and step to a form of generalizing of the results following a thorough interpretation and qualitatively oriented

methodological reflection and approach. It is important that this is done in an open way with the aim to get closer to social reality (Hopf, 2016, pp. 15–18).

Initial ideas for the comparative dimensions of the typology were developed mainly after the thematic analysis, but some arose during the thematic analysis. The thematic analysis and the typology construction are not seen as strictly sequential steps, but the thematic analysis largely formed the basis for further considerations regarding the typology. To make the analyses comprehensible, these steps are now presented separately. In addition, due to the objectives of both analyses, they represent their own sets of results, which are then explained in more detail in the results chapters and are also brought together at the end (see Figure 2). Thus, the individual cases, and the complexity of the phenomenon of coping well-being in the field of unemployment could be examined. At the same time a form of generalization could be achieved, which makes it possible to better understand the complex processes and to a limited extend to transfer them to other young adults outside the sample. The development of the typology during the analyzing process was intended to create an added value regarding the research interest, which will be explained in more detail below. The following chapters 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 present the methodological analyzing steps in more detail.

**Figure 2** General analysis approach




*Source*: Own illustration.

### 4.3.2 Reflexive thematic analysis

The intention in this section is to provide a framework for what has been the procedure, to make the research and analysis process more comprehensible. Regarding the thematic analysis and the approach in this work, it is important to emphasize that there is no “one” thematic analysis, due to different forms and variations applied used in the studies (V. Braun & Clarke, 2022a).

Thematic analysis varies between the users (Rapley, 2011, p. 279) and approaches are grounded in different epistemological methodologies and traditions and therefore pursue different objectives in the analysis. In this context, an approach can be deductive (e.g., theory-driven), or (mainly) inductive or a combination of both. In addition, among other things, a more descriptive approach to manifest structures or the interpretation of latent meaning can be achieved (V. Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 5).

This reflexive thematic analysis approach was based on the steps of analysis procedure according to V. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022b) with necessary adjustments due to the object of the investigation, the existing data, the theoretical knowledge, etc. It contained both inductive elements (mostly) and additional steps that can be described as deductive, that included the consideration and ideas from previous analyses of the data and reference to theory and state of research, especially in the formation of categories. Thus, in addition to an open approach, categories were formed during the analyzing process based on preliminary considerations and knowledge to do justice to the current state of research and the framing of the work. This approach is therefore placed between the very open approaches of thematic analysis, in which codes/categories and themes are developed (only) based on the text, i.e., on the empirical material (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022a, 2022b), and the procedures that approach the analyses with a preliminary fixed coding scheme, such as the coding reliability thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). However, it is also not a typical codebook approach (V. Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 7). It more an approach, which on the one hand initially develops codes openly based on the text, as it is the case with open or initial coding in grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1979 [1967]). And on the other hand at the same time it uses consideration and inclusion of codes that are relevant to the research question, i.e., stronger theory-guided or focus on theoretical prior knowledge, like in some forms of qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2016; Schreier, 2012).

Coding is a central part in the analysis. In general, it is used to reduce and condense the interview material to better analyze the meaning. Here, coding is already a part of the analysis and is not a pre-work or step before the actual analysis. Through coding, one delves deeper into the text, thinks about it, and tries to understand its meaning. So this is already an interpretative process (Miles et al., 2020, pp. 63–64). Depending on the research interest and the framework, it can be preferable to use a combination of case-orientation and variable-orientation in terms of the actual implementation of the research process (Miles et al., 2020, pp. 97–98) and that is what was done here. First, the individual cases were examined in detail, and after each

individual case was understood, comparisons of these cases and their characteristics were elaborated on a further level of analysis. After analyzing the individual cases, this led to the development of themes. In this approach, the *six phases* of thematic analysis by V. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022b) were used as framework and are now described in the following. However, these steps were adapted to the specific analytical framework of this study, i.e., to the requirements and, given the research objectives, to what was necessary to conduct research appropriate to the object and research goals (Mayring, 2016, p. 65). The interviews were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis program MAXQDA.

*Phase 1* was *familiarizing oneself with the data*. The process involved reading and re-reading the transcripts sentence by sentence, taking notes and paying attention to specific cases. This approach allowed for an open analysis. It is worth noting that 40 out of the 45 interviews were analyzed in advance in the EXCEPT context (e.g., Schlee, 2018; Schlee et al., 2021). Thus, the remaining five were analyzed first, to ensure a high degree of openness. It should be noted that I was, of course, already familiar with the interviews. At this point a new open analysis step should be introduced. Otherwise, there would have been a risk of overlooking important new information that had not been considered in the previous theoretical framework of analysis but was crucial to the topic of the thesis.

In *phase 2 the coding* was implemented. Beginning with the inductive coding, codes were developed based on empirical material and then referred to prior knowledge, i.e., existing theories in this field and the state of research. It would be inappropriate to exclude relevant aspects and ideas that could contribute to a better understanding of the research object and individual cases (Reinders, 2016, pp. 21–22). However, many theories about the impact of unemployment on well-being are general and do not specifically address the effects on young people. Gaps in research in this area still exist (see chapters 2 and 3). Therefore, it is crucial to remain open to new ideas during analysis. The development of the coding scheme, therefore, involved a combination of inductive and deductive category development. A coding scheme was developed through several iterations based on these initial considerations and by incorporating previous knowledge on the topic, including existing research and theoretical considerations. Theories, even if not previously applied to young people, can be seen as a framework for considering what areas may be relevant to well-being during unemployment. The concept of well-being encompasses different dimensions, such as cognitive and emotional aspects. Coping mechanisms and their success may also vary in terms of function, available resources, and support (see chapter 2). These and similar considerations were incorporated into

the analysis. In this regard codes served as a kind of sign to indicate descriptive and interpretative results and thus the meaning of the texts. Codes were used both as simple descriptive functions and as labels underlying more complex interpretations (Miles et al., 2020, pp. 62–63).

The next *phase 3* was *generating initial themes.* At this stage codes were combined and referred to each other to develop themes relevant for the research interest. The focus shifted from single cases to discovering patterns of meaning across the interviews. Case summaries, text retrievals, text matrices and thematic maps were used to develop themes at this stage. In addition to the pure focus on the data, theoretical considerations from existing theories and the state of research were also used at this point (again).

*Phase 4* included the *development and review of these themes* to find pattern of meaning in the data. The developed themes were checked and related to each other. They highlight commonalities and differences and were developed through case comparative analysis. By focusing on individual cases at the beginning and the developed patterns and commonalities through the work with themes, it was possible to create a basis for the typology construction in a later analyzing process (see chapter 4.3.3). *Phase 5* was then refining, defining, and naming themes and *phase 6* writing up the results. It must be mentioned that these six steps and phases by V. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022b) were not implemented as linear and consecutive steps. These steps served as an orientation for the implementation and were used flexibly throughout the process, sometimes requiring revisiting, and rethinking of previous steps.

### 4.3.3 Empirically grounded typology construction

The thematic analysis was then followed by a typology construction (Kelle & Kluge, 2010; Kluge, 1999, 2000). However, it is important to note here is that the typology was based mainly on considerations (and results) developed during thematic analysis. With thematic analysis and empirically grounded typology construction two perspectives on the sample have been elaborated at the end. Both results can be considered separately, but also give an overall picture of the research objective. Thus, a more comprehensive picture regarding the research question and the results can be presented. On the one hand, it enables a detailed insight into the interviews, a better understanding of the lives of the young adults. On the other hand, this approach allows interpretations across the cases, which enables an abstraction of the individual experiences of the young people and can lead to form of generalization of the results.

In general, the reasons for a typology in qualitative research are manifold. The primary aim of forming types here, as in much research in the field of qualitative methods, was to make complex social phenomena tangible, and thereby understand and explain them, by reducing, and abstracting the existing empirical data on the object of study (Kluge, 1999, p. 23). The object of investigation is to be structured to obtain an overview and as a heuristic function, since regular relationships (causal adequacy) [Kausaladäquanz] and sense coherence (sense adequacy) [Sinnadäquanz] become visible in the typology, thus enable theory building. Generally, typologies are not theories themselves, but can be the necessary path on the way to theory building (Kluge, 1999, pp. 43–51). During the thematic analysis, it became clear that although themes and patterns could be developed, an understanding of the situation was not fully achieved due to the multidimensionality and complexity of the underlying mechanisms. It was therefore decided to go further and develop types of young people and their situation in relation to their well-being and coping, as this would help to understand the situation even better and to be able to make more generalized statements.

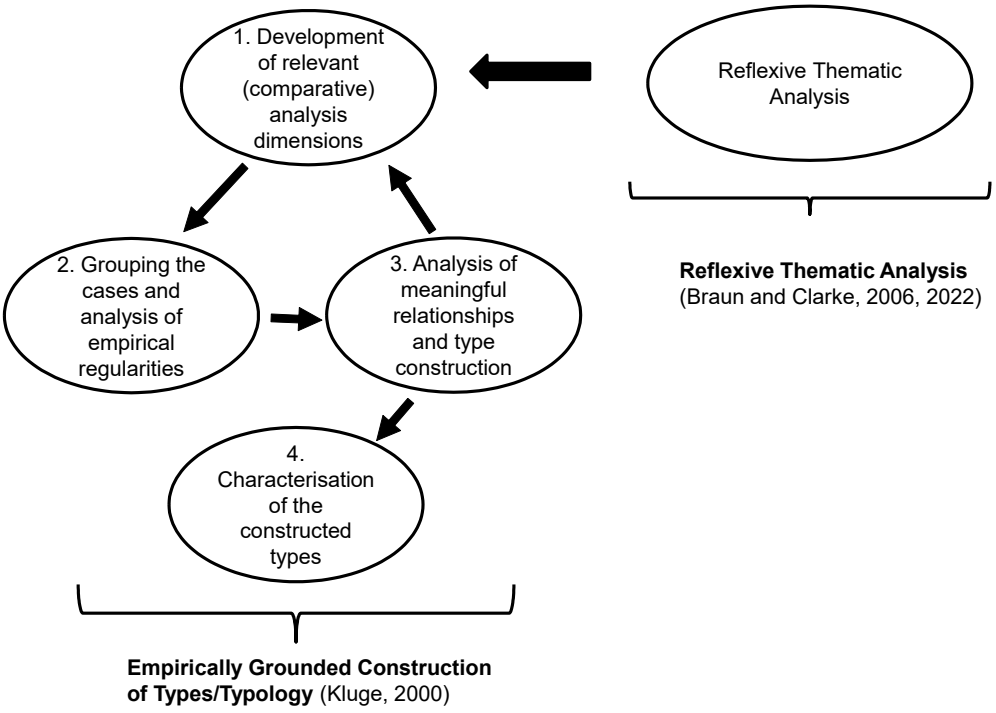
Developing types, regardless of the form of typology, is a grouping process, i.e., an ordering of cases according to certain characteristics (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 85; Kluge, 2000, § 2). Single types are very similar within the type (level of type), i.e., internally homogeneous, and show differences compared to other cases (level of typology), thus are externally heterogeneous. In this way, the differences and commonalities of a research subject can be elaborated (Kluge, 1999, pp. 26–30). “Type” thus refers to a group of cases with common characteristics that are distinguished from other types by certain specifications of characteristics (Kluge, 2000, § 2). The composition of specific attributes and dimensions form specific attribute space of a type. This area sets the frame for a specific type and defines it (Kluge, 2000, §§ 2–3). Not all cases of a type (must) have the same combination of characteristics because the characteristics are not completely disjunct. However, there are often relations between the characteristics of a type (Kluge, 1999, p. 42).

In her detailed, literature-based discussion and comparison of the understanding and use of real and ideal typologies, Kluge (1999) concludes that the two types should not be completely separated, but rather seen as complementary to each other, which is also reflected in the procedure for the proposed type formation. This is due to the creation of both types. No explicit inductive formation as with the real type and no exclusively deductive formation as with the ideal type can take place because empirical evidence as well as theoretical framing is necessary (Kluge, 1999, pp. 77–78). Kluge therefore refers to this as empirically based or grounded

construction of types (Kluge, 1999, 2000), where both an empirical grounding and at the same time a theoretical abstraction take place to ensure to catch and construct reality adequately (Kluge, 1999, p. 87).

The starting point and basis for such a typology is the categorization of the interview material, which is theoretically driven and empirically based (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, p. 83). In this thesis this was done in the context of thematic analysis (see Figure 3). Among other things, thematic analysis identifies patterns across the cases. The themes were developed and could serve to construct an empirically based typology, because they show meanings across the cases based on case comparisons. In this way, similarities, and differences between the individual cases in terms of the research interest, i.e., different relevant themes, can be emphasized. In this study, these themes then serve as a basis for forming the necessary comparative dimensions (1) for creating a typology, since these themes contain and represent (in parts) the necessary relevant dimensions, which were formed based on the empirical material, together with the theory-guided procedure. The comparative dimensions were also developed on the basis of considerations arising from the research objective and previous theoretical knowledge. The process combines empirical and theoretical considerations. The next, rather iterative and interrelated steps were the grouping of the cases and the elaboration of regularities (2) and the analysis of relevant relationships and the type construction (3). The last step was the description and presentation of the characteristics of the cases (4) (Kluge, 1999, 2000).

**Figure 3** Empirically grounded typology construction




*Source*: Own illustration based on Kluge (2000).

## 4.4 Concluding remarks

In short, it can be said that the present empirical study is a further approach based on the EXCEPT project to close gaps in knowledge and to be able to examine the problem of unemployment for well-being (and forms of coping) in Germany in more detail. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of how well-being is shaped and what coping measures are taken in this regard to better understand the situation of young unemployed people in Germany.

The original data was collected in EXCEPT using a semi-structured interview approach. The common sampling strategy was adapted to country-specific circumstances. When sampling the underlying data, a combination of several forms of purposeful sampling strategies (heterogeneous, risk group, information rich) were used, and a dynamic sampling/recruitment process was conducted. Different approaches and access points were adopted for recruiting. This thesis draws on 45 interviews from the context of the EXCEPT project.

As the approach of this thesis is based on data from the context of the EXCEPT project, which investigated labor market insecurities, e.g., unemployment, and various dimensions of social exclusion, including well-being, the data is considered appropriate for the approach. The

analysis, suitable for the research purpose, includes a thematic analysis to obtain patterns and themes regarding well-being and coping. In addition, a typology construction was used, to gain a deeper understanding of different types/groups in order to do justice to the complexity of the topic. The work is therefore based on a two-step interpretation. The one emerged from the other during the research process to best examine the subject. After the thematic analysis, it became apparent that it was necessary to develop a typology in order to understand the complexity of the different situations of young people.

# 5 Results: well-being and coping of young unemployed people in Germany

This chapter presents the main findings of the thematic analysis (chapter 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) and the development process. The analysis approach and procedure were presented theoretically and abstractly in chapter 4.3. The results now are presented with references to extracts from the empirical material and to the analytical approach used, in order to achieve comprehensibility as well as to provide relevant information for the construction of the typology in chapter 6. As part of the EXCEPT project, I have already conducted analyses with a similar focus using thematic analysis (Meo et al., 2021; Schlee, 2018; Schlee et al., 2021). Although the former approach differs from that of the thesis, there may be some overlaps in terms of the content and structure of the results, especially in the chapters 5.2. and 5.3.

## 5.1 Insights into unemployment and labor market experience of the young adults

Before presenting the main findings of the study on well-being and coping with unemployment (chapters 5.2, 5.3), a brief, more detailed look at the sample is provided at the labor market situation of young adults and their experiences of unemployment (see Table 3). This chapter complements the sampling criteria outlined in chapter 4.2 by showing insights into labor market and unemployment experiences. An understanding of these aspects is crucial for comprehending the well-being and coping mechanisms of young unemployed adults.

**Table 3** Unemployment and working experience of the young people

| Number of interview[1] | Alias | Gender[2] | Age | Highest level of education attained (in German) | Education (ISCED) | Occupational status (at the time of the interview) | Unemployment experience | Working /labor market experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1* | Tina | F | 18 | Mittlere Reife | 2 | Temporary employed | Unemployed for 1 year after graduation (looking for vocational training) | Internships, vocational training |
| *2* | Tom | M | 20 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for appx. 6 months after vocational training | Part-time jobs, marginal employments |
| *3* | Fabian | M | 22 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Temporary employed | Was already unemployed and will be unemployed again in 2 weeks due to end of contract (temporary employment) | Apprenticeship, several years of work experience (mostly temporary employment) |
| *4* | Daniel | M | 21 | Abitur | 3 | Unemployed | After school graduation 1,5 years unemployed | Internships, marginal employments for 6 months |
| *5* | Andreas | M | 27 | Berufsaus-bildungen | 4 | Unemployed | Unable to work due to illness, then retraining/re-education, repeatedly unemployed between retraining/measures, after first retraining 1 year unemployed, current unemployment for 2 weeks | Vocational training and several of years work experience |
| *6* | Miriam | F | 25 | Berufsaus-bildung (Fachschule) | 6 | Temporary employed | After graduation (secondary school), unemployed for 6 months, then measure/ vocational school and then again short unemployment (few months) | Vocational training, several years of work experience (temporary employment) |
| *7* | Katrin | F | 27 | Mittlere Reife | 2 | Unemployed | Unable to work due to illness, unemployment periods for several years, currently unemployed for 6 months | Internships, marginal employments |
| *8* | Katharina | F | 26 | Abitur | 3 | Temporary employed | Recurrent unemployment periods of several months | Marginal employments, self-employment, part-time work |
| *9* | Klaus | M | 29 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Unemployed | Recurrent unemployment periods over years (several months up to one year duration, current unemployment period for 6 months) | Vocational training, work experience for several years (mostly temporary-employment, temporary employment agencies, ALMPs |
| *10* | Sophia | F | 25 | Hauptschulab-schluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for more than 5 years (incl. parental leave), current unemployment 1,5 years | Marginal employments, internships, mostly through ALMPs |
| *11* | Lisa | F | 25 | Abitur | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for two years | No or little experience, drop out of university, for one year retraining/ apprenticeship measure through the Federal Employment Agency |
| *12* | Julia | F | 27 | Universitäts-abschluss (Master) | 7 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 5 months | Work experience after Bachelor graduation |

| Number of interview[1] | Alias | Gender[2] | Age | Highest level of education attained (in German) | Education (ISCED) | Occupational status (at the time of the interview) | Unemployment experience | Working /labor market experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *13* | Maria | F | 27 | Universitäts-abschluss (Master) | 7 | Temporary employed | Unemployed for several months after graduation | Temporary employment and several sideline jobs in the past |
| *14* | Marc | M | 24 | Hauptschulab-schluss | 2 | Unemployed | Recurrent unemployment, currently for 6 months | Vocational training started but not completed, internships, marginal jobs, ALMPs |
| *15* | Eva | F | 18 | Keinen Schulabschluss (Schulpflicht erfüllt) | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for appx. 2.5 years | Vocational training started but not completed (drop out) |
| *16* | Sven | M | 25 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 3 months, recurrent unemployment over years | Vocational training started but not completed, temporary employment (temporary employment agencies) |
| *17* | Ben | M | 21 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | For appx. 3 years unemployed (incl. transitional measures, vocational school) | Little, almost no experience |
| *18* | Maja | F | 24 | Mittlere Reife | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for appx 2 years | Sideline jobs, marginal employment, completed apprenticeship |
| *19* | Nadja | F | 29 | Universitäts-abschluss (Master) | 7 | Unemployed | Past unemployment, and current unemployment (perceives herself unemployed, receives scholarship) | Several years of work experience |
| *20* | Igor | M | 28 | Universitäts-abschluss (Master) | 7 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 1 month, past unemployment period | Several years of work experience |
| *21* | Jana | F | 28 | Ausbildung | 3 | Permanent job | Past unemployment period (for 4 months) | Vocational training, several years of work experience (permanent employment) |
| *22* | Lena | F | 21 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 2 years (incl. parental leave), looking for job for 6 months | Vocational training, another apprenticeship started but not completed (drop out) |
| *23* | Simon | M | 25 | Realschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 3 months, past unemployment period for 1.5 years, recurring unemployment (looking for apprenticeships for 5 years) | Sideline jobs, marginal jobs, ALMPs, |
| *24* | Tobias | M | 24 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 9 years | ALMPs, internships |
| *25* | Peter | M | 22 | Keinen Schulabschluss (Schulpflicht erfüllt) | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 1.5 years, recurring unemployment | ALMPs, short working experience |
| *26* | Anna | F | 23 | Fachoberschul-reife | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 1.5 years | ALMPs, internships |

| Number of interview[1] | Alias | Gender[2] | Age | Highest level of education attained (in German) | Education (ISCED) | Occupational status (at the time of the interview) | Unemployment experience | Working /labor market experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *27* | Alina | F | 21 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for appx. 4 months, unemployment experience for several years with interruptions (measures, apprenticeship) | Vocational training started but not completed (drop out), ALMPs |
| *28* | Finn | M | 18 | Realschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployment for 2 years | ALMPs, internships |
| *29* | Irina | F | 24 | Realschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for several months, recurring unemployment periods | Vocational training started but not completed ALMPs, internships |
| *30* | Hans | M | 26 | Keinen Abschluss, Schulpflicht erfüllt | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployment for 3 years, unable to work due to illness | ALMPs |
| *31* | Ali | M | 28 | Universitäts-abschluss (Master) | 7 | Temporary employed | Past unemployment for 3 months | Internships, sideline jobs |
| *32* | Tanja | F | 19 | Realschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 2 years due to illness | Vocational training started but not completed due to illness |
| *33* | Kai | M | 25 | Realschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Currently unemployed for 6 months, past unemployment periods, e.g., unemployed for 3 years | Marginal employments, sideline-jobs, ALMPs |
| *34* | Thea | F | 21 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Temporary employed | Past recurring unemployment periods for several months | Two apprenticeships started but not completed (drop out), temporary employments, marginal employments, sideline-jobs |
| *35* | Max | M | 21 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 2 weeks, recurring unemployment periods for several years | Temporary employment (temporary employment agencies), vocational training started but not completed (cancelled), ALMPs |
| *36* | Luke | M | 30 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 5.5 years, several past unemployment periods since school | Civilian service, ALMPs, vocational training |
| *37* | Franz | M | 24 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for one year, past unemployment periods (maximum 3 years) | Vocational training, and working experience for several years |
| *38* | Laura | F | 25 | Keinen Schulabschluss (Schulpflicht erfüllt) | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 7 years | ALMPs, internships, sideline jobs, marginal employment |
| *39* | Emil | M | 23 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 3 years, past unemployment periods | Vocational training started but not completed, ALMPs, temporary jobs |
| *40* | Kerstin | F | 23 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Recurring unemployment, unemployed for 4 years, currently unable to work due to illness | 3 vocational trainings started but not completed (drop out) |

| Number of interview[1] | Alias | Gender[2] | Age | Highest level of education attained (in German) | Education (ISCED) | Occupational status (at the time of the interview) | Unemployment experience | Working /labor market experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *41* | Nina | F | 21 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for several months, past short unemployment periods | Vocational training |
| *42* | Vera | F | 24 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 1 year | Vocational training, ALMPs |
| *43* | Sina | F | 18 | Hauptschul-abschluss | 2 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 8 months | Internships, ALPMs |
| *44* | Nora | F | 29 | Berufsaus-bildung | 3 | Unemployed | Unemployed for 1 year, recuring unemployment periods for 11 years | Vocational training, ALMPs |
| *45* | Ole | M | 27 | Universitäts-abschluss (Master) | 7 | Temporary employed | Past unemployment for several months, future unemployment | Short working experience, side-line jobs, marginal employment |

*Notes*: [1]Not in chronological order of the interview implementation; [2]F (female), M (male); [3]If the exact duration is not provided, this is due to missing information on the part of the young people involved.

*Source*: Own illustration.

As already shown in chapter 4.3.2, the procedure of reflexive thematic analysis was chosen, in which coding is a central part. Coding provides the basis for comparing cases to develop themes and patterns of meaning. The coded text passages were interpreted in more detail, and the cases and the categories were related and compared with each other, resulting in the development of relevant patterns and themes. A summary of the coding scheme is provided in the Appendix (see A 5). The themes developed are presented and discussed in the following findings.

In terms of the employment status, people who were currently unemployed at the time of the interview and people who had been unemployed in the past were included in order to be able to look back at certain successes and to get different perspectives. In the final sample, most of the young people are currently unemployed (at the time of the interview). However, some are currently temporary employed: Fabian (M, 22, ME, TE)[3], Miriam (F, 25, HE, TE), Maria (F, 27, HE, TE), Ali (M, 28, HE, TE), Ole (M, 27, HE, TE), Thea (F, 21, LE, TE), Katharina (F, 26, ME, TE), including one person in the vocational training program, Tina (F, 18, LE, TE). Jana (F, 28, ME, PE) is now permanently employed after a period of unemployment.

As shown in chapter 2, this research approach used a very broad understanding of unemployment and included different definitions or characteristics of concepts to get a comprehensive picture of unemployment. Therefore, the sample included people who could be classified as NEET. However, they do not represent the core of the sample. Due to a common sampling strategy in the EXCEPT project across the countries, about half of the people are or have been in labor market policies, e.g., ALMPs. In particular, persons undergoing measures, including retraining, further training or qualification measures, as well as work opportunities may be not count as NEET. Another reason is that the NEET rate in Germany is generally low compared to other EU counties (Eurofound, 2012, pp. 38–41). This could be due to the support measures, e.g., in the transitional system of compulsory vocational schooling [Berufsschulpflicht], in which, for example, school-leaving qualifications can be obtained or, within the framework of unemployment and ALMPs, work opportunities, internships, apprenticeships (Allmendinger et al., 2012, p. 334). In addition, access to this group appeared difficult during the recruiting, especially institutionally, e.g., through the Federal Employment Agency, agencies providing measures, vocational schools, etc., since the NEETs have less

[3] The interviewees are identified by: pseudonyms, gender (M/F), age (in years), level of education (based on ISCED scale – LE [low level ISCED 0-2], ME [medium level ISCED 3-4], HE [high level ISCED 5-8]), current employment status TE [temporary employment], PE [permanent employment], UE [unemployed], the reference to the paragraph number of the interview extract in the transcript. The latter is only included when referring to a specific interview quotation.

contact with them. In addition, currently *inactive*, e.g., people who are or were unable to work due to illness could also be included in this sample: Hans (M, 26, LE, UE), Tanja (F, 19, LE, UE), Katrin (F, 27, LE, UE), Andreas (M, 27, ME, UE), and Kerstin (F, 23, LE, UE). Although some people are inactive and not looking for work because they are ill/unable to work or have given up looking for work, most people of the sample are looking for a job or vocational training since they are at transition from school to work – they already finished school or vocational education/training.

Another aspect as part of the broad understanding of unemployment that is considered is that people are considered unemployed even if they are marginally employed because they consider themselves as unemployed and/or are/have been officially registered as unemployed, e.g., Katharina (F, 26, ME, TE), Thea (F, 21, LE, TE), Maja (F, 24, LE, UE). This means that they may be officially registered as unemployed even though they are marginally employed, as the law (§138 SGB III) allows people to work less than 15 hours a week and still be registered as unemployed. In some cases, they are marginally employed, have casual jobs or are participating (working) in measures (ALMPs). This can also be a past experience.

This brief insight shows that, similar to the general picture of young unemployed people in Germany in general, the young unemployed in this study can be very heterogeneous, which may be partly due to the transition from school to work as a process with different opportunities (Dietrich, 2012, p. 35). Because of this heterogeneous picture of unemployment, a broad view of this topic is necessary to adequately capture the complexity of the phenomenon among young adults. In this respect, obtaining variation in the sample was also the goal of the study to gain the greatest possible insight into the subject area.

This heterogeneity and wide variance in the sample is also reflected in *different unemployment experiences* of the young adults. It is worth emphasizing some of the characteristics and patterns that arose from the analyses. Across the cases, there is a variation in unemployment experience, more specifically, the duration of unemployment or (the sum of) recurrent unemployment episodes. Some people are affected by first-time unemployment, but also by many repetitions over several years, etc. The younger participants in the sample, specifically those aged 18–22, are primarily in the transition from school to vocational training. This means they are seeking mostly vocational training. However, there are also young people who have been looking for a job or vocational training/apprenticeship for several years, e.g., since graduating or leaving school. They have not yet managed the transition process and are still looking for a vocational training, e.g., Eva (F, 18, LE, UE), who has been unemployed for 2.5 years, or Ben (M, 21, LE,

UE) with three years duration. Young adults with a short experience of unemployment have either recently left school/vocational school, have already had repeated experiences of unemployment, or report retrospectively on this earlier experience until they have found a job in their lives, i.e., some kind of search unemployment, such as Miriam (F, 25, HE, TE), Fabian (M, 22, ME, TE) and Jana (F, 28, ME, PE).

In addition, there are people in the sample who are more likely to experience *recurring periods of unemployment* than one long period of unemployment. People in the sample who have completed vocational training do not appear to be affected by a single spell of long-term unemployment, but rather by the risk of becoming unemployed either for a short period or repeatedly for varying periods, depending on the training. For example, Klaus (M, 29, ME, UE), Nora (F, 29, ME, UE) and Fabian (M, 22, ME, TE), are more likely to be affected by recurrent unemployment through temporary employment contracts. For other people with no vocational training, e.g., Sven (M, 25, LE, UE) or Marc (M, 24, LE, UE), periods of unemployment are more likely to be interrupted only by short periods of (unskilled) temporary work (through temporary employment agencies), ALMPs or started (but not completed) vocational training. Young adults who are employed by temporary employment agencies seem to be particularly affected by recurrent periods of unemployment, because of the short duration of their employment and the lack of protection against dismissal.

Older people in the sample, for example the 24–30-year-olds, and especially the low-educated (low level of school education and/or no vocational training) constitute most of the people with much unemployment experience in the sample. This means that these people have been unemployed for several years or have experienced several periods of unemployment over several years. However, there is variation in the sample in this regard. Examples of extreme cases are the 24-year-old Tobias (M, 24, LE, UE), who has been unemployed for nine years, which means that he has been looking for vocational training or work since he left school. The situation is similar for Laura (F, 25, LE, UE), for example, who at 25 has already been unemployed for seven years but has had some activation measures and small, casual jobs during this time. Luke (M, 30, ME, UE), who is 30, has been unemployed for about 5.5 years at a time and had already experienced unemployment for many years before, apart from his apprenticeship through the Federal Employment Agency. Much unemployment experience is logically more likely to be among the older people in the sample, but this is of course not a requirement since also younger show unemployment of several years. Former university students are generally older in the sample, which is due to the later transition from school (in

this case after university) to work and the longer stay in the education system. They have a high vocational qualification compared to people who have just left the school system and now are seeking a job or vocational training. Compared to other lower educated individuals in the sample, university graduates tend to be unemployed for shorter periods, although a spell of unemployment can also last several months, e.g., Maria (F, 27, HE, TE) and Julia (F, 27, HE, UE). Overall, a variety of phases and situations can be observed in the lives of young adults. These include the search for a vocational training after school, the search for a job after school or after a vocational training, longer phases of unemployment, longer and shorter phases of unemployment with interruptions, or only short phases that may arise in between due to the contractual situation (e.g., temporary employment), and so on. Young people in the sample between the ages of 18 and 30 can therefore report on different experiences.

In addition, the *work experience* varies. There is, among others, practical work experience through internship, vocational training/apprenticeship (already completed or not completed), temporary employment, part-time work, odd jobs, or work experience through ALMP. However, the nature and extent of the work experience differs between the cases. University graduates entering the labor market are more likely to have gained practical work experience through part-time jobs and internships during their studies; low-educated long-term unemployed tend to have gained experience through internships, trial work and various activation measures. People who have had several jobs (temporary jobs) and/or vocational training tend to have the most working experience. In addition, logically related to age, people who are older tend to have more experience.

Some of the findings and patterns of certain characteristics just presented in a descriptive way are taken up and deepened in the following results chapters in relation to well-being and coping during unemployment.

## 5.2 Subjective well-being of young people in Germany during unemployment

An open approach was chosen to include all relevant aspects of the understanding of well-being from the point of view of the young unemployed people. In this regard, the basic ideas of the concept of subjective well-being (see chapter 2.2.1) served as a framework, but with the necessary openness, i.e., without prematurely forming a fixed construct. Previous analysis on well-being and coping carried out as part of the EXCEPT project (Meo et al., 2021; Schlee,

2018; Schlee et al., 2021) were also considered, and served as additional orientation because I have analyzed parts of the interviews before in this respect. The first steps of the analysis, i.e., the formation of codes (see again A 5 in the Appendix) for the well-being code and its subcodes, have therefore been developed and implemented both based on theoretical considerations (deductively) and inductively during the analyses. The idea of subjective well-being served as starting point of the analysis. The codes were developed on the basis of the empirical material, taking into account the meaning of well-being for young people. The concept of subjective well-being, which consists of a cognitive and an affective dimension (Diener, 1984, pp. 542-544; Diener et al., 1999, pp. 276-277), appeared adequate in this context, since they reported about emotions and feelings and life satisfaction during the unemployment experience. The relation of positive and negative emotions, feelings and moods then builds the overall picture of well-being, together with cognitive aspects (Staudinger, 2000). Cognitive can also include prospects, goal setting, desires, and comparison with others (Diener et al., 1999). During the interviews the cognitive dimension of well-being was examined through questions about perceptions, attitudes, judgments of the situation, including questions about satisfaction (see also the interview guideline A 3 in the Appendix), and the context of the expressions in the interview dialogue.

These developed codes then served as the basis for further in-depth analyses, which made it possible to develop themes and patterns. The headings in the following results chapters 5.2, 5.3 present the relevant main themes and with their corresponding quotations to create transparency. These themes are discussed below, along with their respective sub-themes (highlighted in italic).

### 5.2.1 General but varying negative implications of unemployment on well-being and their reasons

Overall, the young people in the sample show a clear pattern and tendency of negative well-being during unemployment. However, there are differences regarding strength and extent of the reduced well-being across the cases. This heterogeneous picture is discussed in the following.

*The affective level*

*At the affective level, the cases show extensive, but varying impacts*. The emotions differ in their intensity and meaning for the individuals. This section discusses emotions that were reported by the respondents to have a negative (or positive) effect on their overall well-being or that were interpreted as such in the specific interview context during the analysis. The idea of the valence of emotions (e.g., Barrett, 2006; Shuman et al., 2013) helped to interpret and understand the situation.

In few cases, there are *no or few negative*, whereas in the majority of cases there are *strong negative emotions* due to unemployment and its consequences. Although the emotions can be *mixed (negative and positive)* and can *change over the period of unemployment*, negative emotions are predominant in the cases when talking about unemployment. Examples of the wide range of negative emotions from the cases include among others malaise/unease/discomfort, boredom, sadness, concern, worry, fear, anxiety, feelings of insecurity/uncertainty, dependency, shame, frustration, depression, despair, hopelessness, helplessness, powerlessness, inferiority/worthlessness. A wide variety of emotions are revealed in the narratives in the context of unemployment. However, in the following, the aim is not to present all emotions that are apparent in the cases but to highlight most relevant themes and patterns in this context.

The interviews indicate that for some of the young adults, *worries and fears* play a major role during unemployment. For example, Tom's life during his period of unemployment of approximately six months clearly shows how unhappy he is and how *stressful* the situation is for him. His statements are strongly characterized by *concern, fear* and even *desperation*, regarding his future in general but especially on his unemployment and the financial consequences:

> "I'm worried about a lot of things at the moment (…) I'm afraid of the future. I'm afraid that I can't find a job. I'm afraid that I can't find a flat and pay for it. I'm afraid that I can't cope with the whole situation. The whole situation is making me crazy." (Tom, M, 20, ME, UE, par. 79)

The young adults show fears and worries for various reasons. Some reported that they were overwhelmed during the transition from school to work and did not know or did not know which profession they would like to pursue or could pursue. Miriam describes this burdensome past experience after finishing school:

> “Well, it was somehow so ... I didn't know what to do with myself at all, also not in which direction I tend [...] I just didn't know what I should do and that was very unsatisfactory, because I didn't have any options. So at that moment, as a schoolgirl or as a ... almost a young adult, I had no ... I had no clue [...] That was very ... yes, it just wasn't a nice feeling (speaks very softly).” (Miriam, F, 25, HE, TE, par. 25)

In addition to a general fear of the future, some people in the sample are particularly very worried that they will *not be able to start a vocational training/apprenticeship* and will therefore stay unemployed or must work as unskilled workers with low incomes and/or only in temporary jobs. This is perceived as a form of insecure employment with missing financial security. In the sample, *people with a low level of education (no apprenticeship or vocational training) seem to perceive poor prospects on the labor market*. They are particularly affected of impaired well-being because they, from their point of view, are aware of how important an apprenticeship/vocational training in Germany can be to gain a foothold on the labor market in the long term. This means that especially getting a job and/or obtaining a permanent contract is necessary for them to be secure in the long term. The *low level of education* and/or *no or less labor market experience* is therefore connected to *poor prospects* or a negative perception of labor market opportunities in the future, what can be highlighted with the following examples from the interviews. Sophia (F, 25, LE, UE) is *afraid* of not getting a vocational training/apprenticeship because of her poor school education. Although she obtained a lower secondary school degree [Hauptschulaschluss] during her participation in the measure, she is still concerned that she will have to work in low quality jobs, i.e., temporary jobs for unskilled workers. Tobias (M, 24, LE, UE), who has been unemployed for about seven years, sees little chance on the job market for him even with a secondary school diploma if he has no vocational training:

> “The problem is. I'm worried about the education I've had so far. Well, that's just it, that I'm afraid that I won't get a chance to do an apprenticeship because of the poor education I had before.” (Sophia, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 49)

> “Because I'm afraid that I won't get any vocational training and without training I'll just get stuck with cleaning jobs, and I don't want that. I don't want to end up on this track, single mother and will always just be a cleaner.” (Sophia F, 25, LE, UE, par. 109)

> “You think, ‘Yeah, that's great’((ironically)). What am I supposed to do all my life? Shitty secondary school leaving certificate, am I supposed to live off the government all my life or what?” (Tobias, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 151)

Above all, a missing secondary school-leaving certificate [Hauptschulabschluss] is perceived as problematic by the young adults and gives rise to fears for the future. Sven, for example, has no school-leaving qualifications and reports severe problems getting jobs in the long term. He is *pessimistic* about improving his situation because he has worked for a few months and then been unemployed again:

> "I'm standing there without a school certificate or a journeyman's certificate. I just thought to myself: 'Yes, you'll manage this situation somehow or I'll be able to keep my head above water somehow.' But the fact that it's very difficult and that you have little chance of being employed in a normal job without temporary agency work." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 23)

From 25-year-old Laura's point of view, who has been unemployed for seven years, she has not been able to find vocational training/apprenticeship due to her missing secondary school-leaving certificate. She is *very sad* about this:

> "I feel relatively depressed. It is quite simple, when they [the employers] already see (...) ok no degree, not even secondary school, we won't hire her. That's quite shitty. Because from my point of view you can't tell a person's ability from their report card." (Laura, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 53)

Little prospect of success and repeated failed attempts to find an apprenticeship or a job led to *despair* and feelings of *hopelessness* for some in the sample:

> "Helpless, because I don't know what else I should do. I have already sent dozens of applications but (…) somehow nothing came back. (...) I'm getting sick and tired of the temporary employment agency." (Max, M, 21, LE, UE, par. 55)

> "Yeah, I'm ... still trying to find something. But I doubt that someone will hire me." (Peter, M, 22, LE, UE, par. 127)

However, the interviews also reveal individuals who have no or only a very few negative emotional consequences of unemployment. These are especially people with vocational training and years of work experience, or academics, who are *not worried* about not finding a new job and/or being unemployed for a long time. For them, the period of unemployment is more of a *transitional phase and/or something temporary* and can be interpreted as a perception of an unproblematic frictional unemployment (search unemployment period)*:*

> "Well, I see it really laid-back since nowadays it's simply a fact that sometimes people are unemployed. I'm not embarrassed about (…) I'll find something again during the winter." (Fabian, M, 22, ME, TE, par. 89)

> "That wasn't (...) burdening for me. I was always sure that something would come and that I just had to be patient [...] And that's why I was never afraid that it wouldn't work." (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 29)

One of the most relevant reasons for the strong worries and fears of young adults is connected to the fears just mentioned: the *lack of financial resources* for what they consider to be an adequate living. The perceived *insecure financial situation* during unemployment or financial consequences due to unemployment is a key risk factor in the well-being of many of the interviewees. In some cases, they reported on financial deprivation, the feeling of not having enough money to live on, not being able to afford daily expenses (buying food, paying rent, etc.) to meet basic needs, or on a general financial constraint that does not allow to meet one's preferences and desires that would not otherwise exist with work. These experiences can strongly impact well-being, showing *worries* and *(existential) anxiety/fear* and *despair* about financial resources dominating daily life. This is mainly reported by people who are long-term unemployed and who receive unemployment benefit II [Arbeitslosengeld II] as their only financial income for a longer period to cover their basic needs: "[...] Every time you have to think twice about every penny you spend to survive. That's (…) really cruel sometimes." (Franz, M, 24, ME, UE, par. 127).

> "I'm just going to say, it's enough so that you don't starve. […] Then anytime you need something, then you must always look 'Ah, can (or) can't I do it this month?'" (Tobias, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 151)

> "[...] It is lacking everywhere. So, it's, as my girlfriend always says, 'Too little to live, too much to die.' It's (...) It's just (...) You get by somehow in the month, but also not (...) So it's just rent is covered and that's it. [...] It's just too little." (Kai, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 25)

The value of work, and in particular the income associated with it, is evident. Without adequate financial resources, there is a *lack of security and a sense of autonomy*. This, of course, depends on the individual's situation and context, but it can severely limit their sense of well-being.

In addition, the interviews also show that is possible that people who receive (additional) financial support from other sources (e.g., their family) or, as in Katharina's case, people who

are trying to make ends meet themselves, report financial problems associated with worries. Katharina, for instance, is reluctant to apply for unemployment benefits and works hard to make ends meet through various (temporary) minor jobs/marginally employments, talking about the permanent fear that the money will not be sufficient:

> "Also, I am in constant concern about the money not being enough. (…) Until now I always somehow managed to make ends meeting. But there had been some times when it was very tight and I had to, I don't know, had to eat rice with butter or something like that for a week. […] Well, I don't have a secure income, so it is always a little difficult to calculate." (Katharina, F, 26, ME, TE, par. 53)

At this point, however, it is worth noting that *not all individuals in the sample are affected by these financial insecurities*. This is due to various reasons, such as *support options*, which are described in more detail in chapter 5.3 on coping.

Nevertheless, in some extreme cases of deprivation due to unemployment, there is also *homelessness or a lack of a permanent home/residence*, which can (additionally) have a strong negative impact on well-being at the emotional level and cause *worry* and *anxiety*. Without a permanent place to stay, they are under constant stress and are looking for a place to stay with friends, etc. Being homeless can be *burdensome* due to the reliance on others for shelter and the difficulty in finding an employment. Particularly affected by homelessness in the sample seem to be persons who have been financially sanctioned by the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter. This means that they do not receive the full amount of financial support benefits. Financial aid (unemployment benefit II) could be stopped/reduced for various reasons[4], e.g., if the young adults do not comply with their behavioral or reporting/co-operating obligations, such as applications, participation in measures or refusal of job offers (Löwe & Unger, 2022, p. 2). Peter reports about the feeling being stressed and hopeless about his current situation. The Jobcenter has largely sanctioned him, and he speaks quietly and anxiously:

> "Well, I've already ... more often thought about going to a homeless shelter [...] Yeah (I'm) not happy anymore either. It's annoying. (...) Looking every day where do I go, how do I make my money. (...) That is sad. […] it's burdensome. Having to figure out how to survive every day." (Peter, M, 22, LE, UE, par. 151)

[4] It is important to note that the circumstances regarding sanctions described were at a time when sanctions were not yet suspended/or restricted. With the introduction of citizen's income in 2023 handling of sanctions changed (Bauer et al., 2022, p. 33).

Similarly, Marc describes a *vicious circle* in which he finds himself and sees no solution to his situation, he *feels trapped*:

> "With an empty account you don't have to apply for an apartment […] with an account which has been empty for three months, you will not get an apartment / and without apartment it is very bad with work and without work it is very bad to get an apartment. […] If you are stuck in that once, you'll have problems to escape." (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 84)

Moreover, for some young adults in the sample, it is not only one's own situation that seems burdensome but also when others are affected by one's own unemployment. The *financial responsibility for other family members*, e.g., one's own children, also plays a role and exacerbates the negative feelings in some cases. This trend is particularly evident among the single mothers in the sample, but it is also present in some parents. Simon reports on the burdening feeling of not being able to adequately care for his children and his family:

> "[…] I mean I have two kids now and without a job without a big income you never feel really good. […] You also want to somehow create a basis for the children. Also somehow have a few financial reserves in case there is something. In that respect, of course, I feel bad. I feel bad about that (...) because you want to care for your family as a father." (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 31)

Parents want to ensure their children have a safe and comfortable life. They often worry about fulfilling their responsibilities towards their children and their needs. Single mothers, like Lena (F, 21, ME, UE), report about the economic insecurities coming from their unemployment and the additional challenges of finding a job as a single mother. They hope for a better life for their children:

> "I'm worried about my child because I don't want him to have a life like I have. I don't want him to be dependent on any kind of employment agency. That would actually be my biggest worry." (Lena, F, 21, ME, UE, par. 123)

In this context, it is also clear that young adults who are unemployed in particular *cannot imagine having children* at the moment, as they do not feel they have the financial means or the necessary security to take care of their children. This realization also seems to be a burden for some:

> "I'm childless at almost age 30 and I don't have any plans yet=I just can't do it financially. What kind of life am I supposed to offer the child if I already have one now?" (Nora, F, 29, ME, UE, par. 133)

In addition, the interviews revealed that many young adults in the sample repeatedly mentioned the *lack of autonomy* during unemployment. This often leads to financial dependence on others, such as family, friends, or the government. Although *the constant and continuing dependence* on others (the state or family/friends) can reduce well-being and can be very burdening, the opportunity of financial support from the state is generally perceived as positive because it provides security, as Tobias aptly puts it: "Because without the state I would totally have bad luck" (Tobias, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 153).

However, especially those who have been dependent on the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter for several years, and who receive unemployment benefits II and/or have had negative experience with measures, etc., are in this group who perceive dependency as very negative:

> "Well, I really have to say that I've been living off the government all this time, and it's really been six years now, and I just can't do it anymore, and I'd really like to change that all at once." (Sophia, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 119)

These experiences, which are often perceived as burdensome, appear to be partly due to negative experiences with the employees of the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter or with the institution itself and the obligations, bureaucracy, level of financial support received, etc. that go hand in hand with receiving benefits. This is also linked to a narrative of bad behavior, of being at the mercy of and helpless in contact with the employees of the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter. In this context, some people *feel unfairly treated*, *not understood*, and *left alone*:

> "I want to leave the employment agency as soon as possible. I want make sure I can leave them quickest possible, because they are really harassing me. […] Yes, it is that bad" (Lena, F, 21, ME, UE, par. 159).

In addition, the dependence on family or friends also seems to be perceived as a problem in some cases:

> "So, if you can't be independent, then (...) well, then you have a hard time in life, let's put it that way. If you're always dependent on someone and always have to ask, 'may I

> [buy] that?' 'Can I [borrow] that?' or ask 'Can you please/?' That's bad, really very bad." (Nora, F, 29, ME, UE, par. 83)
>
> "I don't want to be dependent on anyone now or have to wait for when he gives me something to eat? Or ask can you give me something to eat? [...] because your wallet is empty." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 87)

However, in comparison to dependence on the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter and public benefits, *dependency on the family is perceived as less problematic.* In the interviews, family dependency or this form of support seems to be generally socially accepted to a certain extent, which may also be due to the young age of the individuals. Nevertheless, young adults aspire to independence through employment, which many also associate with growing up.

In this respect, autonomy and financial independence can also be interpreted as one individual *meaning of work* for young adults, and thus also as a *function of work*. This is very much related to the previous explanations of this chapter. Unemployment and the dependence on the society led to a *feeling not belonging to society* in some cases. Additionally, unemployment can result in a *lack of identity* and *limited self-fulfillment*, causing stress and negative emotions. In a working society [Arbeitsgesellschaft] (e.g., Offe, 1991) where identity and position in society are largely defined by employment and performance, being unemployed can exacerbate these issues, which Laura's narrative indicate:

> "I feel really shit when I think about it, just being dependent on the office, on the state [...] it's not a permanent solution and I mean, I feel antisocial, because I've been receiving Hartz IV [unemployment benefits II] for years." (Laura, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 65)

She became even more explicit and added: "Well, I do feel a little like an antisocial loser" (Laura, F, 25, LE, UE). These feelings are more prevalent among people in the sample who have been unemployed for several years (or repeatedly unemployed over several years) and who receive unemployment benefits II and are thus restricted in their autonomy regarding work options and interests as well as financial preferences in life. Themes of *inferiority* and *worthlessness* in society are present in this context, due to the individual's failure to work in the same way as other people in society:

> "It's **really extreme**. In the beginning it was still okay, I thought to myself 'okay, it's just the way it is now', for about the first half year or year. But at some point, I really developed a feeling that, somehow I'm not worth as much as the others=I can't do as

well as the others. I can't achieve as much=some kind of feeling of **inferiority** […].” (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE, par. 14)

“I am dependent on others for food, drink, smoking, housing, shelter, but actually want to stand on my own two feet [...] But at the moment I am stuck in a quagmire from which it is difficult for me to get out. (...) That's why my self-esteem is sinking.” (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 136)

Long-term unemployed people in the sample often *feel shame* when receiving unemployment benefits for an extended period, and/or particularly when they are not successfully integrated into the labor market or cannot obtain a job (and income) through their own efforts. This seems mainly due to norms and values in a society characterized by work, perceived by the young adults: “In general, I'm ashamed of myself.” (Klaus, M, 29, ME, UE, par. 75); “So I find it shameful for myself because other people look my (bad) resume” (Max, M, 21, LE, UE, par. 45). In this context, a reduced income during unemployment can lead to negative feelings because they cannot afford as much as other people:

“It makes me feel a bit antisocial, because there are things, for example, that I would like to buy, but I can't afford them because I only get Hartz IV [unemployment benefit II].” (Laura, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 65)

Furthermore, interviewees reported on experiences of *stigmatization* and suffering as a result. There was talk of stigmatization, especially of those who have been unemployed for a long time and/or who have received unemployment benefits for a long time, because not many people are unemployed in Germany. Young people reported about negative connotations and experiences of the status being unemployed:

“When you get to know someone for the first time (…) you first have to say, ‘Yes, I'm unemployed’ ((grows quiet)) so it's always been ‘But why? Are you lazy? or stigmatized, something like that. You always get put into a category like that.” (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE, par. 14)

“Well, when I now say … I receive Hartz 4 (unemployment benefit II) then you notice the person opposite thinks ‘Okay, sponger’ or something like that. You never really feel accepted. Then people say ‘Well, he just sits at home and does nothing’ and … ’Yes, spends all our money’ probably that or something similar ((sighs)).” (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE par. 57)

The experienced stigmatization as being lazy, being voluntarily unemployed, and/or living at the expense of others is highly stressful for those affected. The stigma seems to originate from external sources, such as non-close social relationships, rather than from close social relationships. However, there are exceptions in the sample where friends or family members make these accusations. In these cases, individuals feel a lot of pressure and suffer because *they do not feel understood* or do not receive necessary emotional support. Overall, the absence of support, whether it be emotional or financial, from family or the Federal Employment Agency, can have negative consequences for one's well-being. It is important to note that the lack of support can lead to *feelings of being left alone*.

*Further social consequences* occur in some cases, especially among the severely financially constrained. For example, a lack of financial resources can lead to people having to *restrict social contacts and activities*, and *people may withdraw from other people*. Those affected, for example, have not enough money to go out with friends, go partying, etc., like Klaus stated:

> "Well apart from that we are only at home. Sometimes we go for a walk in the forest and sometimes we don't. We hardly ever leave this place, except we have an important appointment, and we say, we have to spend money on this." (Klaus, M, 29, ME, UE, par. 63)

In a few cases, withdrawal also occurs due to shame and feelings of inferiority: "A bit inferior. (...) I don't know, then ... you hide away, or you go out even less than you already do. (...) Yeah. It's bad." (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 102).

However, *isolation is not a major issue* for the young people interviewed. There are narratives of restrictions on social contacts, such as financial constraints or a lack of understanding of their situation by others, leading sometimes to a withdrawal from contacts as already mentioned. However, this does not result in perceived isolation in the interviews, as participants still reported having social contacts. Nevertheless, it can to some extent lead to changes and limitations in social contacts. Overall, many of the unemployed said that their friends make them feel understood. However, few suffer when they are called lazy by their friends. This can lead to a feeling of being left alone, especially, as mentioned above, when people do not get the support they need, e.g., from friends and family, but also from the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter. A reduction in social contacts or the breaking off of contacts due to the unemployment situation does not appear as a pattern in the cases. However, there was talk of changes in friendships, and some tended to turn to other unemployed people because they were in the same situation, had met them at ALMPs, etc. In addition, as a peer group, they often can

have a similar daily rhythm, (financial) situation, experiences with bureaucracy during unemployment, etc.

*The cognitive level*

The results at the affective level indicate various limitations or impairments of well-being caused by unemployment for young people in the sample. It was visible, that the *cognitive domain* of well-being, e.g., life satisfaction, and the emotional domain are difficult to separate, as they occur to be strongly correlated. However, the narratives regarding the life satisfaction and situational context clearly demonstrate that cognitive processes can have a negative impact on well-being. In concrete, when young people are asked about their overall life satisfaction – in some cases a rating on a scale of 1 to 10 was applied during the interview in order to obtain further narratives – they tend to describe a limited satisfaction, particularly due to unemployment and its, often severe financial consequences:

> "(...) If I take this now from a scale of 1-10 [...] How I live now is 1. Rating 8.5 would be a job where I know I get salary ... appreciation ... for the job I do ... and can afford things [...] At the moment it's just [...] Every time you have to think twice about every penny you spend to survive. That's (…) really cruel sometimes." (Franz, M, 24, ME, UE, par. 127).

When Marc was asked why he rated his life satisfaction with the worst value of 1 on a scale of 1-10, he stated a *lack of independence*, *unfulfilled goals and needs* and *a lack of prospects*:

> "I am dependent on others for food, drink, smoking, housing, shelter, but actually want to stand on my own two feet [...] But at the moment I am stuck in a quagmire from which it is difficult for me to get out." (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 136)

It is clearly visible, that in terms of unemployment, there is generally a picture of dissatisfaction. The psychological and financial consequences of unemployment and limited prospects seem to play a major role here. The emotions associated with the experience of unemployment (see previous explanations of this chapter) seem strongly correlated to how the situation is perceived and evaluated in terms of quality of life. However, it should be noted that this assessment can vary, as it did among the interviewees. People who have been unemployed for a long time and have little prospect of their situation improving, e.g., with regard to the labor market situation, assess their situation more negatively and more problematically than, for example, university graduates. The latter are generally more satisfied, partly due to better prospects:

> “I was always sure that something would come and that I just had to be patient [...] And that's why I was never afraid that it [finding a job] wouldn't work.” (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 29)

People who have already experienced an improvement in their situation while being unemployed also show higher satisfaction due to their improved prospects. Simon also tends to be dissatisfied but distinguishes between work and non-work situation. He is satisfied with the latter. And since he is trying to achieve professional goals, he ranks himself at a medium level of satisfaction 5 on a scale 1-10:

> “Yes, I mean ... I have a goal. I haven't achieved it yet ... I know I want to get there. I just haven't got there yet ... but I'm not sitting lazily on the couch right now either. So that would have been one for me now. I'm doing something... (I) just don't have what I want yet, so it's not a 10. (...) That's why it's a 5.” (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE par. 119)

This seems to be typical in the cases because it is repeated in the different interviews that a distinction is made or the satisfaction with life is compared between the professional situation and the private situation. Although unemployment and the consequences of it are the main risk factors for life satisfaction in the young people’s lives, life areas outside of employment should be considered to better understand the well-being, and particularly the role of the cognitive level. The narratives drew attention to the fact that the outside of work also can play an important role in overall well-being.

### 5.2.2 Life areas outside of employment or unemployment can be important to understand well-being

Since this thesis focuses on the overall well-being and the role of unemployment, this topic will only be briefly discussed here. In some cases, it is apparent that, negative emotions regarding unemployment are reported as well as dissatisfaction with the labor market situation, but dissatisfaction with life in general is only partially reported, for example: “I am satisfied with my life. But ... the job market is causing me problems at the moment. I want a job now” (Alina, F, 21, LE, UE, par. 131). This means, for example, if people are satisfied in their private lives, e.g., with their partnership and family, then in some cases this (partially) can outweigh or compensate the negative feelings about unemployment. *Positive emotions and feelings* or *judgments resulting from other areas* can lead to an overall positive perception of the situation. However, in general, positive emotions do not seem to arise due to unemployment. Instead,

positive feelings are present despite unemployment. It can be people who are in a happy partnership or young adults who have great friends or family behind them who are supportive in a variety of ways. Satisfaction can also arise from (other) sources, e.g., the experience of happy motherhood/parenthood:

> "I mean my child makes me smile every day and I can say 'Well, then we'll manage the other days as well'. As I said, I have a lot of support from my mom. I am also very grateful to her that she supports me so much." (Lena, F, 21, ME, UE, par. 141)

However, these positive experiences occur very differently in the sample, without a specific pattern among the cases. In parenthood, however, this is mainly visible among mothers. But this could be due to the smaller number of fathers in the sample.

However, beside positive life experiences from other areas, the interviews clearly demonstrate that *family problems* (e.g., disputes, violence, lack of contact with friends/family, relationship problems) or other areas in life can also be a (additional) burden and *can reduce well-being*. An extreme example of this can be Klaus, who had a difficult childhood, and later experienced health and relationship problems during unemployment. His girlfriend left him while he suffered bad health issues and was in coma. He describes his overall situation, considering his family problems:

> "How did I feel? I have a **shitty life** I have a shitty life and what have I done to deserve it. What have I done wrong in this life? It started ... it started in my childhood with my mum. She basically gave a shit about me [...] three years ago, as I was about to die, I wished I hadn't woken up, that I hadn't woken up. I fought, because I knew my wife, child, are there etc. If I'd known that they were all gone, that everything was gone ... then I wouldn't have given a shit." (Klaus, M, 29, ME, UE, par. 33)

In general, investigating the influence of emotions or perceptions from other domains on well-being is a complex task. However, detailed interviews and capturing the context and subjective perspective of those involved made it possible in most cases. The brief explanations demonstrate that other factors can contribute to overall well-being or impair it. Furthermore, by considering these areas, it is possible to clearly examine the role of unemployment. It is apparent, however, that the labor market situation in particular has a negative impact on well-being and that the private domain in most cases does not seem to play a central role in this respect. This means the labor market situation appears to be very dominant in determining well-being due to its individual meaning in the majority of cases.

### 5.2.3 Time factor important in perceptions and feelings

The previous results have already indicated that the time or duration of unemployment or recurrent unemployment, and thus the prevalence of insecurity in the lives of young adults, can have a negative impact on their well-being. Regarding this, the time course and the individual prospects appear to be relevant. Some respondents talked about changes over time, that the situation was positive in the first weeks of unemployment and then after a while the situation felt worse. Individuals who have completed school, apprenticeship, or university studies may initially enjoy the free time that comes with unemployment, which is often considered a normal experience, and part of life, when transitioning from training to work. Over time, however, the *emotions became more and more negative* starting with unease until, at the emotional level, there was a sense of uncertainty, anxiety about the future and desperation. Particularly affected seem to be those people who have low education, that means they have only secondary school-leaving certificate and/or without vocational training and have spent a long time trying unsuccessfully to find a vocational training/apprenticeship or a job. Katrin who is unable to work due to mental illness has expressed that a feeling of inferiority arose over time because of her inability to cope with her unemployment and health situation:

> "It's **really extreme**. In the beginning it was still okay, I thought to myself 'okay, it's just the way it is now', for about the first half year or year. But at some point, I really developed a feeling that, somehow I'm not worth as much as the others=I can't do as well as the others. I can't achieve as much=some kind of feeling of **inferiority** […]." (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE, par. 14)

Maria (F, 27, HE, TE) and Tina (F, 18, LE, TE) also experienced a change in their perception of the situation. After graduating from college, Maria, and after finishing school, Tina have been initially happy about the free time they had. However, over time the situation shifted into the negative due to *increasing boredom*, *perceived pressure* from external sources such as family and society, and the *individual's desire to work*, *earn money*, and *achieve financial independence*, *remained unfulfilled*:

> "When I finished school, I was very happy about the situation and enjoyed a lot of free time. I really enjoyed that, after a while it's getting really boring, of course. (…) And then a lot of relatives and friends asked me 'What are you doing professionally at the moment?' And then I had to answer, that 'I do nothing, I don't work (…) because I'am unemployed' that's a really embarrassing situation and you feel very unpleasantly ((strained smile)) and after a while, as already mentioned, it even gets boring and …

((taking a deep breath)) you want to have something to do again ((sighing)).” (Tina, F, 18, LE, TE, par. 22)

“Well, it was really difficult. […] Well, in the beginning I was still very positive. And then, well, it is normal that one has to look a little longer after graduating from university and I didn't put myself under pressure. But … it started to be a burden after a while.” (Maria, F, 27, HE, TE, par. 16)

In addition, the narratives show that a *stigma* is experienced as a consequence of being unemployed and/or receiving unemployment benefit. This is very stressful for those affected in everyday life and in contact with other people. It seems as if it mainly occurs during longer phases of unemployment and the receipt of state benefits, but even the topic of being unemployed in this context is stressful for some people (see also section 5.2.1). On the one hand, the positive effect of financial support during unemployment has a positive effect on their well-being, and let them feel financially save, but on the other hand, stigmatization can make daily conversations stressful, which Katrin reported:

“When you get to know someone for the first time … you first have to say, “Yes, I'm unemployed” [grows quiet] so it's always been “But why? Are you lazy?” or stigmatized, something like that. You always get put into a category like that.” (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE, par. 14)

Some of these changes over time have also occurred among the higher educated (university graduates). However, this group interprets unemployment mainly as a normal search phase after graduation, so they expect it to take some time. It is particularly evident that they are highly motivated at the beginning and “finally” want to work after their studies, and then no job opportunity arises, or certain job search expectations are not met. In some cases, the transition was expected to be easier, i.e., a smooth process without any hurdles, than it actually was. This in turn can led to negative feelings. Ali who studied political science, for example, thought he would be able to find a job without a becoming unemployed, but in the end, he experienced several months of unemployment. Due to his additional feelings of stigmatization (even from employees of the Jobcenter), he perceived the situation very negatively, although it was only a transition in retrospect:

“Because there is sort of a social condemnation through social pressure, I'd say, and it feels as if they say ‘Well, he is Hartzer (informal negative connotated German word for someone receiving unemployment benefits II), he is not doing anything with his life. He could have worked somewhere or something and now he is living of people's money

> who pay for social security or taxes. […] And it was really degrading in parts, what I experienced there (at the Jobcenter)." (Ali, M, 28, HE, TE, par. 27)

Nonetheless, the academics in the sample tend to feel less negative about their situation during unemployment because they have good labor market prospects, and from their perspective it is probably only a matter of time before they will find a job. Interestingly, with the exception of Ali, the higher educated do not report feeling stigmatized to the same extent as the lower educated. However, overall, it must be noted that vocational training or a *university degree generally protects against (long-term) unemployment* in the sample. The duration of unemployment is shorter among the higher educated individuals in the sample. University graduates tend to be unemployed for a shorter period, as they find a job more quickly. This may explain why they do not perceive any stigmatization in the majority of the cases, as they have shorter periods of unemployment compared to other unemployed in the sample. The external pressure on the unemployed appears to increase with longer periods of unemployment, while short periods, especially during the transition from school to work seem to be more socially accepted.

The previous elaborations on the influence on well-being (see previous chapters) point out to another important aspect that can lead to a decline in well-being over time: *the financial situation*. If a risk factor, such as the financial situation of the person, causes strong feelings of insecurities, it can exacerbate the underlying problem. This, of course, depends on the coping and support options available over time which can change. A lack of support or support that becomes unavailable may deteriorate well-being over time.

*Among the long-term unemployed, fear of the future is particularly strong*, especially among those who have been in touch with unemployment for many years. These fears can have different reasons, e.g., in some cases financial deprivation or they see poor opportunities on the labor market and thus feel trapped in the insecure situation. Furthermore, long-term unemployment can lead to feelings of *frustration*, *hopelessness*, *despair*, *powerlessness*, *inferiority*, etc., especially for those who have been unemployed for several years (see chapter 5.2.1). However, the analyses show that duration is not always the decisive factor. Important are also the coping mechanisms and available resources, which are explained in more detail in chapter 5.3. For instance, there are cases where the situation or well-being stabilizes somewhat at a low level. These individuals are not yet satisfied with the situation but have come to terms with it. In some cases, the emotions can improve over time by accepting the situation, trying to make the best of it, and focusing on the present. Alternatively, individuals even may improve

their well-being after a while by using certain coping mechanisms. However, before going into coping strategies, a special group of unemployed people in this sample should be briefly highlighted, as they differ considerably from other unemployed people in the sample.

### 5.2.4 Young people with prior health problems – a special subgroup in the context of well-being

A special subgroup of (long-term) unemployed in this sample consists of persons who are or where *unable to work due to their physical and/or psychological illness*. For Hans (M, 26, LE, UE), Tanja (F, 19, LE, UE), Katrin (F, 27, LE, UE), Andreas (M, 27, ME, UE), and Kerstin (F, 23, LE, UE) *health problems* also play an important role when investigating well-being during unemployment. It is important to distinguish whether, for example, health problems (physical and mental) have arisen as a result of unemployment, or whether they have been present before. The reason why people cannot work anymore or only to a very limited extend is the illness/health problems, and illness is not the consequence of unemployment in these cases. Regarding the sample, some individuals are currently unable to progress due to their illness. They need to overcome their illness first, i.e., they need to get well first and then will become able to work (again). Therefore, the illness is relevant to the way unemployment is dealt with but cannot be seen as a consequence of the unemployment situation in general in these cases.

Nonetheless, the interviews reveal that for this group, the particularly negative effects of unemployment on well-being are also evident. They can have already limited well-being due to the disease. However, the narratives here also show particularly negative well-being, as the young people perceive a *hopeless* situation. They are *powerless* and must first improve the state of health itself before work can be searched for or work offers can be accepted. This *powerlessness* through their own actions can make the situation even worse:

> "Normally you always say, look positive into the future, but well if you are already sitting in a wheelchair, you do start thinking 'Well, hopefully I'll get out of here again' And being stuck in there the whole time. That would be really shitty. Really bad, shit." (Hans, M, 26, LE, UE, par. 99)

The unemployment situation is perceived as stressful, particularly when individuals desire to work like their peers. Work holds significant personal meaning, and unemployment can be a source of *shame* for them, especially when surrounded by employed acquaintances. Regarding this, Hans added in the interview: "[...] it's pretty shameful. I would also go to work, but if you

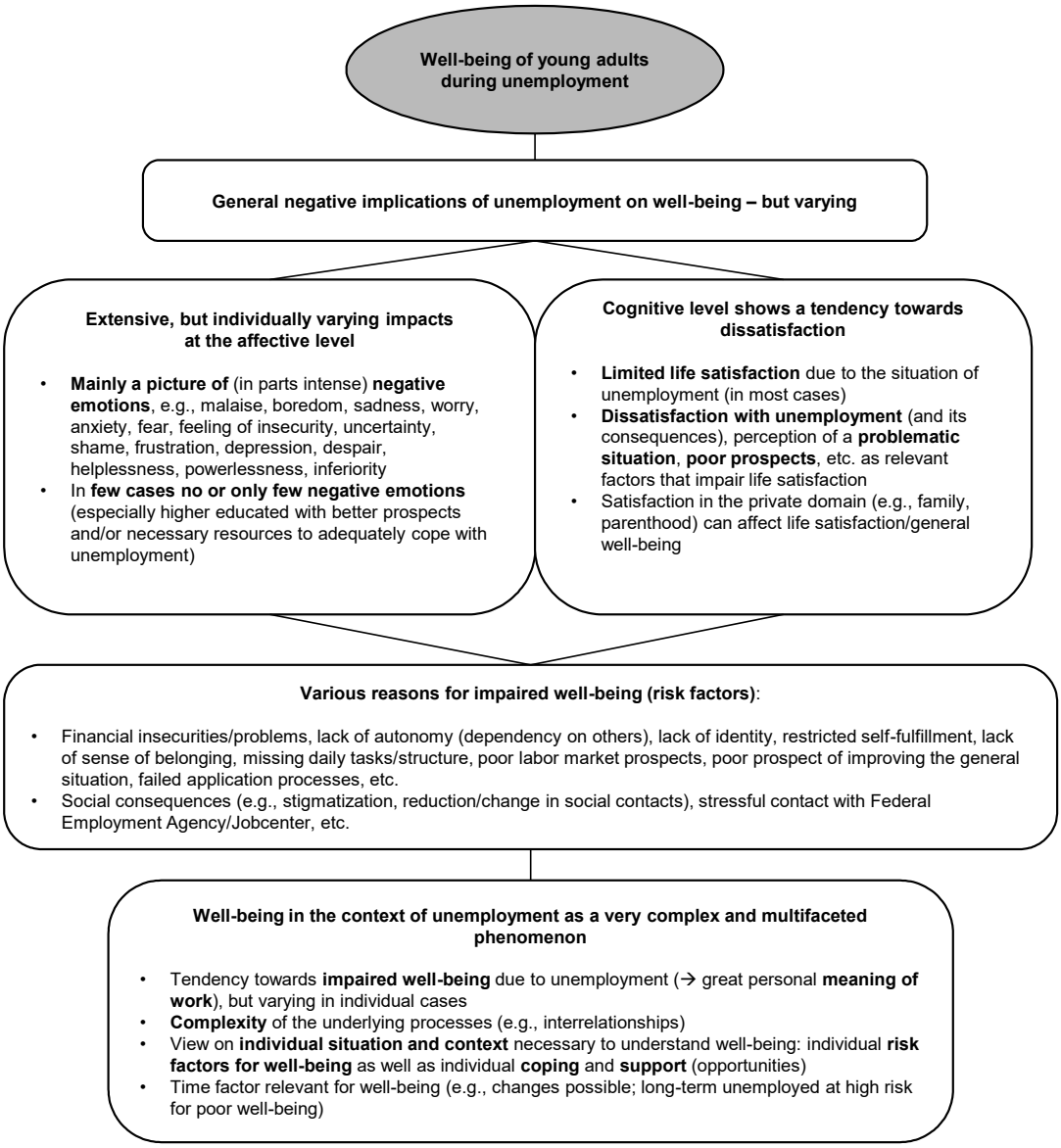
look at it like this, the others go to work, you are at home and I can't change anything, yes." (Hans, M, 26, LE, UE, par. 107). These feelings can lead to a sense of *worthlessness*. They cannot change their unemployment situation on their own, even if they would like to, because they want to get better first, and that is often out of their hands.

The impact of unemployment on well-being is generally evident for the group described in this section, but it is influenced by their current health and coping abilities (see chapter 5.3). The typology (see chapter 6), which includes these cases as a separate type, provides further explanations in the context of well-being and coping during unemployment.

### 5.2.5 Overview of well-being during unemployment

Overall, previous findings of this thesis have revealed the consequences of unemployment on the well-being of young adults. In this regard, Figure 4 gives an overview (summary) of the main themes developed in the context of well-being and unemployment. Although there is a *tendency for unemployment to have negative consequences on well-being*, the extent of this *varies* among different cases and the picture of well-being during unemployment appears a *complex* phenomenon.

**Figure 4** Theme map of the main results on well-being during unemployment




*Source*: Own illustration.

It is worth noting that in addition to the negative emotions and dissatisfaction with life resulting from unemployment, there are cases in which there was little or no impairment of well-being. As demonstrated, although unemployment generally has a negative impact on well-being, the extent and intensity of well-being during unemployment varies from case to case. In addition, it can be relevant to consider the unemployment period as a *process* due to possible changes during this period. The duration of unemployment can reduce well-being over time.

In general, well-being can be negatively affected by various risk factors, both on an emotional and cognitive level. Previous findings indicate certain *risk factors for well-being that result from unemployment*. The interviews suggest that various risk factors can manifest as individual risks or in combination in the lives of the young adults. Impacts on well-being then can also arise singly or in multiple ways, potentially exacerbating the negative impact on individual well-being. The findings suggest that it is difficult to separate the two dimensions of well-being (affective and cognitive) to interpret well-being. They are strongly related. Therefore, it is necessary and more beneficial to consider perceptions and emotions as a whole picture of each case and to evaluate all aspects of well-being together. In this way, a comprehensive and accurate picture of well-being during unemployment can be obtained.

A look at the area outside the labor market situation also shows that this domain, e.g., in private life/family, can also weaken or strengthen the general well-being (multi-causality). However, the area of employment seems to be the main factor of implementation, as it is of high importance from the respondents' point of view.

Furthermore, these findings highlight the complexity and diversity of unemployment, making it necessary to consider *individual cases and contexts* to understand the situation. In this regard, the analyses indicate that young people's individual *coping and available coping resources* influence the effect of unemployment on well-being. Chapter 5.3 provides an insight into how young adults cope with unemployment.

## 5.3 Coping in the context of unemployment

This section presents the main findings on coping in the context of unemployment and well-being. Coping refers to behaviors, actions, cognitive or emotional mechanisms employed by the young unemployed to deal with the consequences of unemployment or to enhance their employment prospects and conditions. The aim is to improve well-being or to avert negative consequences for well-being.

During the analyses, the code scheme regarding coping (see A 5 in the Appendix) based on inductive code development, which was used to ensure the necessary openness during the analysis. In addition, deductive theoretical considerations of the stress and coping (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) were considered (see also chapter 2.3).

It was possible to create a structure for investigating coping. It quickly became clear that the complexity of coping does not only involve the *direction or intention* of coping but also the *level* on which the processes take place, and that the used *resources* can be distinguished, i.e., from whom resources of coping originate. In addition, other aspects of coping were added that appeared relevant in this context to understand the coping process. Therefore, during the analyses, considerations based on the empirical material, as well as ideas from existing research on coping were used to catch and illustrate the complexity of coping in the field of unemployment.

The analysis made clear, that *coping* (strategies, mechanisms, efforts) can be *distinguished according to the level* – individual, social relationship, or institutional level. This means where the coping takes place and can also be interpreted as resources young people use for coping. Thus, the chapter is structured in these terms. As already shown, although there is a tendency towards a negative effect on well-being in the interviews, the well-being varies. Accordingly, the coping strategies can also vary.

### 5.3.1 Individual level coping – behavior/action and psychological strategies

The analyses show that individual coping strategies for well-being include *actions/behaviors, as well as psychological strategies (cognitive mechanisms, and emotional responses)*. Young people therefore cope with (impaired) well-being on both action and psychological levels. In this context, the interviews reveal that coping can be used to combat or overcome the source of reduced well-being, i.e., unemployment (*problem-oriented*), or to improve a possible reduced well-being or to avert negative consequences for one's own well-being (*consequences-focused*).

*Dealing with unemployment (problem-oriented)*

First, *coping mechanisms for dealing with unemployment (problem-oriented)* are discussed. Unemployment is seen as the cause of limited well-being that needs to be overcome. In this regard, actions, or behavior such as *seeking employment or vocational training is broadly used and an important way.* Young adults often display this behavior in various ways, typically

through different forms of media. The internet is a common medium, particularly for job searches, such as browsing job ads on websites or the Federal Employment Agency job board. Newspapers are also a popular option. In addition, they do this by finding out about job vacancies from acquaintances or in everyday life, for example, when they see a job advertisement in the stores. Young adults also approach local employers directly and ask them for work or internships:

> "I asked everywhere. I went into the shops, asked 'Hey, do you need someone here? I need money' […] Every now and then someone says, 'Yes, just do an internship with us.'" (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 56)

Some young people hope that this initial contact will lead to paid work or vocational training opportunities later. In general, the young people are also aware and believe that work experience and certificates improves job prospects and makes candidates more attractive to employers. It sends the right signals about their interest, motivation, experience, and qualifications: "I also took my forklift driving license. That was paid for. That definitely brought me a step ahead, because I didn't have any gap in my CV" (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 67).

*Job applications* are generally used to escape directly from unemployment and to prevent for negative consequences of unemployment, such as financial problems or emotionally for example stigmatization. In this context some cases, such as Finn (M, 18, LE, UE), have already improved their situation. Finn was able undergo an *internship,* to gain work some experience, and to earn some money, what helps him during his unemployment to better cope with financial shortages. Additionally, the internship provides a better perspective for his future, increasing the individual's well-being during the extended period of unemployment (2 years). It offers a new way (opportunity) out of unemployment: "Well at the moment I am not worried at all, because I am on good track" (Finn, M, 18, LE, UE, par. 97). This opportunity, e.g., an internship, or practical work experience, is also achieved by some in the sample with the support of ALMPs. This topic will be discussed further below (see chapter 5.3.3). An internship can also help young people to gain orientation for their future career goals. Some young people reported that they did not know what they wanted to do when they left school and entered the labor market. Internships (and some measures) also give them some orientation regarding what they would like to work in the future.

The narratives show that young adults try to *increase their employment opportunities by improving their individual education*, in addition to gaining *labor market experience*. This is a crucial tool for them, which includes re-entering the education system and achieving school

degrees. This can be achieved in labor market programs that they attend in or in programs of the transitional system. They believe that relevant school certificates convey a positive signal to potential employers, who view them as an indicator of an individual's suitability for the role of a good employee: "That always looks good, if you have grades or certificates" (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 67).

This strategy is primarily used by young adults who have not obtained a secondary school-leaving certificate or have been unsuccessful in finding a vocational training place for an extended period with a low school-leaving certificate, such as a lower secondary school leaving certificate. The analyses clearly show that individuals with lower levels of education understand that in order to gain a permanent foothold in the labor market, they must improve their education. Most young adults prefer vocational training over "simply employment" to secure a long-term foothold in the labor market through apprenticeships. They avoid insecure employment contracts, such as temporary or unskilled jobs/casual jobs:

> "[…] I'm afraid that I won't get any vocational training and without training I'll just get stuck with cleaning jobs, and I don't want that. I don't want to end up on this track, single mother and will always just be a cleaner." (Sophia F, 25, LE, UE, par. 109)

In general, *emigrating and working in another country does not seem to be a viable option* for most interviewees. Only very few individuals, such as Klaus (M, 29, ME, UE) or Luke (M, 30, ME, UE), who have struggled to establish themselves in the labor market for an extended period, have considered seeking employment elsewhere if they are unable to secure a job here soon. It seems that these considerations are mentioned without a concrete plan or willingness to act on them. This may be because they are aware of the good opportunities with a good education in Germany. People also often choose not to move away from their local area due to family ties or friendships, which are considered very important. Additionally, Germany's social security system provides advantages in uncertain situations, such as unemployment (see chapter 5.3.3). Young adults may sometimes be unable to relocate to other cities or states, even if they cite poor job opportunities as a reason for staying in the local labor market. This is especially true for those who still live with their parents and/or have strong family and friendship ties in the area. However, some older individuals in the sample attempted to relocate to other cities during periods of labor market insecurity, but these efforts have been unsuccessful.

*The long-lasting inability to find employment, apprenticeships, internships*, etc., shows a clear impact on the well-being of young people and may also additionally decrease well-being. This can lead then to, inter alia, *malaise, sadness, desperation, and hopelessness*, as already shown

in chapter 5.2. In such cases, some individuals, for instance Sven (M, 25, LE, UE), may *adjust their personal goals and aspirations* as a result of their negative experiences in the apprenticeship/vocational training search process. They perceive no chance to find a vocational training place but want to improve their situation, e.g., in financial terms. As a solution, for example, they then accept or think about to accept work offers (atypical employment), such as marginally employments, small job opportunities, or work for temporary employment agencies, even if the work is accompanied by low pay, limited job security, and reduced chances of permanent employment. From their point of view, they see no other option than to accept this work in order to improve their situation and hopefully achieve access to the labor market:

> "[...] In essence, it's **my own fault**. Sure, I don't have a degree, I have to take what I get. I'm not really allowed to complain or whine, but [temporary employment agencies] should be banned anyway. [That's a] mess." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 75)

> "I don't want to do this with the temporary employment agencies forever. But I don't know any other way out at the moment and it's always annoying." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 91)

*Dealing with the consequences of unemployment (consequences-focused)*

Moreover, the analyses reveal *individual level coping strategies that young unemployed people adopt to reduce negative well-being outcomes or to improve their well-being*. This means addressing the impact of unemployment, e.g., on well-being or other consequences that can affect well-being. In this context, actions, or behaviors, as well as psychological strategies that are closely linked, are applied.

*Living economically* is a common and relevant strategy for the majority of the unemployed in the sample. This is often necessary due to the loss of income or lower financial resources available while being unemployed. If people find themselves reaching their financial limits due to everyday expenses, they may choose to live frugally by limiting their general consumption and being mindful of their spending. This can include avoiding unnecessary investments, purchasing affordable groceries from the supermarket, prioritizing spending, and reducing expenses on hobbies, etc. Kerstin summarizes her approach to saving money when buying clothes:

> "If I need new clothes, I really only buy them if nothing works anymore … especially shoes, I only buy them if they … are wet and … water goes inside from below. And I

> look three time if it really is necessary (…) And then I don't spend more than 20 Euro on a pair of shoes and then I wear them until they are broken again. And clothing, only if they are ruined. Otherwise, I don't buy any." (Kerstin, F, 23, LE, UE, par. 81)

In general, living with fewer financial resources than before becoming unemployed, e.g., relying now solely on unemployment benefits, and the task of *living frugally* is often perceived as burdensome in the interviews. This can have a serious impact on their well-being, for example through dissatisfaction or worry. Therefore, for them it is important to reduce or at least not worsen any impairments to well-being caused by financial shortcomings. In extreme cases, unusual but for the young people very helpful measures are taken, which are initiated by themselves, namely the search for already discarded, but still edible, food from rubbish bins of grocery shops: "I have been going 'dumpster diving' for three months or something like that. Which actually works fine here in (***) (hometown, large city)" (Maja, F, 24, LE, UE, par. 113).

The majority of the sample had *not been able to save any money before unemployment*. Some young people, especially those who had previously worked and were able to save something, also *draw on financial reserves*: "I actually put money aside before, because I always worked [...]. I also fell back on that." (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 73)

In addition, some respondents report on the use of *leisure activities*, such as hobbies, as a way of *coping emotionally* with unemployment. In some cases, this was reported as a *distraction* from the negative impact on well-being. Besides the advantage of having something else to do, i.e., having a task in everyday life to escape boredom, feeling useless, etc., it also helps to experience positive emotions or to create nice moments for oneself. This can from their point of view, create a balance in their everyday lives, which are otherwise dominated by negative emotions due to unemployment (see chapter 5.2). This form of coping can be, for example, to pursue one's own hobbies, such as fishing. But also spending time with friends, which is mentioned later in the relationship coping strategies (see chapter 5.3.2), can take place. However, the prerequisite for this is that the hobbies or activities can continue to be practiced during unemployment, which is no longer possible for some, especially due to financial constraints. In particular for the long-term unemployed people, especially those, who are often affected by long periods of financial constraint, the financial situation can also have an impact on their social life. Klaus (M, 29, ME, UE) says that he and his wife only go out of the house when it is necessary to meet their daily needs, such as food, or to attend necessary appointments.

Financial constraints may hinder them from engaging in social activities such as meeting friends, going out, or partying.

Other narratives, from a small number of people who have been interviewed, describeed *criminal activities to cope with financial problems.* In addition, *drug consumption is reported as a way of coping emotionally*. For instance, Klaus was dealing and using drugs to cope with financial hardship and to cope at the emotional level with severe strong worries and fears of his precarious life situation: “Back then I was dealing drugs and I was also consuming drugs to escape this nightmare and that is how I basically paid my bills” (Klaus, M, 29, ME, UE, par. 35).

It is worth noting, that these coping mechanisms are not widespread across the cases, as far as the interviews were able to show. Rather, it is visible in a small number of cases and is also interpreted as exception. *Drug consumption* as coping is mainly found only among the severely deprived who are in hopeless situations, i.e., people who have been unemployed for a very long time (several years). *Criminal activities are rather rare.* However, a recurring pattern, especially in large cities where public transportation is prevalent, is *fare evasion*. This is used because ticket prices are sometimes, from young people’s perspectives, unaffordable when they are unemployed. As a result, some people in the sample have already come into conflict with the law and have even resulted in prison sentences for extensive disregard of the law. They then experienced in the past, that a criminal record can also have a negative impact on finding a job, as employers are less willing to hire these people. Another aspect that is addressed by unemployed people with craft skills, but also people who can offer other services, is *moonlighting* while being unemployed to earn something on top of their unemployment benefit. This usually involves one-off jobs or smaller activities over a short period of time but helps them to earn some necessary extra money during financial hardships.

In addition to activities and behaviors that can mitigate or prevent the consequences of poor well-being or improve well-being, the interviews also revealed strategies for dealing with the situation on the psychological level, sometimes more and sometimes less consciously. These take the form of mental processes and emotional responses. The following description is not intended to divide them up, as they can be viewed holistically and show complex interplay.

A common strategy is *thinking positively about the future and being confident about one’s abilities*. The narratives suggest that this is particularly true for respondents with a university degree or vocational training with relevant work experience. They perceive good prospects for the future and perceive their period of unemployment as being only temporary, believing that

they will find work soon. This is related to the attitude of optimism that one's own situation will improve in the future:

> "That [being unemployed] wasn't ... burdensome for me. I was always sure that something would come and that I just had to be patient [...] And that's why I was never afraid that it [finding a job] wouldn't work." (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 29)

Furthermore, individuals who have improved their prospects because they have completed their vocational training or enhanced their health, and those engaged in work experience or invited to a job interview, such as Simon (M, 25, LE, U), are optimistic about the future because they feel that they have already made some progress since being unemployed and are now on a good track. This perception prevents them from feeling very unhappy and avoids feelings of hopelessness.

Some interviewees attempt to *normalize or gloss over their current situation*. This is often combined with optimism, and visible particularly in those with a good education (e.g., vocational training). Thus, they generally perceive good prospects on the labor market. Fabian can serve as an example. He is on the verge of another period of unemployment but defines his objective insecure situation (being or becoming unemployed) as a normal and temporary part of anyone's life. Due to this he looks into the future relaxed:

> "So I see it really laid-back since nowadays it's simply a fact that sometimes people are unemployed. I'm not embarrassed about (…) I'll find something again during the winter." (Fabian, M, 22, ME, TE, par. 89)

However, people with lower levels of education, and therefore presumably fewer opportunities in the labor market, and currently bad financial situations also adopt this strategy, as it allows them to improve or maintain their well-being by *avoiding or ignoring the objectively insecure situation*. This is often accompanied by the suppression of emotions such as frustration, sadness, and anxiety.

In many cases, young people also exhibit a tendency to *focus on the present* and *suppress their own current insecurities regarding potential future consequences*: "I just push away what might be in a few months" (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE). This helps them to focus on the present and find solutions for their current acute problems. It also allows them to pool resources without being emotionally overwhelmed by negative emotions in the situation. Even though their insecure situation can already be stressful, for many, especially those who have been unemployed for

several years, the fear of the future and the hopelessness of the situation can be even more burdensome.

*The strategy of accepting the current situation* is identified as a widely used approach in the sample to avoid stress and achieve a sense of harmony. This was demonstrated by individuals being kind of content with their poor labor market prospects they perceive. This is especially true for the long-term unemployed with lower secondary education, including young people without vocational training. They may understand their situation, realize their objectively poor opportunities, and therefore have adjusted their expectations to their situation to avoid disappointment or frustration:

> "Meanwhile I just accepted it … I actually see more chances for success at my age, if I just take these jobs as an unskilled worker and try to gain a foothold from there." (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 32)

On the other hand, accepting the situation in the example can also be seen as *resignation*. This is particularly the case for people who have been unemployed for a very long time and no longer see any chance of improvement of his life situation: "I just don't believe that anything will improve anymore" (Peter, M, 22, LE, UE, par. 123).

Others try to increase the value of their current insecure situation and well-being by *putting the situation into perspective* and/or also *comparing* it with others, what gives them a better feeling about their own situation:

> "It could be worse, it could be better. I could have more, but I am content with what I have at the moment. […] Because as I said, I could be living in the street. I could not have food or couldn't eat anything. Yes, it definitely could be worse." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 123)

As already mentioned in chapter 5.2, being unemployed and receiving unemployment benefits can lead to a sense of burden and stigmatization. Some people in the sample experience stress and feel dependent on others or the state for their care. For example, they may receive unemployment benefits. Young adults may experience stress due to self-imposed pressure or societal expectations of self-care. To avoid negative influences on their well-being, some individuals, like Katrin (27, F, 27, LE, UE), convince themselves that they are not to blame for the situation, i.e., it is *fault of their own*. Perceiving others as at fault can lead to emotional improvement, e.g., when feeling anger or unfairness, and may improve self-esteem by not feeling vulnerable or guilty. Alternatively, they persuade themselves that they are not reliant on

other single individuals, but rather on the state. This enables them to feel better about themselves, as they believe that they are entitled to state support based on taxes: “Yes, well, I think to myself, I mean I whitewash it (…) I think that I get unemployment benefits at that point. I'm, simply put, dependent on the state, but not from an individual.” (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE, par. 62)

Some, such as Maja (F, 24, LE, UE), argue that receiving unemployment benefits is simply their *right as citizens* and they are happy with this support. Later, they narrated, when they are working and paying taxes, they will give back to society the financial support they received through taxes. This idea of normalizing the use of financial support from the state can ward off negative thoughts about financial dependence and any stigmatizing tendencies that may arise:

> “Well, I don't want to live on the money from the employment agency forever, but […] if I have the opportunity and the luck to live in such a state, then I'll use it and then later be glad to do a great job and pay a lot of taxes. Then they'll get something back.” (Maja, F, 24, LE, UE, par. 39)

The analyses reveal that, at the individual level, coping resources can be the individual’s own efforts or psychological mechanism to cope with the situation. These can be actions/behaviors or psychological mechanisms. In all cases there are several ways of coping at this level. However, most people use both problem-oriented and the consequence-focused, as well as a combination of psychological and action/behavioral-oriented coping strategies. In addition to these strategies (at the individual level), other areas of coping can be identified.

### 5.3.2 Social relationship level coping – coping with social support

The next level of coping is the social relationship level. It involves *resources from one’s own social network* (e.g., psychological, material, etc.) that young adults use to cope with either with unemployment or its consequences. The interviews show, that, like individual level coping, social support is used to *combat or overcome the cause (problem-oriented)* of the reduced well-being, i.e., the unemployment, or, to *improve the possible reduced well-being or to avert negative consequences on one’s own well-being (consequences-focused).* It is about the *availability and the use of social support from one’s own social environment*. It is also possible to further distinguish whether the support is based more on the psychological level, e.g., emotional, or on coping actively (with action/behavior) with (material) resources, e.g., solving financial problems.

The analyses show that *everyone in the sample uses some form and amount of social support*. Young people draw on their social network, especially on *close social relationships* such as (nuclear) family, partners (girlfriend/boyfriend, spouse), and good friends. In addition to these close relationships, young people may also benefit from connections to acquaintances or support arranged through their *social network* to improve their well-being or avoid negative impacts. Social support appears useful. The two directions (problem-oriented and consequences-focused) are very closely related, as the following explanations demonstrate.

*Dealing with unemployment (problem-oriented)*

In terms of problem-orientated coping, the interviews indicate a broad use of *advice* and *assistance in job search or application processes* (e.g., writing applications) as well as in *establishing contact with potential employers*.

In particular, *job placement or information on vacancies* proved to be widespread and, according to some in retrospect, successful. Tom and Sina, for example, talked about the support from their family during the job search process: “Moreover, they [family members] support me and say: ‘Look, here's a job offer. What do you think about it? Are you interested?” (Tom, M, 20, ME, UE, par. 101).

> “My mum is very supportive. She also hopes that I will get a job as a result of this internship. But she's also looking around a lot to see where I can get an internship or an apprenticeship. So she asks around a lot and helps me a lot.” (Sina, F, 18, LE, UE, par. 94)

Among others in the sample, Simon reported on successful job placements in the past. This gave him the opportunity to work for a while, until he later became ill and unemployed (again):

> “Yes, I had nothing in my hand. I had no work, nothing to do really. I was at home all day [...] And then at some point a friend who had worked in the kitchen before said I should apply, and he brought me in [that employment] […] I did a test working and then I had the job.” (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE par. 27)

Tina received support from her father, especially in writing job applications, which was valuable as he had experience of helping young people find work through his occupation as a social worker:

> "[…] My father supported me, because he has experience with finding people an apprenticeship, because he worked in the youth workshop and always made sure that they found an apprenticeship." (Tina, F, 18, LE, TE, par. 60)

This support, mainly based on the *provision of information*, that can help to cope with unemployment (and to find a job) and provides psychological support to improve well-being, e.g., through care, encouragement, a sense of being valued.

In addition, support by one's own social network was also shown regarding the interaction with the Federal Employment Agency or the Jobcenter. Especially in families where parents or friends have had experience with unemployment and with the contact to the Federal Employment Agency or Jobcenter, these people gave tips and advice, e.g., on the whole application process for institutional financial support (filling in the forms) or on certain additional subsidies that can be applied for:

> "[...] you're not familiar with things from the start [...] But there are lots of situations where you don't know what you have to do or ... If you have an adult with you who knows about how to deal with something like that [application for unemployment benefits II], then it's much easier." (Tanja, F, 19, LE, UE, par. 71)

*Dealing with the consequences of unemployment (consequences-focused)*

On the one hand, young people *benefit from the knowledge and experience of other people* from their social network to overcome unemployment directly. They help to improve their employment situation so that they can stand on their own two feet in the future. On the other hand, through support young people do not feel (left) alone in their unemployment situation, which can *provide emotional stability and sense of being still – although being unemployed – part of society*. For instance, when individuals experience doubt, insecurity, worry, and a lack of identity due to unemployment, psychosocial support can enhance their perception of their current life situation by assisting them in feeling (re)integrated into the social environment and preventing feelings of isolation or exclusion: "Well, they (parents) were really motivational because they kept saying that everything is just normal" (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 75).

> "[…] I'm grateful to my girlfriend for being so understanding, because she could have said: 'You don't have a job any more. So I'm leaving you now'. She also supports me and says: 'We'll manage.'" (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 89)

The narratives demonstrate that *friends tend to provide companionship, e.g., a sense of belonging,* that they are not alone or different because they are currently unemployed *as well as informational support*. In addition, in this regard *interaction with others, i.e., social contact itself, appeared as very important*. Marc describes well how important it can be to have a break from the daily routine of being unemployed just by meeting friends or spending time with others. This can create positive feelings and experiences in everyday life, which may result in a sense of relief from the perceived burden: "Whenever I am outside and meet my friends, then mainly just to escape everything for about an hour or two. To think about something else" (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 94). It can also help to provide some structure and a task in everyday life and escape the boredom that can sometimes set in.

Among those who have no contact with their parents, for example, some children of divorce in the sample, additional stress seems to be caused by the lack of support from their own network. The absence of potential helpful resources negatively impacts well-being, as does the sense of being alone in the situation without necessary help.

Although the analyses suggest that social support, e.g., emotional support, companionship, provision of information, etc., may be particularly important at the psychological level in coping with the effects on well-being and in coping with unemployment, further instrumental social support, e.g., financial, is relevant during unemployment. *Financial and material support* has high relevance for the unemployed and is usually provided mainly by the family, especially in the nuclear family, but also in uncles/aunts and grandparents can be observed. This support proved to be very important for improving or maintaining one's well-being during periods of financial insecurities, i.e., during unemployment and reduced income. Although friends are mostly mentioned as emotional support, in some cases they also help financially. For example, they support each other and try to make the best of a difficult situation together. Thea emphasizes the importance of sharing rental costs: "I'd be helpless without my friend (…) If I had to pay the apartment on my own, then [pause] I wouldn't have a chance at all with my salary" (Thea, F, 21, LE, TE, par. 221).

For people who are experiencing residential instability (without a fixed residence) or homelessness, the living situation can be particularly challenging, which can have a negative impact on their well-being. They try to cope by staying (temporarily) with family and friends to avoid living on the streets: "At the moment well (…) I sleep at my friend's, my families' couch. On the weekend I can stay with my girlfriend" (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 28).

Most material and financial support was provided by one's own social network of family of origin, partners, and close friends. This support included, among others, *providing shelter, covering daily needs, sharing housing costs, and financial assistance* (e.g., support against financial bottlenecks): "I'm still very dependent at the moment. My mother gives me food. My mother gives me a house or a flat, a room." (Eva, F, 18, LE, UE); "I don't have to pay anything for that, actually. I'm actually doing quite well financially, I think. The only thing I must pay is the mobile phone bill" (Tom, M, 20, ME, UE, par. 69).

In addition, people receive support from their own network in the form of food, which is very valuable for them to cover basic needs, and helps them to cope with the situation despite their limited financial resources:

> "Eat at my grandma's of course, Sundays. Which then became Mondays and then also Thursdays and then at some point became every day (…) Because there simply was no money." (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 36)

> "[…] our neighbor helps us […]. It also illegal what she is doing. At (***) (name of the supermarket) they throw the food away twice a week, because it is shortly before Expiring, that is their responsibility. But (…) she then takes the stuff with her and brings us so that we have enough food. And we don't have to spend money on that." (Klaus, M, 29, ME, UE, par. 63).

*People who are younger in the sample tend to receive more support from their families,* especially from their parents, e.g., financial support and providing a place to live, compared to older people. Although older people in the sample often receive financial support from their families and friends and this support is perceived as valuable, older people are more likely to receive public financial support such as unemployment benefit II. On the one hand, this could also be since parents are legally obligated to care for and provide for their children (maintenance obligation) according to the German Civil Code (BGB §§ 1601 and following). This would support the argument of parental support for younger children. However, it could also be attributed to the fact that growing up and becoming an adult is associated with achieving financial independence, which typically develops with age and requires less support or is deemed less necessary (Weis & Joachim, 2017, pp. 6–7). It may also be because older people in the sample are more likely to have labor market experience than younger people and are therefore more likely to be entitled to unemployment benefit I (unemployment insurance) because they had previous employment and therefore fulfill requirement for insurance benefit (e.g., Ehlert, 2016, p. 71).

In addition to the previously described ways in which many of the young people receive financial support, it is important to note that not all the young people in the sample can access financial support from their social network. This includes those whose parents or friends are also experiencing financial insecurities, as well as those who have no contact with their parents or lack social relations: "[…] I cannot expect a lot of help from my parents, they are struggling with their own debts […]" (Sophia, F, 25, LE, UE); "I am not in touch with my father. […] And my mom, she has debts. Well, she cannot help me […]" Thea (F, 21, LE, TE, par. 159).

Generally, *the effectiveness of the social support mechanisms* already presented *depends largely on a variety of factors, including the "quality" of the individual's social network and the resources associated with it.* This theme proved to be very complex, however, the analyses can highlight a few important findings. The question is, for example, what cultural, social, or economic capital (Bourdieu, 1983), or alternatively, what economic and cultural capital, is available to one's own social network, and what can be used to improve the situation in this uncertain labor market situation with the consequences already described?

It was found that those who have *one or more resources generally have better well-being* (although not necessarily good well-being) than people who have no or very little social support from their own network. However, it then also depends on the *quality of this support resources and individual needs.* This could be the sufficient amount of financial capital, for example, or the usefulness or success of advice. Therefore, it would be not correct to state in general that people who receive advice from their parents or who are generally financially supported have better well-being. For example, people who come from a highly educated family, i.e., parents who have, for example, completed vocational training or university studies, and are in permanent employment, are more likely to benefit from financial support or advice to find jobs, due to the relevant capital available from their social network. Success therefore may be related to the level of financial resources, but also to valuable knowledge about how the labor market works and how to get a job (and possibly having the appropriate contacts). In some cases, people who come from a low-educated parental background report that their parents are also experiencing unemployment. While this may help them with the complexities of applying for unemployment benefits, for example, it does not help them financially, as they are usually in a difficult financial situation themselves. In some cases, the parents are currently unemployed, and the children live with the parents in a joint household, i.e., they receive unemployment benefits together with the parents [Bedarfsgemeinschaft]. Or the young adults already live outside the parental home and receive unemployment benefit II on their own. In this regard the

interviews show, that young people then benefit from certain amount of financial support and/or important advice, e.g., on how to live frugally, how to deal with the situation in general, how to find a (new) job from unemployment, etc.

Nevertheless, all in all it becomes clear across the interviews that *young people who have the possibility of receiving the necessary social support for their individual situation to cover their needs often show a better sense of well-being than those without*. This support, particularly when accompanied by sufficient economic resources to prevent financial distress, appears to function as a *protective factor*, potentially alleviating stress:

> "[…] I had my parents who supported me pretty well. […] That was enough for me in the meantime. So, when I ever had money worries, my parents were mostly there to help me out." Daniel (M, 21, ME, UE, par. 54).

In addition, a recurring theme can be highlighted. This refers to social relationships and contacts in one's own network that are or can be helpful and supportive in the current situation in some way, e.g., as (financial) *backup*. This means that the existence of available support can improve well-being or prevent, for example for bad financial consequences and/or to anxiety. This support then can be interpreted as a *protective factor*, as a *safety net*. The interviews also show that simply knowing that (potential) support is available and that they are not alone in an uncertain or problematic situation can provide a sense of security. For example, Fabian and Lisa state that when problems arise, they first contact family and friends: "Relatives, acquaintances, friends. Those first people who simply help me get over the hurdles or something like that." (Fabian, M, 22, ME, TE, par. 109).

> "Well (…) yes, as naive as it sounds, but I think as soon as a problem occurs, I would give my mom a call or something like that [laughs] and say something like 'What am I supposed to do?'" (Lisa, F, 25, ME, UE, par. 55).

The possibility of receiving support can be beneficial for well-being. However, especially in the case of financial support, there is often recourse to formal resources, i.e., coping through institutional resources (e.g., unemployment benefits).

### 5.3.3 Institutional level coping – coping with public/state support

Strategies at the institutional level mainly refer to *seeking support from public institutions and the state* to improve or maintain well-being in the context of youth unemployment. In this regard one main distinction can be made between more *passive* forms, such as receiving

unemployment benefits (PLMPs), and *active* forms, such as improving employability, e.g., through active labor market policies (ALMPs). Similarly, the coping mechanisms used also show that they take place for different reasons and with different aims, i.e., on the one hand to cope with unemployment in general *(problem-oriented)*, e.g., activation measures such as job application training, acquisition of skills for the labor market, etc. On the other hand, coping at this level can also serve to cope with the consequences of unemployment, which is then reflected in the use of public benefits *(consequences-focused)*.

*Dealing with unemployment (problem-oriented)*

Many participants in the sample have prior experience with *activation measures or programs (ALMPs)*. This includes both current participation in an activation measure at the time of the interview and previous experience. To clarify, the aim of recruiting and sampling for this study was to include a wide range of people with experience of ALMPs (and PLMPs) as well as people without experience to achieve maximum variation in the cases (see chapter 4.2.1).

The interviews indicate that participation in measures is a possible useful way to *improve education* (e.g., to catch up on school certificates), *to acquire relevant skills for the labor market* and/or *to gain work experience to improve employability*. In addition, unemployment has been successfully tackled through measures which in some cases have included the opportunity of *vocational training/apprenticeship*. Lisa for example is currently in school-based apprenticeship program (as wholesale and retail saleswoman) provided by the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter: “And ... exactly, then in September 2014 I started part-time retraining through the Jobcenter. (...) And that's where I am now” (Lisa, F, 25, ME, UE, par. 15). In her case, she is officially undergoing retraining, but she had no vocational training before. Retraining in the sample appears particularly relevant for people who can no longer work in their profession due to illness, such as Andreas (M, 27, ME, UE) who suffered from back problems. It is worth noting that school certificates, such as school-leaving qualifications, can also be obtained through transition systems or evening schools. Transition systems are mandatory for individuals who have not yet completed their 10-year compulsory schooling (F. Braun & Geier, 2012).

Not only can individuals obtain school qualifications or training through government support, but they can also acquire skills and certificates for the labor market. For instance, Sven is content with his forklift certificate, which has helped him to progress. Both the certificate as a signal and the fact that his employer recognizes that he did something and worked hard while

being unemployed: “I also took my forklift driving license. That was paid for. That definitely brought me a step ahead, because I didn’t have any gap in my CV” (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 67).

In addition, interviewees report that the measures have *improved their prospects*. The support, skills, and certificates they have acquired have increased their labor market opportunities. They feel now more confident in their ability to cope with the situation. For instance, they have achieved initial successes in receiving responses from employers to their applications, which was not the case before. They have also been given opportunities for internships or trial work. This *progress* gives them hope that they will soon be able to cope with their unemployment. Finn confirms this and is delighted with the activation program, during which he received active support:

> “[...] I think if I wasn't here, I still wouldn't have found anything. Because I also had a lot of mistakes in my applications in terms of spelling and everything, the structure. And here I was shown how to write a perfect application. [...] Well, and I've already had several job interviews in that time. I hadn't had any before, for example. That was a sign that something had improved.” (Finn, M, 18, LE, UE, par. 19)

A significant number of young adults had already received *job placement and advice* from the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter. However, the majority did not find these services helpful. Similar experiences can also be seen with some activation measures. A key reason is that they find that the *job placements and measures do not seem to correspond to their interests or abilities,* and they therefore do not see any benefit in them. These measures have frequently been implemented without consideration of individual needs, which has led to their perceived ineffectiveness and irrelevance: “I think participating in courses about ‘how to clean my workplace’ or ‘how to use the ten-finger writing system’ is stupid. I think these courses are useless” (Tom, M, 22, ME, UE, par. 52). Tom’s perspective is that having knowledge of how to keep a workplace clean is not a necessary qualification for finding a job. He also mentions that he is already able to use the 10-finger system. Overall, young adults have *mixed views on activation measures*. There are some people who are very satisfied and some who are very dissatisfied what then influences the well-being differently. However, from their point of view, it is very important to adjust the institutional support offered to individual need:

> “I mean, generally I think it's good that there are such measures. I think it's also ... for many people it also makes sense. (...) What I find problematic is that it is not really tailored to the individual's needs.” (Lisa, F, 25, ME, UE, par. 61)

Measures that achieve improvements can also have a *positive effect on well-being*. In Simon's case he recommends to all those who need professional orientation to take part in such a program, where one gets some insights into different occupations:

> "Great. You really cannot say anything negative about these measures here. I could recommend to everyone who doesn't know what how to continue." (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 43)

Active coping with measures to find work or apprenticeship/vocational training is widespread but perceived differently. It is important to note that there are varying opinions and experiences with these measures among interviewees, despite the positive outcomes that have been highlighted. The obligation for the unemployed to participate in measures to maintain their entitlement to institutional financial support (unemployment benefits) has a significant impact. This can cause stress and be an additional burden: "[...] I think the employment office puts too much pressure on you, too many threats […]" (Kai, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 35).

In addition to the support provided by Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter or their promoters, other social workers from *governmental or non-governmental institutions* (e.g., youth centers) are mainly consulted for advice and support in application procedures and perceived as helpful support in finding a job.

*Dealing with the consequences of unemployment (consequences-focused)*

In addition to the activation measures and other forms of support just described, which are primarily intended to address unemployment itself, there is also the possibility of addressing the (financial) consequences and associated effects on well-being.

First steps on the labor market, were possible for some young people, e.g., through an apprenticeship or internship. This can improve well-being and offer a feeling of *control and motivates* to further improve their situation actively. In addition, for some interviewees it can serves as a *means of establishing structure to their daily lives* through clear tasks. Simon has enhanced his unemployment situation, resulting in better employment prospects and improved well-being: "Well yes, it just brought me ahead. Definitely. It brought a little … yes … structure to my life. Encouraged me" (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 71). People who had been unemployed for an extended period and experienced boredom reported the perception of an improvement in their situation due to having a structured day and tasks to complete. They have recognized, a lack of purpose and tasks can lead to an unfulfilling life and undermine well-being:

> "I think work is a very important part of life. At time in which I was looking for a job I had no clear task. You just notice that you're totally dissatisfied and just **bumming around,** and I think it's important that you have a task and something to do." (Maria, F, 27, HE, TE, par. 50)

It is also evident that some participants are glad that they and their situation are taken seriously and that they receive the necessary institutional support to address their needs. In this context, some participants feel a *sense of belonging* and *understanding* because they are all unemployed and in the same situation. This is especially evident in *measures that are tailored to the young adults and to their needs*. In measures that have a very diverse mix of participants (e.g., in terms of age, skills, motivation, etc.), these positive effects are not apparent. It is also evident that young adults who receive or can receive only little support from other people in their own environment, e.g., from their parents, can benefit from these measures, especially in terms of help to find a job. The opportunity to try out different sectors of the labor market seems to be a major advantage of some activation measures, such as those that offer a variety of craft activities to try out, or internships in different sectors, as a lack of orientation and a lack of a goal or plan for the future can otherwise be emotionally distressing for young adults.

The interviews indicate the relevance of *passive income support* policies, particularly unemployment benefits (unemployment insurance as unemployment benefit I; means-tested welfare payments as unemployment benefit II) *to overcome the (financial) consequences of unemployment* for young people. Consequently, well-being can be enhanced, and income support can prevent the occurrence of severe negative consequences on well-being, which would otherwise be due to financial concerns.:

> "Without it [unemployment benefit II], I'd probably live under a bridge. I am really thankful for that … I wouldn't know what to do with two children and no job" (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 37).

Most of the young people in the sample are grateful for the possibility of financial support and would assess their situation as significantly worse without this support in from of unemployment benefit II. In general, income support is considered as an *important protective factor*. However, the interviews revealed varying perceptions of the sufficiency of the amount of unemployment benefit II. Perceiving a low amount can negatively impact their well-being if there is a sense of financial deprivation: "[...] Every time you have to think twice about every penny you spend to survive. That's (…) really cruel sometimes." (Franz, M, 24, ME, UE, par. 127). This, of course, depends largely on individual circumstances, such as cost of living,

lifestyle, and financial obligations (e.g., debt). The amount of social support also plays a role, which can also vary from case to case.

In general, many young unemployed in the sample reported on their entitlement to unemployment benefit II. However, in some cases they mentioned a lack of entitlement to formal support because they are still living in their parents' household. If their parents are working, it may be that the parents are obliged to provide for their children (maintenance obligation), according to the Civil Code [Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch] (BGB §§ 1601 and following). This support must be available until they reach a certain age or a state of financial independence, e.g., when they have completed their (vocational) training, before the state intervenes in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. Only a few people receive or had received unemployment benefit I (insurance benefits), as most of them are not entitled to it due to a lack of contribution periods. They also reported financial problems with the amount of money, but tend to be more satisfied with it, compared to unemployment II recipients.

Unemployment benefits II is broadly used in the sample but linked to *obligations to cooperate.* This means that recipients of unemployment benefits must fulfill certain obligations, such as keeping appointments with Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter and showing that they are trying to find a job. This can also mean that they must take part in measures (ALMPs). The perceived dependency on the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter and interaction with employees of the agency can impair well-being in certain cases. The agency's actions, such as financial sanctions in the event of non-fulfillment of obligations, are sometimes perceived as obstacles or even the cause of the deterioration of their own insecure situations:

> "The employment office forces you to do it [the ALMP measure]. If you say 'Hey, I've already done application training five times, why do I have to do it again?' the employment office says 'You have to, if you don't go, you'll be sanctioned' [...] I think the employment office puts too much pressure on you, too many threats, although they should actually help you. But they don't." (Kai, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 35)

In terms of institutional support, another interesting theme comes from the interviewees. Some young adults with a previous unemployment experience who are now working reported a *feeling of (financial) security in the future in case they would become (re)unemployed.* This protective factor leaves some, like Jana, without fear of future unemployment because they would be eligible for unemployment benefit I and would be financially secure during their job search:

> "[…] I am never afraid, that I won't find anything. I know I receive ALG I [unemployment benefit I] for one year, well I can claim ALG I and that is enough time to look for a job." (Jana, F, 29, ME, PE, par. 101)

The combination of existing labor market experience (and vocational training) and the possibility of receiving unemployment benefits I in the case of unemployment makes them positive and confident about the future.

Another important support is provided during unemployment by other governmental or non-governmental institutions, such as *social workers* or *food banks*. Social workers not only provide advice for the application process but also offer informational support in *dealing with the bureaucracy* involved in communicating with the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter. Especially in the case of foodbanks, material support is provided in the form of *food*. This support, which is much appreciated but sometimes also associated with shame, is considered very valuable in the event of financial bottlenecks. Others seek help from (health) institutions that offer emotional support and useful advice. Kerstin (F, 23, LE, UE), who has suffered from mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, uses professional help in the form of therapy to help her cope mentally during unemployment.

### 5.3.4 Overview of coping

This chapter 5.3 has so far demonstrated that *individual coping and (social, institutional) support (opportunities) play a crucial role in how unemployment affects well-being.* In this context, it became also clear that *the purpose of specific coping mechanisms can vary*, i.e., it can be directed towards a certain goal and at a certain level. There seem two main directions of coping: young people try to overcome the problems caused by unemployment directly (e.g., by trying to find a job/vocational training) to prevent (stronger or further) effects on well-being *(problem-oriented),* or to reduce or prevent the negative effects on well-being and thus improve it *(consequences-focused)*.

Furthermore, the analyses reveal that the directions can be interpreted as *long-term* or *short-term strategies*. Some responses address acute problems such as financial shortages, while others focus more on the long-term nature of the situation. The latter is more problem-oriented, aiming to tackle unemployment, while the former focuses more on the consequences of unemployment. Young adults tend to focus on addressing the cause of unemployment, i.e., getting rid of it through job search and improving employability through education and work

experience with a long-term perspective. The goal is to gain a foothold in the labor market and thus to overcome unemployment to improve or maintain their well-being in the long term. The young adults in the sample are also aware and perceive that apprenticeships or vocational training could protect them from unemployment. Therefore, it is crucial for most of them to find an apprenticeship or vocational training as their next and most important step.

In contrast, dealing with the consequences of unemployment, such as financial difficulties, which can have a negative impact on well-being, is often a short-term strategy. However, some individuals in the sample have experienced long-term unemployment or frequent changes between unemployment and employment. They seem to focus more on the financial and psychological consequences of unemployment, e.g., living frugally, accepting the situation, normalizing the situation, etc. Short-term coping strategies seem to be more of a concern in terms of psychological coping with the consequences of unemployment or countering financial difficulties through frugality or illicit work. In general, however, it can be said that people who are unemployed for a long period of time may develop their short-term coping strategies into long-term coping strategies, especially at the psychological level, such as acceptance, normalization of the situation, and/or resignation, in order to improve their well-being or to avoid limitations.

It is important to emphasize again that the interviews indicate that both *individual coping* (action/behavior, psychological) and *social* or *institutional support*, are highly relevant to how the situation is dealt with and how the well-being manifests itself. Therefore, coping can occur at the individual level, as well as with support options at the relationship or institutional level, through actions/behaviors, psychological mechanisms, and available resources. These coping strategies and mechanisms are used *separately or in combination*. The interviews indicate that several levels and resources are often used simultaneously but that the *focus is often on one or two specific coping levels or resources*. In this context, it is of *crucial importance which resources are available*, e.g., which support possibilities can be provided by the family emotionally or materially, or which the young adults can fall back on; or whether the young adults can claim institutional support, such as unemployment benefits or ALMPs. The interviews suggest that a *combination of family support and institutional support was used by most of the cases*, however, with *varying focus whether on institutional resources or family resources*. Younger people tend to rely primarily on family support, often still living with their parents. In contrast, those who are long-term unemployed or have little family support tend to rely more on institutional support. Although institutional support, such as unemployment

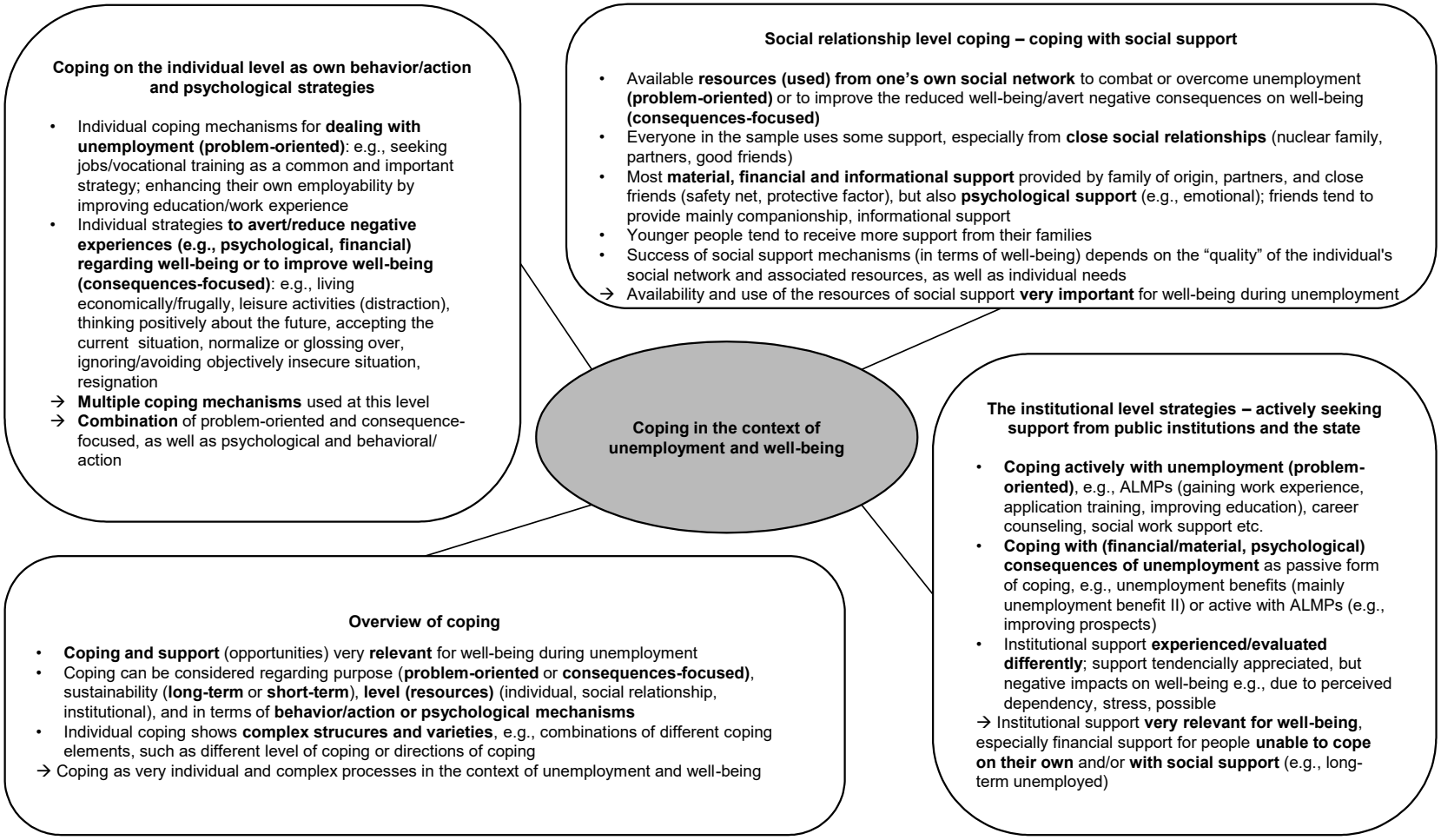
benefits, is highly relevant in the cases to cope with financial insecurities, family support remains crucial, providing informational, emotional, and financial support as well as acting as a protective factor. In general, there is a pattern of *combining rather than an exclusive focus on one level*. This applies to all three, the individual level, social level, institutional level.

In addition, sometimes it was *difficult to distinguish between tackling poor well-being and the unemployment which often led to it*, especially on the relationship level. For example, support to find a job can be on the one hand problem-oriented (e.g., advice or job placement), but also emotional support, because young people feel supported and feel valued, what can improve their well-being.

It is important to mention, that *sources of coping or coping efforts can also have a negative impact on well-being and sometimes exacerbate the situation*, for example due to perceived problematic interactions, such as sanctions, condescending treatment, dependency on the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter, or a lack of support from the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter, as already shown in chapter 5.2. Support can also have a negative effect for example, when advice or attempts to help are perceived as pressure and stress, or when the financial support received from parents hinders the individual's own striving for autonomy.

Figure 5 provides an overview of the relationships based on the previous findings, showing that coping is crucial for well-being during unemployment and how young adults cope with well-being. The analyses highlighted the importance of considering the individual context, as coping is a complex and individual process. In order to better understand the complexity of individual cases and to represent coping with unemployment, a typology with appropriate comparative dimensions can be developed based on the themes already identified as patterns in the cases. This typology is presented now in chapter 6.

**Figure 5** Overview of the main results on coping during unemployment




*Source*: Own illustration.

# 6 Results: a typology of coping in the context of unemployment and well-being

The results of the thematic analysis so far have provided insights into the situation of young adults affected by unemployment regarding their well-being and their coping mechanisms. However, it became apparent during the analyses that this is a complex field and a stronger case reference, considering individual life contexts, is needed to better understand the situation of young adults affected by unemployment and how they cope with it. To achieve an appropriate level of abstraction and generalization of the results, it was necessary to consider individual cases in a holistic manner. It is important to note that detailed case-related analyses already took place during thematic analysis. However, it was crucial and essential to re-examine the individual cases during the research and analysis process to comprehend the situation of the young adults and to accurately represent the complexity of the object of investigation. More specifically, a typology approach was used to address open questions arose during the research process, for example about the complex combinations and intentions of coping mechanisms or about overall well-being, which seems to be very individual and can be influenced by a variety of factors. The question emerged as to whether it is possible to identify certain groups with specific characteristics in terms of well-being and coping, which can help to understand the complex individual situations and contexts.

As already mentioned in chapter 4.3.3 relevant steps of a typology construction (see also Figure 3 again) are 1) development of relevant analyzing dimensions, 2) grouping the cases and analysis of empirical regularities, 3) analysis of meaningful relationships and type construction, and 4) characterization of the constructed types (Kluge, 2000). Due to the thematic analysis that was carried out, which focused on the individual cases and elaborated relevant meanings and patterns across the cases, first step(s) of the typology construction have already been completed by the thematic analysis and could be transferred. This means that important themes could be used as relevant comparative dimensions, since they are the result of case comparisons with relevant criteria and highlight commonalities and differences (patterns), what is necessary for the development of the typology dimensions. In addition, the analysis process developed categories and themes based on empirical material, as well as on (theoretical) prior knowledge what is crucial for the typology construction (Kluge, 2000).

The typology includes the *well-being of the young adults* as a crucial dimension, differentiated according to cognitive and affective dimensions. Both dimensions provide important insights

into individual well-being and must be interpreted together to understand well-being holistically. Regarding the *cognitive dimension*, since it proved to be highly relevant in the analyses for well-being, the *future perspective*, e.g., on the basis of *perceived labor market prospects/opportunities*, is also included in addition to general *life satisfaction*. In this context, the previous labor market and unemployment experience of young adults, as well as their education, play a crucial role. In addition, the cases show that *personal goals and desires* are also relevant on this dimension of the perception of the situation. At the *affective dimension*, emotions, feelings, and moods are considered, which are an important part of well-being. *Risk factors* for well-being, such as the financial situation, identity, and stigmatization can play an key role regarding the impact of unemployment on well-being. These factors are included in the typology dimensions and are discussed in relation to their relevance.

In addition, the general *employment and unemployment experience*, including the duration of unemployment, is highlighted as a relevant comparative dimension. Furthermore, *socio-demographic characteristics* are also considered, e.g., gender, age, education, which (in parts) turned out to be relevant for the unemployment experience and individual well-being.

The *coping dimension* of the typology consists of several relevant aspects, such as the *direction and intention* of coping. They describe the forms of coping and are mainly divided into *problem-oriented* and *consequence-focused*. As a result of these coping forms, a conclusion can be drawn about the sustainability of the efforts, which can be divided into *long-term* and *short-term*. Both can occur in the cases, since different forms can be used at the same time, such as coping with the acute financial situation because of unemployment, which has an impact on well-being. In addition, a sustainable job or education can be searched for to gain a long-term foothold in the labor market. Another aspect that is considered in the coping typology is the *level of coping*. Since it was already clear from the thematic analysis and its results, the following levels of coping can be distinguished: *individual level coping*, *relationship level coping* (social support) and *institutional level coping* (public/state support). This reflects at the same time the *coping resources* used and makes a combination and use of several coping mechanisms easier to understand when looking at the levels. A relation to direction and intention are also important in this context.

The next step 2) was then to *group the young adults and examine regularities based on the empirical material*. This was done via contrasting single cases and constructing attribute space by looking at attribute combinations. For this purpose, the already developed themes and comparisons of the cases were useful again, because it was possible to depict commonalities,

i.e., an internal homogeneity of the groups and at the same time an external heterogeneity (e.g., Kluge, 2000) between the groups. This was also done in the previous thematic analysis (chapter 5.1 - 5.3). Once again, this analysis process, i.e., the typology construction process, cannot be considered completely separated from the thematic analysis because the steps overlap or are similar.

The next step 3), *examining significant relationships and creating types* was performed with reference to steps 1 and 2. Finally, in the last step, the constructed types were *characterized and described* (Kluge, 2000).

The developed six types are presented below. Using particularly relevant cases from the sample, the characteristics of the types are discussed in more detail. It is shown which young adults have been assigned to which types, the reason for this is highlighted, and it is shown how the cases differ and resemble each other within the types. The variation and homogeneity within the cases will be highlighted and examples from the various interviews assigned to the case will be discussed.

## 6.1 Type 1: Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type

The first type is the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type", which is characterized by a relatively *high level of well-being* compared to other people in the sample, despite the objectively uncertain situation on the labor market, i.e., unemployment. Seven young adults, Ole (M, 27, HE, TE), Fabian (M, 22, ME, TE), Nadja (F, 29, HE, UE), Maria (F, 27, HE, TE), Julia (F, 27, HE, UE), Ali (M, 28, HE, TE), and Daniel (M, 21, ME, UE), were assigned to this type. Regarding emotions, mostly an *absence of negative emotions* is visible. Moreover, life satisfaction is often predominant. However, there is variation among the cases of this type, and it is important to make precise distinctions. Since most individuals of this type desire employment – work is very meaningful for them – and are not content with being unemployed, their *satisfaction may already be somewhat limited:*

> "I think work is a very important part of life. At time in which I was looking for a job I had no clear task. You just notice that you're totally dissatisfied and just **bumming around**, and I think it's important that you have a task and something to do." (Maria, F, 27, HE, TE, par. 50)

> "Well ... temporarily I was very annoyed ((laughs)) by the situation [...] I was also very dissatisfied, but not permanently." (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 95)

The type is not satisfied with unemployment as such but is basically satisfied with his/her life and *believes that unemployment will only be a temporary restriction*. This restriction of well-being is perceived rather marginal, like Fabian states:

> "So I see it really laid-back since nowadays it's simply a fact that sometimes people are unemployed. I'm not embarrassed about … I'll find something again during the winter." (Fabian, M, 22, ME, TE, par. 89)

This is largely related to the perceived very good labor market opportunities due to their high level of education, such as a university degree, or good school education (upper secondary), or vocational training with work experience. Generally, individuals who have recently completed their education or training, or whose contract has ended, perceive their situation as a *normal transition process to employment*, which is only temporary. For instance, Julia views her current unemployment not as a problem:

> "That [being unemployed] wasn't ... burdensome for me. I was always sure that something would come and that I just had to be patient [...] And that's why I was never afraid that it [finding a job] wouldn't work." (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 29)

This view or attitude leads to an optimistic outlook on the future in this type, which is only accompanied to a *small extent, if at all, by negative emotions/feelings* (such as stress or worry), i.e., emotional mechanisms that could have a negative impact on well-being.

An important factor for good well-being is an *unproblematic view of unemployment itself*, since it is also characterized by financial security, among other things. For young adults of this type, the situation is financially unproblematic because they can fall back on their own savings, financial support from their parents or family, or on formal support in the form of unemployment benefits (unemployment benefits II or, in some cases, unemployment benefits I if they have already worked before). In particular, the family is seen as a *protective factor* that can step in during an emergency:

> "I actually put money aside before, because I always worked [...]. I also fell back on that. My parents only stepped in when this money then more or less came to an end." (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 73)

Their own *good prospects* are visible as the current situation during transition process from study to employment is seen as *normal part of life,* or in case of Fabian (M, 22, ME, TE), who previously has worked, that unemployment is something that can sometimes happen in life. The psychological *burden or pressure that can arise* from one's own missed expectations and goals,

or from external stigmatization, as other people in this sample experience, seems not yet so intense at the beginning of their unemployment period. In some cases, such as in Julia's (F, 27, HE, UE) case, the reason for unemployment also plays a role. She has not found a suitable job from her personal perspective. As a result, she has decided to reject an alternative job that does not meet her aspirations, wishes, or expectations. This type would sometimes have had the opportunity to take a job but chose not to and continued to look for a more suitable job. This is only possible because they are financially secure.

However, it must also be noted that there are also cases assigned to this type, which report a *change in the perception of the situation and/or the prevailing emotions* after a period of time. Thus, looking at the *time perspective* in more detail here, it may be that in some cases negative perceptions of the situation and emotions accompany the course of time. This is particularly evident when, after a long search and unsuccessful applications (including constant rejections), a (suitable) job has still not been found:

> "Well, at the beginning I was still very positive. And well, it's quite normal that you search a little longer after graduating from university and I didn't put myself under pressure. But ... after a time it was burdening that I had several job interviews and then got many rejections." (Maria, F, 27, HE, TE, par. 16)

In this respect, the interviews indicate that the financial situation and dependency (e.g., financial dependency on parents or on the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter) became more problematic after some time and in some cases had an impact on their subjective well-being:

> "I noticed that I still depend on the help of my parents, depend on the help of my boyfriend ... depend on my partner, that he also supports me financially [...] that they have to justify themselves [to others]. Which was then again very unpleasant for me." (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 31)

> "I don't like to live at the expense of others, neither at the expense of my parents, friends of my friends or acquaintances." (Ali, M, 28, HE, TE, par. 25)

This shows that variation can occur within the type regarding their well-being, even if the type can generally be described as optimistic, with good prospects for the future, and with the best well-being (also due to restrictions that may occur after a while) compared to other types.

In addition to the above-mentioned factors and reasons for a good sense of well-being and coping aspects, the individual's *ability to cope* (and the awareness of this opportunity) plays a major role. The coping of this type is strongly aimed at overcoming the cause of unemployment

*(problem-oriented),* i.e., *active attempts are made to find employment*. The type is strongly characterized by *self-initiative and active forms of coping*, as far as the job search is concerned. This is done through the usual channels, through job advertisements in newspapers and online (sometimes also through the job portal of the Federal Employment Agency). The search for a job turns out to be self-confident and the type knows how to do it and how to proceed. However, the job search and support can also be carried out via contacts of acquaintances or one's own family, i.e., via one's own social network. This type is particularly interested in actively seeking employment, since they have already completed their studies or dual vocational training and have work experience. The goal is to gain a long-term foothold in the labor market through employment. Therefore, it is designed as a *long-term strategy*.

There is less focus on dealing with the consequences, such as the financial situation. Although this also plays a role, it is more in the background, as people either have previously saved money or, for example, receive financial support from family or unemployment benefits. The financial situation is not problematic. It is considered as a *temporary situation* that will not last long. This is a cognitive and/or emotional coping mechanism of this type. This type utilizes both *individual-level* strategies, such as job searching and personal cognitive and emotional coping mechanisms, as well as *relationship-level* resources, such as emotional and cognitive support from friends and family. For example, parents show understanding about their situation, provide sense of belonging and motivation, and assist with job searching: "Well, they (parents) were really motivational because they kept saying that everything is just normal" (Julia, F, 27, HE, UE, par. 75).

> "My family is just perfect [...] I always get support … of course, in every way, also financial support. But what is more important to me than all the fucking money issues is the personal emotional, the love that you just get, you know?" (Ali, M, 28, HE, TE, par. 100)

In times of financial hardship, young adults may turn to their parents for financial support or to alleviate their problems. This provides a sense of security. In addition, parents can offer support by allowing their children to live with them and by paying for health insurance.

Coping with unemployment benefits via the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter is rather rare here compared to other people in the sample because they have enough own resources or from the social network to cope. Moreover, young people try to avoid this form of support because they do not want to be dependent on others:

> "I applied to the job center and filled in an application for unemployment benefit II […]. And ... until I even went there, that was for me the biggest overcoming and struggle at all." (Ali, M, 28, HE, TE, par. 23)

Finally, the name "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" should not hide the fact that unemployment can also be associated with negative experiences for those affected, although these are generally associated with good prospects and perspectives for the future. Uncertainty may differ at different times. Initially, perceptions are usually not negative, but they can become more negative as time goes on. In some cases, individuals assume they will quickly find a job, but when their expectations are not met, they perceive the situation negatively. Despite unemployment, they reported better well-being than other types.

## 6.2 Type 2: Consequences Focusing Type

Katharina (F, 26, ME, TE), Thea (F, 21, LE, TE), Maja (F, 24, LE, UE), and Lena (F, 21, ME, UE) are the young adults from the sample who can be assigned to and regarded as the empirical basis for the "Consequences Focusing Type". Compared to the previously described "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type", this type is more dissatisfied with the unemployment situation. *The well-being is partly limited during unemployment*. This is mainly due to the fact that the desired training or occupation, such as the individual's "dream job", has not yet been achieved among the unemployed who are marginally employed, or because the general consequences of unemployment. To clarify, this type includes people who are currently unemployed at the time of the interview as well as people who have been unemployed and report their past unemployment. All these people have in common that during their unemployment that they are/were *marginally employed* or have/had *other small work opportunities* and that they have *not yet reached their desired position in the labor market*. This can be a source of frustration and stress: "Well, I haven't found what I really want yet. That is a little difficult ((becomes quiet))" (Maja, F, 24, LE, UE, par. 29).

Nonetheless, in some cases, especially in comparison to other types, (not yet presented), *higher satisfaction and generally better well-being* are evident. In this regard, however, negative, and positive emotions, in some cases mutual appearance is possible. For instance, a positively perceived freedom and self-determination, e.g., by providing for oneself financially through side jobs and small work opportunities during unemployment, can then also be accompanied by *financial worries* and *fears* what is visible in Katharina's narrative:

> “I'm satisfied because I notice that I'm on a good path and I'm somehow becoming more and more independent step by step. (...) Yes. Well, I'm not quite there yet, but I notice a continuous improvement.” (Katharina, F, 26, ME, TE, par. 87)

> “Of course, I'm constantly worried that the money won't be enough. (...) Until now I have somehow always managed to make ends meet. Sometimes it was very difficult, I don't know, for a week I just ate rice with butter or something, but I always managed. (5) Well, I don't have a secure income and that's why it's always a bit difficult to calculate.” (Katharina, F, 26, ME, TE, par. 53)

Overall, however, the empirical data indicate that there may be *heterogeneity regarding well-being.* A decisive factor here seems to be the different perceptions of labor market opportunities/prospects, e.g., due to the different labor market experience and school education or vocational training of the young adults. They have lower secondary [Hauptschulabschluss, Realschulabschluss/Mittlere Reife], or upper secondary qualifications [Abitur, Berufsausbildung]. They all have in common that they already have labor market experience, especially with small jobs, part-time work, etc., or with completed training (1 or 2-year vocational training/apprenticeship) and are now aiming for a (further) professional qualification in the future. People with more labor market experience and/or higher levels of education seem to perceive prospects and labor market opportunities better than others, e.g., those without vocational training. Thea, for example, has not yet completed a vocational training program, so she feels insecure, but she knows how important a vocational training would be for her future, helping her to integrate into the labor market:

> “[...] if you have no training, it works now, as I said, but in ten years it will be different. I will be older, [...] I have no vocational training, I have no idea how often I have changed jobs. You can't forget all that (...) I don't know how employers will see it. [...] That's why I actually need vocational training.” (Thea, F, 21, LE, TE, par. 229)

However, general sources of well-being are positive feelings of *autonomy, self-fulfillment, and identification through employment*. Thus, attitudes toward employment, or work and the financial situation, also seem to be relevant. However, when employment is missing, this type experiences stress and dissatisfaction. Work is very important to this type, but preferably in a job that they enjoy and where they can fulfill their potential. Until such a job is found, they will take on marginally employments/part-time jobs, or other small work opportunities to meet financial needs, even if they do not like them:

> “I have to say that the jobs I've had so far have never been fun. It was always just a chore because of the money [...] so the work in the plant nursery, in the bakery and also stocktaking ... I don't enjoy it.” (Katharina, F, 26, ME, TE, par. 47)

> “[...] You can always find bad work, and if necessary, it has to be that kind of work. So when someone says they can't find work at all, I have to say ‘that's not true, that's just not true’, because you can always find work as a dishwasher or as a substitute cleaner or something like that. There are so many advertisements in the newspaper, just as a cleaning lady. In a time of need, you just have to do that.” (Katharina, F, 26, ME, TE, par. 57)

In addition, to the high relevance of *(financial) independence* from others and *autonomy*, their own free choice of work activities and working hours (timing, scope) are relevant. However, from their point of view, they sometimes must also accept work that may not be fun.

In particular, the negative current or past experiences they had or are currently having as a result of *being dependent on others*, especially on the state, e.g., *stigmatization*, *shame*, *bad experiences with/treatment by the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter*, can make an important contribution to their decision of an own independent coping. The following short excerpts from the interviews provide some insight about negative experiences with state support: “I think it's somehow not okay to get money from the state. I mean okay, I pay taxes too. But still, I don't want to ... get money from the state.” (Katharina, F, 26, ME, TE, par. 69); “I wasn't registered at the employment office. I don't feel at ease with the employment office” (Thea F, 21, LE, TE, par. 29); “Well, they are so lazy there [at the Jobcenter], they don't get anything done. So, I found myself a job ten times faster until they found me one. It was really ridiculous” (Katharina, F, 26, ME, TE, par. 21).

> “I just think it is horrible how people treat you in there. How they treat you like the lowest of the low. I also said, ‘Before I go there again, I'd rather work in a whorehouse’. Before I'd had to do anything with them again. It might sound harsh, but … I say it like that, because they really treat you … That doesn't work. I mean they are not more special than we are.” (Lena, F, 21, ME, UE, par. 49)

Although financial independence is desired, it has so far only been partially achieved and they are still partly dependent on institutional support (unemployment benefit II) or support from family or friends. This latter coping strategy at the *relationship level* is an important and accepted strategy in addition to their own efforts at the *individual coping level*:

> “My best friend helps me. I wouldn't be able to manage on my own with the flat and everything. But my best friend lives with me to some extend. And then she helps a bit with the costs, we share costs.” (Thea, F, 21, LE, UE, par. 95)

State support, i.e., unemployment benefit II, is used only in exceptional cases, when there is no other option, for example in financial emergencies or as a complement to other coping strategies. But this is not seen as the main coping focus of this type. They want to avoid state support if possible because, as already mentioned, institutional support is perceived stressful and burdening:

> “Well, because I'm still dependent on the money from the government, that I can somehow ... at least to the extent that at least the rent is paid, because otherwise I wouldn't have enough money.” (Maja, F, 24, LE, UE, par. 89)

> “I just want to get away from the employment office. I just want to get away as quickly as possible, because they are really harassing me, putting pressure on me now. [...] that's really bad.” (Lena, F, 21, ME, UE, par. 159)

This type *mainly copes with the consequences of unemployment*, i.e., targets the consequences that go hand in hand with it. Young people are not currently seeking a classic standard employment relationship or training as their first intention or are not (yet) attempting to gain a long-term foothold in the labor market through a “normal” training and employment career. One characteristic of this type is the search for work, no matter in what form – this can be jobbing or other atypical employment – to mitigate primarily severe consequences, such as financial deprivation and effects on the emotional and cognitive level, to be able to get rid of also emotionally stressful situations:

> “You just feel useless. Your mood is always bad [...] because when you don't work, it's somehow different. You can't afford anything. You always have to look where you can get this and that. Yes, you don't feel good.” (Thea, F, 21, LE, TE, par. 87)

Here again, the *personal meaning of work* is evident, as it provides not only financial income but also the function of having something to do, a task in life. It is characteristic that young people of this type use atypical employment – in terms of working hours and/or fixed-term contract – as a coping mechanism, e.g. (multiple) marginal employment, small part-time work, casual work, temporary work (fixed-term contracts), moonlighting, etc. This increases the current satisfaction and well-being of this type in that, although they are in an insecure labor market situation, they are not or less dependent on the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter

or other people. In some cases, however, the situation can be perceived as problematic, especially if there is a lack of financial resources. The search for work thus plays a central role, but not with the aim of working in these activities and employment relationships in the long term or even forever. It is therefore more *short-term*, with the aim of improving the current situation. It is important to note that this type sees this short-term form of coping as more of a transitional or bridging solution. Basically, this type wants to gain a foothold on the labor market in the long-term and pursue secure employment. However, until this point is reached, young adults mitigate the consequences of unemployment, especially financially, by taking atypical forms of employment. From their point of view, they have to do this because they are not able to cope with the situation in the long term and, as already mentioned, they want to live independently of any other support (especially from the state).

The main resources used in the coping process are the *individual's own resources*, i.e., at the cognitive and emotional level, and at the action/behavior level, the effort to find a job or the willingness to work in order to mitigate most of the financial consequences of unemployment. In addition, *resources from one's own social network*, such as family and friends are used. Financial support, e.g., for rental costs, and emotional and informational support in the form advice, guidance, help with job applications or job searches, or job/position referrals are used. This type shows different views and approaches with regard to the institutional level of coping. What they all have in common is that they in principle do not want to receive any state assistance (e.g., unemployment benefits). In general, this type can also be described as autonomy-aspiring. To reach this during unemployment, the type focusses on consequences of unemployment during coping.

## 6.3 Type 3: Institutional Coping Type

Thirteen young adults in the sample – Simon (M, 25, LE, UE), Anna (F, 23, ME, UE), Finn (M, 18, LE, UE), Alina (F, 21, LE, UE), Irina (F, 24, LE, UE), Igor (M, 28, HE, UE), Nora (F, 29, ME, UE), Emil (M, 23, LE, UE), Luke (M, 30, ME, UE), Jana (F, 28, ME, PE), Lisa (F, 25, ME, UE), Vera (F, 24, ME, UE), Sophia (F, 25, LE, UE) represent the "Institutional Coping Type" and are the empirical basis for this type. The age of the young unemployed varied, ranging from young to older persons in the present sample. What they have in common, is that they have already used *institutional coping strategies*, and in some cases, logically mainly the older ones, over many years. However, it is not (only) the basic experience with institutional coping as such that is characteristic for this type, but that they *mainly focus on institutional level*

*coping*. This is the predominant level of coping for different coping directions (problem-oriented and consequences-focusing). The narratives also reveal *different work experiences*, e.g., vocational training (sometimes drop out). However, the majority tend to have less working experience, and if so, then often in the form of internships or small work opportunities and/or temporary jobs. In terms of *(school) education*, the level also tends to be low (especially lower secondary school leaving certificate). In addition, this type is characterized by *varying unemployment experience*, ranging from several months to several years, or recurring unemployment. Generally, the experience of unemployment tends to be higher in this type than in both previously described types.

Overall, the young adults are affected by a *limited well-being*. This is mainly manifested in the predominant *dissatisfaction* with the current situation, especially due to failed attempts to find a vocational training/apprenticeship or an employment. The absence of opportunities to work, which is partly perceived as self-inflicted and partly innocent, has often persisted for a long time, sometimes for several years. In most cases, there is a perceived (financial) dependency on others, such as the Federal Employment Agency, which can have a negative impact on well-being. In Sophia's case, for example, there is also the problem of finding a job, as a single parent:

> "I'm unhappy with the labor market situation because I simply don't have any vocational training yet. It's just so difficult to find something part-time (part-time employment) because of the childcare. And, yes, also because of the money situation. I really have to say that I've been living off the public assistance for six years now, and I just can't manage it any more, and I'd really like to change all that." (Sophia, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 119)

In addition to *discomfort and unease*, there is *frustration and sometimes helplessness* because they have tried many options (e.g., numerous applications, ALMPs, etc.) but have not yet been successful on the labor market. Overall, this type is characterized by *stresses and worries* about various issues, such as the current *financial situation*, negative feelings of *dependency* on others, *stigmatization*, but also a general perception of *poor prospects and labor market opportunities*. *Self-doubt* is a common manifestation among those affected:

> "You question yourself and your whole life and everything that came before, and then you simply doubt in yourself. So, to speak, 'what have I actually done wrong that it is the way it is?'" (Lisa, F, 25, ME, UE, par. 33)

The young adults are *afraid of not finding a vocational training* because of their poor education and thus have a *limited future perspective*. Some also regret their own poor school performance, e.g., missed school degree. Sophia stated:

> "To be honest, when I think back from today, I really have to say that it all bugs me. I'm annoyed that I didn't have the mind back then that I have today." (Sophia F, 25, LE, UE, par. 17)

> "The problem is. I'm worried about the education I've had so far. Well, that's just it, that I'm afraid that I won't get a chance to do an apprenticeship because of the poor education I had before." (Sophia, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 49)

> "Because I'm afraid that I won't get any vocational training and without training I'll just get stuck with cleaning jobs, and I don't want that. I don't want to end up on this track, single mother and will always just be a cleaner." (Sophia F, 25, LE, UE, par. 109)

As already mentioned, the constant failures and unsuccessful applications can appear as a heavy burden in this type: "I'm just saying that it was an exhausting time, because I sent out 60 to 70 applications. I only got rejections or no response at all" (Finn, M, 18, LE, UE, par. 13). Moreover, considerable financial restrictions and the resulting psychological stress become apparent. The financial resources received through institutional support, mostly unemployment benefits II, are just enough to cover basic needs. Nora mentioned the, from her point of view, impossibility of having a child and providing for them with this money, while Simon expressed his concern about not being able to save for himself and his family, causing significant stress:

> "I'm childless at almost age 30 and I don't have any plans yet=I just can't do it financially. What kind of life am I supposed to offer the child if I already have one now?" (Nora, F, 29, ME, UE, par. 133)

> "[…] I mean I have two kids now and without a job without a big income you never feel really good. […] You also want to somehow create a basis for the children. Also somehow have a few financial reserves in case there is something. In that respect, of course, I feel bad. I feel bad about that (...) because you want to care for your family as a father." (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 31)

Linked to this, there is a strong sense of uncertainty regarding dependency on the Federal Employment Agency, particularly in financial terms. While this support is perceived as financial security and they therefore are often thankful for this support opportunity, negative

emotions, and feelings about financial support, such as feelings of dependency and lack of self-determination, often predominate in the narratives:

> "Well, I've been [dependent on unemployment benefits] **for far too** long now. It's really been six years that I've been dependent on the office and that ... sucks ((slight embarrassed laugh))." (Sophia, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 55).

> "Yes, because I don't want to be dependent on the state. I want to ... take care for myself in life [...] Because I'm not stupid. I can speak the language and ... I have my degree and... being dependent on the Jobcenter, that's the worst thing ever." (Irina, F, 24, LE, UE, par. 28)

In some cases, people feel *ashamed* and even *degraded* by having to rely on state assistance. This can be caused or exacerbated by a perceived negative behavior of the employees of the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter and by the perception of stigmatization as well as a general lack of understanding of unemployment by others: "Mhm not good, I mean, knowing you're dependent on the Jobcenter (...). You're a bit ashamed of it" (Anna F, 23, ME, UE, par. 36); "[…] Then you are simply treated from above by them [condescending] (Jobcenter employees) and then it's like you stand there and beg 'Please, please give me Harz 4 [unemployment benefit II]' so that I don't have to live on the street" (Vera, F, 24, ME, UE, par. 77).

In order *to avoid being stigmatized*, some people make up stories rather than admitting they are unemployed and receiving benefits: "Not good at all. I don't like to say that I'm a Hartz 4 (unemployment benefit II) recipient. Then I always make something up." (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 59)

> "It's not nice. I don't like to admit it in front of others [that I'm unemployed]. Well, because you do have a certain ... standing in front of other people. They think 'Ah, a lazy person'". (Nora, F, 29, ME, UE, par. 95)

They are nevertheless *hopeful* that things will work out someday, i.e., that their labor market situation will improve. In addition, this type also shows an important *time perspective* that should be considered. This type is basically more dissatisfied with the situation than other types already presented ("Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type", "Consequences Focusing Type"). However, some individuals are already showing improved levels of satisfaction over time as a result of their coping mechanisms, the ability to enhance labor market prospects:

> “(...) Well, I'm satisfied with myself. […] I know what I have achieved. I know what I have. (...) I don't let people tell me that I'm somehow worse than people who earn a lot of money or do something else because I don't have a job [...]” (Luke, M, 30, ME, UE, par. 128)

Finn (M, 18, LE, UE) and Simon (M, 25, LE, UE) also show that the well-being (emotional and cognitive) can improve over time through the small steps they have already been able to take on the job market. These improvements were achieved mainly through active labor market measures (ALMPs), by completing training or internships, or by improving their personal orientation regarding the labor market. In this regard, it is important to note that measure providers and/or social workers offer application training and support, both public and private.

As already shown, this type copes mainly through institutional channels. In addition, the type is characterized by coping that is both *problem-oriented* and *consequences-focused.* In concrete terms, this means that the young adults are actively looking for work or vocational training. They are trying to create important *signals* for the labor market/employers via internships or *catching up on certain relevant school qualifications*. The latter often takes place within the framework of ALMPs or in transitional education programs, provided by different educational institutions. Sophia (F, 25, LE, UE), Alina (F, 21, LE, UE), Anna (F, 23, ME, UE), Vera (F, 24, ME, UE), and Simon (M, 25, LE, UE), for example, were able to obtain (or make up for) the necessary educational qualifications, in particular school-leaving qualifications (especially completion of compulsory basic secondary schooling or a secondary school degree), which are perceived relevant or a prerequisite for finding vocational training. Lisa (F, 25, ME, UE) is currently undergoing retraining, i.e., a funded training program to become a wholesale and export merchant provided (funded) by the Federal Employment Agency. Overall, this type receives a wide range of support and activation measures from different providers, all at the level of institutional support, such as pre-vocational year, compulsory vocational school year or internship, job application training, career guidance, one-euro jobs, vocational education programs. They reported that sometimes they have transitioned from one measure to the next after completion. Help is also sought through other institutions, such as social workers and municipal counseling centers.

Passive forms such as *public income support*, in particular unemployment benefit II, are used to avoid or alleviate the primarily financial consequences of unemployment and mitigate the negative effects of a lack of income on well-being: “Without it [unemployment benefit 2], I'd

probably live under a bridge. I am really thankful for that … I wouldn't know what to do with two children and no job" (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 37).

In addition to the perceived positive effects of the support provided by the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter on well-being, institutional support (and its circumstances) can also be *perceived negatively and burdensome*. In addition to the aforementioned aspects, mandatory measures can be perceived as pressure. The dependency on the state, the negatively perceived bureaucracy of the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter, the negatively and unfairly perceived treatment by agency staff and possible financial sanctions in case of non-compliance play an key role:

> "Really shitty, because I was often crying in there [at the Jobcenter]. Really, I really cried because I made an effort to cooperate and to take part in everything and ... and then I still got this financial sanction." (Sophia, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 123)

> "I have the feeling (as) if they are treating a dog (softly spoken). (...) Honestly now. [...]. Because I had the feeling that they were not interested in my future. And they just sent me to a wrong measure. And... the way they deal with each other ... I don't like the way they treat us." (Irina, F, 24, LE, UE, par. 100)

If more support from the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter is desired, or if personal progress is not achieved through measures, or if the specific measure does not seem useful from the perspective of the unemployed person or does not correspond to the individual needs and goals of the person, the interviews show this also has a *negative impact on well-being*:

> "They put me in measures. But none of them made any sense to me. That's why I dropped out of them right after one day=I'm honest about that" (Finn, M, 18, LE, UE, par. 15).

> "[...] I was at (***) (name of the institution/measure provider) and they put me in [a measure] there and I still didn't have a school-leaving certificate. So, I thought to myself, 'Why am I going there now? That's another lost year where I won't be able to do my school-leaving certificate' and at the end of this program I'm still empty-handed." (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 43)

> "I mean, generally I think it's good that there are such measures. I think it's also ... for many people it also makes sense. (...) What I find problematic is that it is not really tailored to the individual's needs." (Lisa, F, 25, ME, UE, par. 61)

Although some people have had bad experiences with measures in the past, it is important to emphasize that the positive experiences of the measures outweigh the negative ones in this group, since they in most cases have been able to improve their prospects and their chances on the labor market. Simon and Finn emphasize this improvement:

> "Well yes, it just brought me ahead. Definitely. It brought a little … yes … structure to my life. Encouraged me […] I see something developing and improving and they [employees] invite me for interviews and tests of aptitude and internships and ... something like that. [...] The measure here is really good." (Simon, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 71).

> "[...] I think if I wasn't here, I still wouldn't have found anything. Because I also had a lot of mistakes in my applications in terms of spelling and everything, the structure. And here I was shown how to write a perfect application. [...] Well, and I've already had several job interviews in that time. I hadn't had any before, for example. That was a sign that something had improved." (Finn, M, 18, LE, UE, par. 19)

This type also uses additional sources of coping such as social relationships and receives e.g., advice, shelter/accommodation, emotional or financial support to cope psychologically and financially with unemployment and its consequences. Although unemployment benefit is the main support, family support can serve as *back-up* in challenging times:

> "[…] After more than ten years [with unemployment benefit II] you have learned to manage the little money you have. And if problems do arise somehow financially, fortunately I have a lot of family members I can ask for help." (Nora, F, 29, ME, UE, par. 47)

However, in some cases, material and non-material support from the family is either not possible or not wanted, which is why most people mainly rely on institutional financial support (e.g., unemployment benefit II):

> "[I receive] no support, for example, when I ask my mum 'I need money'. Her answer: 'Go get a job', 'Go get a job'. I say 'yes, but that doesn't help me now'. I say 'now I can't get a job so quickly'" (Anna, F, 23, ME, UE, par. 96).

In some cases, there is no good relationship or little contact with the parents. Some are children of divorce and/or have no contact with one parent, e.g., Emil (M, 23, LE, UE), Lisa (F, 25, ME, UE), Jana (F, 28, ME, PE), Irina (F, 24, LE, UE). Some even had to experience violence at

home during their childhood, e.g., Sophia (F, 25, LE, UE) and Vera (F, 24, ME, UE). This also can explain partly the focus on formal, institutional support of this type.

All in all, the young adults' own efforts to find a job or training can be described as *individual level coping*. In addition, despite previous unsuccessful attempts to integrate into the labor market, young adults try to be confident that things will work out in the future. Others, who are less confident, try to focus more on the present and exclude possible bad future scenarios, which is like suppressing uncertainties: "I'm trying to deal with my current situation and ... I can't think about the future" (Sophia, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 129). However, the primary focus is on *institutional support* in the form of unemployment benefits and measures for integration into the labor market. Although acute financial and psychological consequences must be dealt with, the coping direction is basically *long-term*. This means that they are planning to gain a foothold in the labor market by undertaking education or training. In some cases, there are also people who have already completed or are about to start vocational training/education.

## 6.4 Type 4: Overcoming Disease Type

The "Overcoming Disease Type" (Hans, M, 26, LE, UE; Tanja, F, 19, LE, UE; Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE; Andreas, M, 27, ME, UE; Kerstin, F, 23, LE, UE) differs from the other types by the fact that the cause of unemployment is health-related illness. That means restrictions and problems that made it impossible to continue or start work or vocational training. These *health-related restrictions, along with actual unemployment, constitute a large part of the severely restricted well-being.* Overall, people of this type have a *long experience of unemployment,* ranging from several months to (mostly) years. At this point it is important to mention that the interviewees did not become physically/mentally ill due to unemployment.

The health limitations were present at the time of entering unemployment and/or are currently present at the time of the interview. For instance, Hans (M, 26, LE, UE) currently relies on a wheelchair and experiences extreme pain due to his rheumatic disease. Tanja (F, 19, LE, UE) experiences psychological problems (social phobia) that prevent her from participating in social life. Katrin (F, 27, LE, UE) is currently receiving inpatient treatment in a clinic for her psychological problems (including borderline syndrome). Kerstin (F, 23, LE, UE) is unable to work currently due to psychological and acute back problems. Andreas (M, 27, ME, UE) had to give up his profession due to severe back problems in the past.

People of this type are characterized by a *problematic view of their life situation with poor prospects and uncertainty*, both regarding their disease and to their own employment (opportunities):

> "People always say you should look positively into the future, but I don't know, when you're already sitting in a wheelchair, you think, 'Well, hopefully you'll get out again' and don't stay in there forever. That would be really bad. Really bad, shit. […] Well, I definitely want to get out of this situation in general regarding my working life find something." (Hans, M, 26, LE, UE, par. 99)

> "And that is my worry then, that I ... that it could happen that I either don't find a job at all or must accept one out of financial necessity (I'm not happy with). And that is my worry that I'll have a bad time again and that I'll just give up again […]." Tanja (F, 19, LE, UE, par. 111)

In addition, the young people perceive the potential risk of continuing to receive unemployment benefits II and the associated *financial restrictions* if they do not enter the labor market. Moreover, the interviews indicate that the *status being "unemployed"* can also be *perceived stressful*. Hans mentioned feelings of *shame* and Katrin feelings of *inferiority* and *stigmatization*, even though they are not responsible for their illness and thus for their unemployment:

> "[...] as I said, it's pretty shameful. I would also go to work, but if you look at it like this, the others go to work, you are at home and I can't change anything, yes. […] it's not nice to see the other people working there, doing this, doing that, and you're sitting next to them." (Hans, M , 26, LE, UE, par. 107)

> "It's **really extreme**. In the beginning it was still okay, I thought to myself 'okay, it's just the way it is now', for about the first half year or year. But at some point, I really developed a feeling that, somehow I'm not worth as much as the others=I can't do as well as the others. I can't achieve as much=some kind of feeling of **inferiority** […] When you get to know someone for the first time … you first have to say, 'Yes, I'm unemployed' ((grows quiet)) so it's always been 'But why? Are you lazy?' or stigmatized, something like that. You always get put into a category like that." (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE, par. 14)

Moreover, the *lack of tasks and financial restrictions* in their daily lives can also be stressful for them, indicating the individual meaning of work and therefore the importance for their well-being:

> "Well, it's not nice when you're sitting at home part of the time and ... you just know you have so much time, but you can't do anything with it. Of course you keep yourself busy with something, hobbies, whatever, but especially at my age, you want to do something, go out, do something and you simply can't afford that." (Tanja, F, 19, LE, UE, par. 25)

People of this type have a lot of contact with institutions due to their illness and unemployment. Like the "Institutional Coping Type", they sometimes may have positive experiences but also experience negative treatment by the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter, which can be perceived as a burden:

> "Looking down on us, not treated humanely. […] You feel you are an application that has to be processed […] You are an appointment, but you are not a human being. That's the problem I have a lot." (Tanja, F, 19, LE, par. 131)

However, Andreas (M, 27, ME, UE) is a notable exception in this group, as he has already been able to improve his health and his prospects on the labor market. However, he reports about a similar negative situation at the beginning of the illness and before he had started retraining. He is an example of how this type can improve their satisfaction by improving their health and adapting their education to the specific needs of the labor market, in his case further education or retraining as an industrial clerk. However, it must also be mentioned that, compared to the other cases, Andreas was able to gain more labor market experience before his illness and had worked in his profession for many years. Compared to Andreas, the others are still at the beginning of their employment careers or at the transition from school to vocational training, although some have already gained some work experience before. In addition, Andreas' disability insurance also helped to avert the negative material/financial consequences of unemployment financially through a disability pension [Berufsunfähigkeitsrente]. He reported that he was very happy to receive the financial support he needed:

> "[...] My great luck was more or less that I took out an occupational disability insurance policy early on through my parents, which ... which actually helps me to make ends meet. It's not much, but it does help to, let's say, keep the flat." (Andreas, M, 27, ME, UE, par. 17)

When looking at the *coping mechanisms and efforts* in more detail, it becomes clear that this type *uses and focuses on all three levels of support*, which is often necessary to address health and unemployment consequences together. It appears across all cases that the *focus is on improving health*. In other words, the highest priority is given to the illness, which from the point of view of those affected must be overcome first, as it is the main cause of the poor labor market situation (unemployment):

> "[...] I just push away what might be in a few months. And say 'Now I'm here in the clinic, concentrating on next week and then for the next three weeks and when I have my release date I concentrate on the next few weeks, that's about it. That's when I can really say I'll do it step by step." (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE, par. 52)

Their health must first be improved before they can work (again) due to prevailing inability to work [Arbeitsunfähigkeit]. Although, it is apparent that unemployment places a big burden in their lives, the priority is to restore the ability to work by improving health, which can be classified as *problem-oriented* coping. *Get well* is thus seen as a *long-term strategy*, even though most of the people lack work experience due to their illness and do not have any vocational qualifications, which they then first want to achieve. Although they try to make an effort themselves and their own efforts can be decisive for health improvement/recovery, there is no guarantee that health improvement will succeed.

In addition to this long-term perspective (first of all to improve health), the current, i.e., *acute consequences of unemployment* must also be overcome. For example, without an employment income, living costs and rent have to be financed, and burdens on the emotional level also have to be addressed. From the young adults' point of view, *social support from family and friends* is an important factor in this context, fulfilling financial and emotional tasks, but also in the form of care tasks or as a provider of advice:

> "In my daily life I get support from my family, from my brother [...] And ... the (***) (social worker) always comes over sometimes. And ... the (***) (care service), so care service comes over. Shopping, a bit of washing and the usual stuff. And friends of course support […]." (Hans, M, 26, LE, UE, par. 51)

> "So mentally I get support from my family, my boyfriend's parents, from my boyfriend anyway (...) Then the youth counseling help I have from the Jobcenter […] And financially it's just my boyfriend and my father [who support me]." (Kerstin, F, 23, LE, UE, par. 73)

In the narratives, it is apparent that in addition to family and friends as the central source of support, *other forms of institutional support* are also used, such as help from social workers, counseling services, physicians/therapists, or the nursing service (health care). However, financial support provided by the family is crucial, especially in cases of financial hardship, which occurs when public financial support (e.g., sickness benefit, unemployment benefit) is not sufficient:

> "It's also nice to be protected […] I'm getting an implant, that'll cost I think 2000, 1800 Euros or something like that. Well ... must be, must be paid by my parents. I don't get that paid by the agency, so that's why I'm glad that my parents support me in these cases when there are these costs." (Katrin, F, 27, LE, UE, par. 104)

Since most of the people of this type are not able to work, they receive *unemployment benefit II* as basic security. Hans, for example, receives *care allowance* due to his care level. Andreas also receives *financial support from his pension insurance*. *Activation measures* are also used as coping strategy, for example in the case of further training or retraining. This is especially true if the person's health has already improved. If the person is on the path to health improvement and has better job prospects or the prospect of returning to work, their overall situation and satisfaction improve. This can alleviate feelings of sadness, frustration and helplessness that can affect well-being. This is especially evident in the retrospective questioning during interviews.

## 6.5 Type 5: Worried Family Coping Type

Young adults assigned to this type – represented in this thesis by Tom (M, 20, ME, UE), Eva (F, 18, LE, UE), Ben (M, 21, LE, UE), Nina (F, 21, ME, UE), Tina (F, 18, LE, TE), Sina (F, 18, LE, UE), Miriam (F, 25, HE, TE) – are among the younger ones in the sample at the time of the interview and/or at (past) unemployment. They have *no work experience or only small*. Regarding *education*, some have already completed vocational training and therefore have some work experience. Some have started vocational training and then dropped out. Most are still at the transition from school to vocational training when experiencing unemployment. Therefore, they are or were mainly looking for a vocational training, but also for an employment after their completion of training. The *unemployment experience is characterized by a duration of several months or years*.

In general, this type shows predominant *dissatisfaction* with the unemployment situation and life in general. A major factor for the limited satisfaction is the *desire to work and/or to pursue a vocational training*. The *lack of tasks* also plays a role as well as *missing autonomy and (financial) self-determination/self-fulfillment*, which has a *negative impact on their well-being* and *becomes stronger over time* (e.g., due to boredom or stigmatization):

> "When I finished school, I was very happy about the situation and enjoyed a lot of free time. I really enjoyed that, after a while it's getting really boring, of course. (…) And then a lot of relatives and friends asked me 'What are you doing professionally at the moment?' And then I had to answer, that 'I do nothing, I don't work (…) because I 'am unemployed' that's a really embarrassing situation and you feel very unpleasantly ((strained smile)) and after a while, as already mentioned, it even gets boring and … ((taking a deep breath)) you want to have something to do again ((sighing))." (Tina, F, 18, LE, TE, par. 22)

In addition, this type may *lack orientation or ideas about their own future working career*. In addition, there may be a *lack of education*, i.e., the necessary school or vocational qualifications for individually desired jobs or training. These perceived limited prospects on the labor market can reduce individual well-being as Miriam reported:

> "[...] I didn't know what to do with myself at all, not even in which direction I was leaning [professionally]. […] Yes, I didn't know what I should do and that was very unsatisfying because you don't have any options. So, at that moment, as a schoolgirl or as a ... almost a young adult, I had no ... I had no clue after the career counselor didn't help me either." (Miriam, F, 25, HE, TE, par. 25)

In addition to a lack of education in general, poor grades also raise concerns about a young person's chances of finding a job in the labor market. This is linked to *negative feelings and emotions*, such as *worries, concerns about the future*, *about finding a job or training* at all, and about *gaining a foothold in the labor market in the long term*. Tom, for example, reported on his comprehensive worries about his whole life due to unemployment:

> "I'm worried about a lot of things at the moment (…) I'm afraid of the future. I'm afraid that I can't find a job. I'm afraid that I can't find a flat and pay for it. I'm afraid that I can't cope with the whole situation. The whole situation is making me crazy." (Tom, M, 20, ME, UE, par. 79)

This lack of prospects, as well as the *worries and fears* caused by a *lack of education and the financial consequences of unemployment,* for example, have a very strong impact on their well-being. As has been shown in other types, this can go hand in hand with *feeling of shame* (e.g., due to *stigmatization*), up to a feeling of *inferiority*. In addition, the distressing perception of being dependent on help from others plays an important role in their reduced well-being:

> "And (...) I definitely find the time bad now, because I'm just living like that and haven't really achieved anything yet, I think. [...] The problem is time, because I'm not getting any younger. And I have to find something soon. (...) Otherwise I'll probably still **be unemployed at 30**." (Tom, M, 20, ME, UE)

In addition to worries about the future, the *frustration and burden of constant failed job applications* also plays a role: "And it has always been a some kind of annoying, I'll be honest, because if you keep applying and always get rejected, then it's just quite annoying and yes (Tina, F, 18, LE, TE, par. 130)"; "Well, that I only get rejections, that I get frustrated after a while. I'm in a bad mood, I don't even want to open any letters anymore" (Sina, F, 18, LE, UE, par. 153).

Regarding *coping strategies*, individuals tend to adopt a two-way approach. Firstly, they focus on *finding work or training (problem-oriented)* and secondly, they adopt a *consequence-focused* approach, i.e., they try to avert or reduce the financial consequences of unemployment, e.g., financial hardship as well as cognitive and emotional consequences due to lack of financial resources and burden of unemployment. These forms of coping are thus both *long-term and short-term oriented*.

The central characteristic of this type is the source of coping or the resources on which individuals rely. These *coping resources are mainly provided by their family (social relationship level)* coping*,* such as *financial or material support* with housing (e.g., most of them still living in the parental home), food, and daily needs. Tom and Nina explained this in detail: "I'm still very dependent at the moment. My mother gives me food. My mother gives me a house or a flat, a room" (Eva, F, 18, LE, UE).

> "No, absolutely nothing, neither [pay] for the rent nor for my electricity or water or food. I don't have to pay anything for that, actually. I'm actually doing quite well financially, I think. The only thing I have to pay is the mobile phone bill." (Tom, M, 20, ME, UE, par. 67)

Moreover, the family also provides *emotional support and sense of security*, by conveying a sense of belonging, and as a financial backup. In addition, the family can act as an *advisor* by providing tips and informational support during the application process, as well as *job search and placement assistance*. In Nina's case, family and friends are her financial backup (protective factor) in emergency situations and in Tina's case, her father helps her with job applications: "My siblings and my boyfriend. My best friend is also my little one's godmother. (...) I have a few behind me who help me." (Nina, F, 21, ME, UE, par. 143)

> "[…] My father supports me, because he has experience with finding people an apprenticeship, because he worked in the youth workshop and always made sure that they found an apprenticeship." (Tina, F, 18, LE, TE, par. 60)

Since young people of this type are the younger ones in the sample and are still mainly in transition to vocational training, they often do not receive *institutional support* in the form of insurance benefits (unemployment benefit I). When they are still living in their parental household, they, in some cases mentioned not being eligible for means-tested unemployment benefits II because their parents are responsible for them and must take care of them. In Germany, according to German Civil Code (BGB §§ 1601 and following), parents are obligated to provide for their children, i.e., to pay child support, until they are (financially) independent have for example completed their first vocational qualification. If the parents were unemployed and receive unemployment benefits II, the young adults would also be considered part of the community in need and therefore eligible for unemployment benefits II (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2024c).

However, it was apparent, that most young people of this type receive *career counseling* provided by the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter. In addition, some young adults enter the *transitional system* [Übergangssystem] after school – sometimes voluntary and sometimes obligatory to complete compulsory education. There are reports of opportunities to catch up on school-leaving qualifications, to complete compulsory schooling/education, to get to know the labor market and to gain experience through internships while they are looking for a vocational training/apprenticeship or work. In some cases, it was also possible to earn a bit of money, as some of these measures are paid marginally.

> "I did the program [transitional system measure] because my sister, my older sister, had already done it, because she had exactly the same situation after finishing secondary school and didn't really know what she should do [...]. And of course, for me, there was

the positive side effect that one gets money. Which of course you appreciate ... as a young person ((laughs)).” (Miriam, F, 25, HE, TE, par. 27)

Some young adults of this type also use *unemployment benefit II* to make ends meet financially. In addition, (other) *ALMPs*, besides the transitional system, are used if these are available. In addition, *foodbanks* are sought out for support and *social workers support,* in particular as advisors, also with regard to the application process or interaction with the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter. However, as already mentioned, due to their age and the (lack of) legal entitlement (e.g., to unemployment benefits I), they usually make use of support such as job placement services, provided by the Jobcenter. However, these are perceived as insufficient and can make the situation even more strained, as young people reported about feeling being left alone by the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter or that the support was not promising. In addition, contact with the agency, whether compulsory or voluntary, is characterized by negative experiences, such as the feeling of having been treated unfairly or unreasonable bureaucracy, which is perceived as a source of hardship. This can be stressful and burdensome, which is why they often see no real advantage in institutional coping/support services, preferring to rely on family resources.

In addition to these external support resources, the type also shows strong *personal efforts* to cope with unemployment and its consequences. People of this type try to live frugally and, for example, look for employment/vocational training on their own. However, here again it is important to emphasize that family support, such as financial support in financial hardships during unemployment, or living in the parental household, etc., is the preferred resource of support. Even if they receive certain other forms of institutional support such as, income support (unemployment benefits II), they will still prefer parental/family support for the most part and to be independent of the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter. The nuclear family therefore plays the decisive role, but other family members or friends can also provide emotional or material support.

Overall, however, this type also shows the other side of the coin of family support for young adults. There is a *perception of dependency*, which some individuals, although they appreciate family support, can nevertheless feel as a burden: “I don't like to ask my mum, I'll put it that way. I would rather have my own money, but I have to ask my mum, it's unpleasant ((becomes very quiet))” (Sina, F, 18, LE, UE, par. 90). This may also be related to the *stigmatization* experienced by the unemployed, as reported in the interviews. Individuals who are unemployed often feel that others view them as lazy due to their lack of employment. Additionally, they

may *experience a lack of understanding* regarding their current situation and status of unemployment. This type also shows that *pressure can arise from one's own family*, especially if there is a long period of unemployment. This pressure to finally take up a job or vocational training and to stand on their own two feet financially, in some cases, also to move out of home, etc., can have an additional burdening effect on the young adults. Tom and Tina talked about family conflicts in this regard: "[...] At first I'm pretty shocked that my own parents say 'Yes, you have to move out and find something of your own'" (Tom, M, 20, ME, UE, par. 77).

> "[Family said]: 'Keep applying, you definitely have to start an apprenticeship this year'. And it was always a bit annoying, to be honest, because if you keep applying and keep getting rejected, then it's just quite annoying." (Tina, F, 18, LE, TE, par. 130)

## 6.6 Type 6: Detached and Resigned Type

The "Detached and Resigned Type" – including the cases Max (M, 21, LE, UE), Tobias (M, 24, LE, UE), Peter (M, 22, LE, UE), Franz (M, 24, ME, UE), Laura (F, 25, LE, UE), Marc (M, 24, LE, UE), Kai (M, 25, LE, UE), Sven (M, 25, LE, UE), and Klaus (M, 29, ME, UE) – is characterized by a *low level of education*, which is especially apparent in the form of a lower level of school education (e.g., no school-leaving certificate or a lower secondary school certificate). This type often does not have any vocational training certificate. Exceptions are represented by Franz (M, 24, ME, UE) and Klaus (M, 29, ME, UE) as empirical cases, who already have vocational education. Furthermore, young adults tend to have *less labor market experience than other young adults* in this sample. Overall, the individuals of this type tend to be older (not all cases), as there are no people who have recently left school or are new to the transition from school to vocational training. They are often affected by *long-term unemployment* (unemployment over several years). This means that they are looking for vocational training or employment for several years. In some cases, people with vocational training and working experience are affected by recurrent unemployment periods because they are not able to gain a long-term foothold on the labor market due to a lack of relevant education or training. Regarding gender, it can be observed that mostly men are assigned to this type.

The "Detached and Resigned Type" shows the poorest well-being compared to the other types. People are *very dissatisfied* with their life situation, especially due to (long-term) unemployment and its severe consequences perceived. The *financial consequences* of unemployment and *negative prospects*, particularly due to poor labor market opportunities and

a perceived low probability of escaping this situation and being secure in the long term, perceived problematic. The cases show *severe financial hardship (financial deprivation)* resulting from insufficient income and limited financial support, such as unemployment benefit II, or small financial support opportunities from family or friends. Moreover, in some cases, financial sanctions regarding unemployment benefits by the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter and/or private debts can worsen the financial situation and increase the perceived insecurity. In cases of extreme deprivation, some individuals may *not have a permanent residence* and may be *homeless*, which they attribute to unemployment. These financial and material deprivations are often accompanied by *existential fears*: "[...] Every time you have to think twice about every penny you spend to survive. That's (…) really cruel sometimes." (Franz, M, 24, ME, UE, par. 127)

> "[…] It's enough so that you don't starve. […] Then anytime you need something, then you have to always look 'Ah, can (or) can't I do it this month?'" (Tobias, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 83)

Peter, in particular, faces extreme challenges in his everyday life due to his homelessness, which significantly impacts his well-being:

> "Well, I've already ... more often thought about going to a homeless shelter [...] Yeah (I'm) not happy anymore either. It's annoying. (...) Looking every day where do I go, how do I make my money. (...) That is sad. […] it's burdensome. Having to figure out how to survive every day." (Peter, M, 22, LE, UE, par. 151)

Some *lack basic needs* such as food and housing (e.g., an apartment), which is very stressful. In addition to the acute shortage of basic needs, the *situation is perceived as a trap*, i.e., a situation from which there seems to be no way out: "Shit. It really sucks. And the rejection of flat applications, because I have debts [...] Well, and since [having personal debts] I can't really manage to get a flat" (Peter, M, 22, LE, UE, par. 55).

The problem of the perceived insecurity and entrapment is also reported in relation to the *experience of atypical employment*, which includes temporary work (sometimes through temporary employment agencies or hiring out of workers) and/or unskilled work that does not allow for permanent and full integration into the labor market from their point of view. The lack of vocational training opportunities often results in *limited prospects for full integration into the workforce*. An inadequate education and/or a lack of experience in the labor market compound this issue, resulting in poor prospects for employment and *prolonged or recurrent periods of unemployment*:

> "I'm standing there without a school certificate or a journeyman's certificate. I just thought to myself: 'Yes, you'll manage this situation somehow or I'll be able to keep my head above water somehow." But the fact that it's very difficult and that you have little chance of being employed in a normal job without temporary agency work." (Sven, M, 25, LE, par. 23)

> "I feel relatively depressed. It is quite simple, when they [the employers] already see (...) ok no degree, not even secondary school, we won't hire her. That's quite shitty. Because from my point of view you can't tell a person's ability from their report card." (Laura, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 53)

> "I've been in this fucking vicious circle for seven years (and) you couldn't get out. [...] That's the problem, once you're in, you're in. You usually don't get out of it so quickly." (Tobias, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 121)

If one takes a closer look at further emerging emotions that were reported in the context of this unemployment or that can be identified in the narratives of those affected, a wide variety of *strong negative feelings/emotions* are visible. A great *sadness* about the situation and a *feeling of malaise* (sometimes also regret because of wrong decisions in the past, e.g., dropping out of school or training) are strongly accompanied by great *worry* and *fear*: "Yes and if it continues like this … I am honestly afraid of living on the street within the next twenty to twenty-five years." (Franz, M, 24, ME, UE, par. 131); "It won't go on for long as it is at the moment" (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 122).

The feeling of *insecurity and/or uncertainty* is a constant companion. Together with the *fear*, this is particularly evident in relation to financial security, but also generally in relation to prospects: "You think, 'Yeah, that's great'((ironically)). What am I supposed to do all my life? Shitty secondary school leaving certificate, am I supposed to live off the government all my life or what?" (Tobias, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 43).

The stories of those affected are characterized by a high level of *frustration* about the seemingly *hopeless situation*, especially as they struggle to find a job. In this regard *despair* and *hopelessness* and a feeling of *powerlessness* are a daily companion of this type: "Yeah, I'm ... still trying to find something. But I doubt that someone will hire me" (Peter, M, 22, LE, UE, par. 127).

> "It's frustrating when other people have jobs and you don't. And especially when friends come and say things like 'Haha, why don't you look for a job' or something like that.

> ‘You always have free time’. That's annoying, of course. […] But we don't use our free time to just sit in front of the TV. Instead, we do and do and do, but very few people understand that.” (Kai, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 105)
>
> “Helpless, because I don't know what else I should do. I have already sent dozens of applications but (…) somehow nothing came back. (...) I'm getting sick and tired of the temporary employment agency.” (Max, M, 21, LE, UE, par. 55)

In addition, feelings of *worthlessness* or *inferiority* arise after continuous unemployment. In Marc’s case, for example, this feeling is amplified by the fact that he withdraws himself, i.e., avoids social contacts because he feels bad being unemployed and homeless: “A bit inferior. (...) I don't know, then ... you hide away, or you go out even less than you already do. (...) Yeah. It's bad.” (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 102).

The young unemployed people often rely on other people or on public assistance (unemployment benefit II). In addition to this necessity and financial security considered as a positive aspect for well-being, the interviews show that the status of being unemployed and dependency on others, i.e., not being able to stand on one’s own two feet, is already a source of *shame*: “In general, I'm ashamed of myself” (Klaus, M, 29, ME, UE, par. 75); “So I find it shameful for myself because other people look my (bad) resume” (Max, M, 21, LE, UE, par. 45). Furthermore, the *stigmatization* of people who are unemployed and those who receive unemployment benefits, is a significant issue that can cause discomfort and even lead to feelings of *inferiority*:

> “I am dependent on others for food, drink, smoking, housing, shelter, but actually want to stand on my own two feet [...] But at the moment I am stuck in a quagmire from which it is difficult for me to get out. (...) That's why my self-esteem is sinking.” (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 136)
>
> “I feel really shit when I think about it, just being dependent on the office, on the state [...] it's not a permanent solution and I mean, I feel antisocial, because I've been receiving Hartz IV for years.” (Laura, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 65)

In terms of *coping*, they mainly try to *overcome the consequences of unemployment or to mitigate or prevent its consequences (consequences-focused)*. As already mentioned, negative and problematic consequences that strongly affect young adults’ well-being include financial deprivation. There may also be homelessness or a lack of a permanent residence. Young people of this type try to achieve these basic needs, i.e., sufficient financial resources for daily

necessities such as food, housing, etc., in first place. In addition, *psychological coping* with unemployment and its consequences takes place (cognitive, emotional). Then, in the second place, the type tries to overcome the cause of unemployment, i.e., also tries to find work or training.

Regarding the *coping level and resources*, the analysis indicates that the focus is primarily on *institutional support*. Specifically, financial support is provided in the form of unemployment benefits (mainly unemployment benefit II). The amount of unemployment benefit II and potential financial sanctions regarding benefits can make it challenging for those affected to manage their finances. In problematic cases, existential problems became apparent in the interviews:

> "[…] It's enough so that you don't starve. […] Then anytime you need something, then you have to always look 'Ah, can (or) can't I do it this month?'" (Tobias, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 83)

> "[...] It is lacking everywhere. So, it's, as my girlfriend always says, 'Too little to live, too much to die.' It's (...) It's just (...) You get by somehow in the month, but also not (...) So it's just rent is covered and that's it. [...] It's just too little." (Kai, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 25)

Although this institutional coping is considered necessary by the young adults concerned and they are sometimes even grateful for it, the stigmatization of unemployed people or recipients of unemployment benefits, on the one hand, and the negatively perceived contact with the Federal Employment Agency or the Jobcenter, on the other, can have a negative impact on their well-being (see also previous explanations). Sometimes the young adults are also affected by financial sanctions from the Federal Employment Agency due to fail to comply with obligations, such as missing appointments, job or measure offer rejections, etc., which can exacerbate both the financial deprivation and the uncertainty, and thus can have an additional burdening effect. From the perspective of young adults, this contradicts the idea of state support and the reasons for it are sometimes incomprehensible or perceived overstated:

> "The employment office forces you to do it [the ALMP measure]. If you say 'Hey, I've already done application training five times, why do I have to do it again?' the employment office says 'You have to, if you don't go, you'll be sanctioned' [...] I think the employment office puts too much pressure on you, too many threats, although they should actually help you. But they don't." (Kai, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 35)

Many individuals in this group feel that the *support they receive is inadequate or not tailored enough to their individual needs*. Additionally, the threat of sanctions from authorities creates a high level of pressure to participate in the measures or to apply constantly, which can lead to feelings of fear and powerlessness. Many have experienced "measure hopping", which means that they have been involved in a large number of measures over the course of their several years of unemployment, in some cases moving from one measure to another: "And then you get one measure after the other that somehow sucks and doesn't help you and you don't want to do it" (Tobias, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 151).

This type also makes use of the help of *social workers* in the form of counseling as a source of coping. Additionally, *food banks* are used as additional source of support for obtaining necessary food, primarily seen as an opportunity to obtain food for (almost) free, as financial resources are scarce: "Well at the Tafel [German food bank] I was quite often. It kept my head above water" (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 36).

In addition to this formal support, young people of this type also cope very much at the *individual level*. They also try to ward off/reduce consequences at the cognitive or emotional level. Cognitively, for example, they try to *suppress* or not think about the situation, i.e., their own insecurity or poor prospects and hopelessness: "I don't even think about the fact that I might (...) It's really best not to think about it" (Laura, F, 25, LE, UE, par. 119). In addition, the situation, which is perceived negatively, both subjectively and objectively, is sometimes *glossed over* or put *into perspective*: "You are not living on the street, that's the point. So from that point of view it's bearable" (Kai, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 109).

The interviews of this type reveal some form of *resignation* as a consequence of unemployment, including feelings of *powerlessness*, *frustration*, and *hopelessness*. In some cases, there is a sense that nothing can be done to improve the situation and that any effort would be futile. This can help to alleviate stresses such as pressure, worries, or fears. For example, Peter stated, "I just don't believe that anything will improve anymore" (Peter, M, 22, LE, UE, par. 123). They do not believe that the situation will improve any further, although they are making an effort. In this context, some are accepting their unfavorable labor market situation: "Meanwhile, I just accepted it" (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 32).

Some individuals have a history of repeated conflicts with the law. Some activities can be interpreted as coping mechanisms (psychological and financial), e.g., using drugs as a means of emotional escape, seeking distraction, or committing fare evasion or theft to alleviate financial consequences. Klaus, for example, talked about drug consumption and dealing: "Back

then I was dealing drugs and I was also consuming drugs to escape this nightmare and that is how I basically paid my bills" (Klaus, M, 29, ME, UE, par. 35).

In addition to *living frugally to avoid financial shortages*, some people of this type also attempt or attempted to address the root cause of their impaired well-being (problem-focused), such as *seeking employment*. Active job search, often directly via demand for job/internship in the store is used:

> "I asked everywhere. I went into the shops, asked 'Hey, do you need someone here? I need money' […] Every now and then someone says, 'Yes, just do an internship with us' (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 56).

Temporary employment for short periods is sometimes found through subcontracting, such as temporary work agencies. However, this is perceived as stressful due to the working conditions, short duration, and recurrent insecurities and uncertainties:

> "[...] In essence, it's **my own fault**. Sure, I don't have a degree, I have to take what I get. I'm not really allowed to complain or whine, but [temporary employment agencies] should be banned anyway. [That's a] mess." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 75)

> "I don't want to do this with the temporary employment agencies forever. But I don't know any other way out at the moment and it's always annoying." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 91)

This type also uses odd jobs, work as unskilled worker, or moonlighting. Marc, for example, "worked a bit unofficially" (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 18) and rather unusual ways to earn some extra money out of desperation, shows Franz: "But financially I ... so far I've been donating blood and plasma, but my body won't keep up with that for long" (Franz, M, 24, ME, UE, par. 65).

Similar to other types, although more in the background here, but still relevant, the unemployed also show *coping through their own social network*, both materially and psychologically. For instance, they may receive *emotional support* by showing empathy/understanding for their situation and behaving in a positive and constructive manner, as Sven reported about his girlfriend:

> "[…] I'm grateful to my girlfriend for being so understanding, because she could have said: 'You don't have a job any more. So I'm leaving you now'. She also supports me and says: 'We'll manage.' […] Cohesion is also pretty important and that makes me stick it out somehow. To keep going and not to stop, because if you stop, then you just

> lose, I think. The struggle with yourself as well. You give up on yourself, so to speak, if you don't continue." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 89)

In addition to receiving money from family as support, some talked about other support. Marc highlighted the relevance of support by his grandmother in form of food:

> "Eat at my grandma's of course, Sundays. Which then became Mondays and then also Thursdays and then at some point became every day (…) Because there simply was no money." (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 36)

Furthermore, again, support can also be burdensome in some cases, especially when there is a feeling of missing independence and that one lives at the expense of others:

> "[...] It shouldn't be my girlfriend's task to give me money. I want to stand on my own two feet and I want to earn my own money, because she earns it hard and that makes me psychologically ... Sometimes it gets me down." (Sven, M, 25, LE, UE, par. 115)

In cases where there is no permanent residence, it is particularly visible how family and friends help to provide a temporary place to sleep: "[…] three days with my buddy and then went to my uncle. […]" (Peter, M, 22, UE, par. 107); "At the moment well … I sleep at my friend's, my families' couch. On the weekend I can stay with my girlfriend" (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 28).

Social contacts and exchanges are also important as a way of "escaping" from everyday life or simply as a distraction. As shown in other cases and types, this also creates a sense of belonging and serves as emotional support:

> "Whenever I am outside and meet my friends, then mainly just to escape everything for about an hour or two. To think about something else […] Just sitting there. Talking nonsense and then going home again in the evening and trying to continue the next morning." (Marc, M, 24, LE, UE, par. 94)

However, the quality and quantity of the own social network, i.e., the general coping possibilities (see chapter 5.3), are not available or are limited compared to other types, e.g., to the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type". This could be due to reduced contact frequency or fewer social contacts in general. Or it could be due to less intense or even missing family relationships. It is also apparent that one's own social network, such as family and friends, may also be affected by insecurities and thus unable to provide the same level of financial support, or my provide less contact or assistance due to their education or available social contacts. However, it is visible that people help each other as much as they can.

This type is characterized by a *very limited sense of well-being* due to a high level of insecurity, particularly financial insecurity, caused also by long periods of unemployment and lack of income, as well as poor future prospects. Young people use different coping strategies available to them, but the focus is mainly on institutional support and individual coping (behavioral and psychological). In addition, coping is more *short-term* and tends to focus on the consequences rather than the causes. Social support also plays a role but is often unavailable or very restricted. The focus is therefore on the other two strategies (individual level and institutional level).

## 6.7 Overview of the typology and discussion of the developed types

*Table 4* provides a comparative overview of the typology. It includes relevant comparative dimensions and the characteristics of each type that have been developed. The purpose of this table is to highlight relevant insights and make the typology more comprehensible. It is not intended to provide a complete picture of all mechanisms related to well-being or coping that occurred during the empirical analysis.

**Table 4** Overview of the typology

| | **Type 1**<br>**"Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type"**<br>(7 cases assigned) | **Type 2**<br>**"Consequences Focusing Type"**<br>(4 cases assigned) | **Type 3**<br>**"Institutional Coping Type"**<br>(13 cases assigned) | **Type 4**<br>**"Overcoming Disease Type"**<br>(5 cases assigned) | **Type 5**<br>**"Worried Family Coping Type"**<br>(7 cases assigned) | **Type 6**<br>**"Detached and Resigned Type"**<br>(9 cases assigned) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Unemployment / labor market experience and socio-demographic characteristics** | | | | | | |
| **Experience with unemployment** | Short period (few weeks or months) | Several months | Varying unemployment experiences, some (mostly older) people affected by long-term unemployment or recurrent unemployment periods | Longer experience, ranging from several months to (mostly) years | Unemployment for several months or years | Long-term unemployment for several years or recurrent unemployment periods for several years |
| **Education and labor market experience** | Higher educated (e.g., university graduates) at the transition into the labor market; or upper secondary educated with vocational training and working experience | Mixed school education and training (but no higher education), varying labor market experience, mostly jobbing/odd jobs/marginal jobs | Tendency to low (school) education, and work experiences (e.g., internships or small work opportunities) | Varying, mostly low labor market experience, varying school education and training (lower and upper secondary education) | At the transition from school to vocational training or from training to employment, mostly secondary school leaving certificate (in some cases vocational training), no/few labor market experience | Tendency to low level of education, (e.g., no school-leaving certificate or a lower secondary school certificate, mostly no vocational training, low labor market experience, but varying in some cases |
| **Gender** | Mixed | Female | Mixed | Mixed | Mixed | Male/mixed |
| **Age** | Older ones | Varying age | Varying age | Varying age | Younger ones | Older ones |

| | Type 1<br>**"Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type"**<br>(7 cases assigned) | Type 2<br>**"Consequences Focusing Type"**<br>(4 cases assigned) | Type 3<br>**"Institutional Coping Type"**<br>(13 cases assigned) | Type 4<br>**"Overcoming Disease Type"**<br>(5 cases assigned) | Type 5<br>**"Worried Family Coping Type"**<br>(7 cases assigned) | Type 6<br>**"Detached and Resigned Type"**<br>(9 cases assigned) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Well-being** | | | | | | |
| **Risk factors for well-being and reasons for impaired well-being** | Unmet expectations/ desires, lack of self-fulfillment, etc. | Impaired autonomy, lack of self-fulfillment, problematic financial situation, etc. | No/lack of work opportunities/opportunity to start vocational training, financial shortcomings/deprivation, dependency on others, stigmatization, lack of identity, etc. | Health problems/illness, lack of tasks, financial restrictions, uncertainty, dependency on support from others, stigmatization, etc. | Financial insecurities, lack of tasks, missing autonomy, missing self-fulfillment, lack of orientation/prospects, stigmatization, lack of understanding for their situation, missing institutional support, etc. | Financial hardships/existential fears, homelessness, negative future perspective, social consequences, stigmatization, lack of identity, dependency on others, etc. |
| **Cognitive** | **Mainly Satisfied**<br>(can change to dissatisfaction over time)<br>Situation perceived as normal transition (only temporary), good labor market prospects due to good education and/or labor market experience | **Mixed picture, from dissatisfied to (partly) satisfied**<br>Situation perceived as partly problematic, varying needs, aims, wishes and prospects | **Dissatisfied**<br>Situation perceived as problematic, but still hopeful, mixed labor market prospects | **Dissatisfied**<br>Problematic view on life situation due to health problems and unemployment and its consequences, poor prospects regarding health situation and labor market, sometimes change if health situation/prospects improved | **Dissatisfied**<br>Problematic situation due low education/low labor market experience and therefore perception of limited labor market chances, lack of orientation/ prospects | V**ery Dissatisfied**<br>Very problematic situation (insecurity and trap), strong consequences of unemployment, no prospects/negative future perspective |

| | Type 1<br>**"Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type"**<br>(7 cases assigned) | Type 2<br>**"Consequences Focusing Type"**<br>(4 cases assigned) | Type 3<br>**"Institutional Coping Type"**<br>(13 cases assigned) | Type 4<br>**"Overcoming Disease Type"**<br>(5 cases assigned) | Type 5<br>**"Worried Family Coping Type"**<br>(7 cases assigned) | Type 6<br>**"Detached and Resigned Type"**<br>(9 cases assigned) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Affective** | **Mainly no/few negative emotions/feelings**<br>Change in some cases over time to negative emotions, e.g., stress, worries, burden, boredom | **Negative and positive emotions/feelings**<br>In some cases, mutual appearance, mixed picture, e.g., positive: feeling independence; negative: worries/fear about financial situation/the future, frustration, dependency on state/unemployment benefits, etc. | **Negative emotions/feelings**<br>Malaise, burden, frustration, worries, shame, stressful dependency on institutional support/ employment agency, etc.<br>Sometimes change to partly positive feelings due to improved labor market prospects | **Negative emotions/feelings**<br>Worries, fears, sadness, helplessness, frustration, shame, inferiority due to health problems and/or unemployment, uncertainty about the future, stressful dependency on unemployment benefits II etc. | **Negative emotions/feelings**<br>Worries, concerns, fears, insecurity/ missing orientation, boredom, shame, stigma, frustration, inferiority, etc. | **(Extensive) Negative emotions/feelings**<br>Malaise/unease, sadness, worries, fear, feelings of insecurity/ uncertainty, dependency, shame, frustration, despair, hopelessness, powerlessness, inferiority/ worthlessness, etc. |
| **Coping** | | | | | | |
| **Forms of coping (direction, intention of coping)** [1] | **Problem-oriented,** e.g., search for work, applications<br>&<br>Consequences-focused, e.g., cognitive and emotional coping (perception as a normal part in life/transition, etc.), financial situation (own savings) | Problem-oriented, e.g., search for work/vocational training, applications<br>&<br>**Consequences-focused**, e.g., working (atypical employment) to improve financial situation/autonomy, emotional and cognitive coping | **Problem-oriented**, e.g., search for work/ vocational training, internships, improving education and labor market chances (employability), ALMPs<br>&<br>**Consequences-focused**, e.g., cognitive and emotional coping, financial (institutional, unemployment benefit II) | **Problem-oriented**, e.g., get well (e.g., therapy), education, retraining<br>&<br>Consequences-focused, e.g., financial situation, cognitive and emotional | **Problem-oriented**, e.g., search for work, vocational training<br>&<br>**Consequences-focused**, e.g., financial situation, cognitive and emotional | Problem-oriented, e.g., search for work/ vocational training/ internships, improving education/labor market chances (ALMPs)<br>&<br>**Consequences-focused**, e.g., improving financial situation (unemployment benefit II, housing, cognitive and emotional) |

| | Type 1<br>**"Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type"**<br>(7 cases assigned) | Type 2<br>**"Consequences Focusing Type"**<br>(4 cases assigned) | Type 3<br>**"Institutional Coping Type"**<br>(13 cases assigned) | Type 4<br>**"Overcoming Disease Type"**<br>(5 cases assigned) | Type 5<br>**"Worried Family Coping Type"**<br>(7 cases assigned) | Type 6<br>**"Detached and Resigned Type"**<br>(9 cases assigned) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sustainability**[1] | **Long-term**<br>&<br>Short-term | Long-term<br>&<br>**Short-term** | **Long-term**<br>&<br>Short-term | **Long-term**<br>&<br>Short-term | **Long-term**<br>&<br>**Short-term** | Long-term<br>&<br>**Short-term** |
| **Coping resources (level of coping)** [1] | **Individual level:** own efforts (e.g., search for work), emotional/ cognitive mechanisms<br>**Relationship level:** social support from family/ friends (e.g., financial, material, housing, psychological, informational)<br>Institutional level: unemployment benefits II (only in case of emergency) | **Individual level:** own efforts (e.g., search for work/atypical employment, psychological (cognitive, emotional): reaching autonomy, feeling of independence, perceiving this situation as bridge/transition into labor market integration<br>**Relationship level:** social support from family and friends (e.g., financial, psychological, material, housing)<br>Institutional level: different, e.g., unemployment benefits II | Individual level: own efforts (e.g., search for work/vocational training, internships), emotional/cognitive mechanisms<br>Relationship level: social support from family and friends (e.g., financial, psychological, housing, material)<br>**Institutional level:** mainly unemployment benefits II, ALMPs, educational institutions, social worker | **Individual level:** own efforts (e.g., improving health, search for employment/ vocational training), emotional/cognitive mechanisms<br>**Relationship level:** social support from family and friends (e.g., financial, material, psychological, informational)<br>**Institutional level:** unemployment benefits, ALMPs, health care, health care system insurances, institutions, social worker, youth services | Individual level: own, efforts, (e.g., living frugally, finding employment/vocational training), emotional/ cognitive mechanisms<br>**Relationship level:** social support from family and friends (e.g., financial, material, housing, informational, psychological)<br>Institutional level: transition system, career counseling, ALMPs, food bank, social worker, unemployment benefits II | **Individual level:** own efforts, (e.g., financially, living frugal) emotional/ cognitive mechanisms<br>Relationship level: social support from family and friends (financial, material, psychological, housing)<br>**Institutional level:** unemployment benefits II, ALMPs, food bank, social worker, youth services |

*Note*: [1]The main focus is highlighted bold.
*Source*: Own illustration.

### 6.7.1 The process of the construction

The typology was developed through a *process* of constant case comparisons, resulting in changes to both the types and their characteristics, as well as the number of types themselves. The process started with the themes and the comparative dimensions developed. The number of types of the typology was not predetermined, but rather based on empirical material available and the interest in knowledge. That means the available cases (interviewees) and their heterogeneity regarding relevant characteristics (comparative dimensions) played a role in determining the level of differentiation in the typology and thus in the number of different types. During the process, the number of types was reduced from nine to six, for instance by merging similar types into a new type or including cases from one type in a very similar type regarding the comparative dimensions. In the first step, an attempt was made to make the differentiation as detailed as possible based on the comparative established dimensions, resulting in some types that were similar or did not differ much from each other, e.g., only in one or a few characteristics. In the next step, a decision was made on whether these types can be considered as separate types or whether they are too similar.

For example, the "Detached and Resigned Type" also includes cases such as Sven (M, 25, LE, UE) and Klaus (M, 29, ME, UE), who have experienced repeated unemployment over a longer period, sometimes several years. This characteristic, however, appeared not sufficient to form a separate type, although it could be interpreted as relevant difference between other cases of this type, who experience mainly one long-term unemployment period. However, the other characteristics of the individuals were similar to those of the "Detached and Resigned Type", particularly in terms of their well-being and coping strategies. Thus, the decision was made to include these cases into the existing "Detached and Resigned Type" and allow for some additional variation in terms of labor market experience. An alternative option could have been to handle the cases as subtypes within the type. However, doing so would have unnecessarily complicated the typology without adding much value.

The development process of the typology also showed a change in the type of the "Institutional Coping Type", which previously consisted of two different types. However, at the end of the analysis process, the similarity was visible between the two types. The only differences of both types occurred in the intensity of coping via institutional channels, such as between those who mainly take active part to improve their situation and those who are more passive and show less motivation. However, there was no clear pattern regarding institutional coping, such as the use of ALMPs or PLMPs, and the other comparative dimensions were kind of similar. Therefore,

it was decided to create one type. This is because institutional coping was used and, in most cases, both active and passive forms were used. The relatively high number of empirical cases of this type, 13 in total, is likely due to the sampling strategy, which included at least 50 percent with experience with ALMPs and PLMPs.

Additionally, the typology process revealed that two types were initially thought to be distinct, but were in fact identical, albeit presented different times in the course of the unemployment experience. This means that the characteristics were the same but showed a temporal development. Therefore, the "Overcoming Disease Type" was established, which considers health improvement as a means of coping, as well as retraining or further training due to previous illness. On the one hand, this provides a time perspective, as well as a consideration of possible partial successful retraining as a strategy, as in the case of Andreas (M, 27, ME, UE), who has already successfully retrained due to his illness and now perceives himself on a good course to improve his life situation.

As already explained, the typology is based primarily on empirical data, but also incorporates theoretical aspects and considerations from the literature, i.e., previous research. As a result, the empirical cases, i.e., the young adults of the present sample, do not always fit 100 percent to all characteristics and attributes of the respective assigned type. Despite the homogeneity of a type, there are variations within its boundaries. Although there may be deviations from individual characteristics in some cases, the empirical cases serve as the basis for the types and provide insight into the situation of possible groups of young unemployed individuals and their coping mechanisms. When comparing the dimensions of the different types, similarities and differences can now be identified.

### 6.7.2 Characteristics and well-being of the types

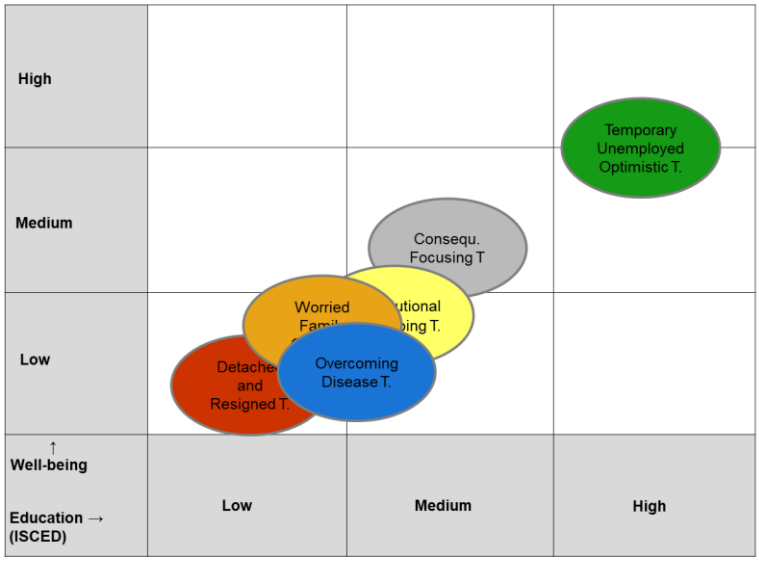
Starting with the *experience with unemployment and socio-demographic characteristics* of the types, there are differences, which are also illustrated in *Table 5*. The "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" typically experiences short-term unemployment lasting several weeks or months, often occurring only once during the transition from school or university to work. In addition, this type is also characterized by a good education – compared to other types with the highest achieved education – and the associated certainty they will quickly find another job if they became unemployed. A contrast to this type can be seen in in the "Detached and Resigned Type", which experiences very long periods of unemployment lasting several years, or recurring periods of unemployment over many years. This type is also the least educated, often

lacking school-leaving qualifications and, in most cases without any completed vocational training. The lack of necessary education and qualifications for the labor market makes it difficult for individuals of this type to enter and integrate into the labor market in the long-term. Due to the transitional situation in which they find themselves, the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" tends to have little work experience. While the "Detached and Resigned Type" has sometimes some working experience due to recurring short employment experiences, it mostly also shows low labor market experiences, because of long-term unemployment periods. However, initial work experience may also be available through ALMPs, internships, or (started and not finished) former vocational trainings. The "Worried Family Coping Type", who is also in transition from school to vocational training or from training to work, is similarly inexperienced regarding the labor market, but in comparison to the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type", with a lower level of education. The "Institutional Coping Type" also has a low level of education, having gained most of its work experience through the ALMPs measures, including internships and temporary work opportunities. The "Worried Family Coping Type", and the "Institutional Coping Type" show differences in unemployment experience. The former has already experienced unemployment but has not been unemployed for as long. But overall, both types show variations, e.g., of several years of experience of being unemployed or only, short unemployment experience of several months. The "Consequences Focusing Type" and the "Overcoming Disease Type" are not characterized by a homogenous picture of education, i.e., they show variation from no school-leaving certificate to high school diploma [Abitur]. Regarding the "Overcoming Disease Type", this is not surprising, since, from young peoples' point of view, the main reason for unemployment is not necessarily the lack of education, but the health problems the young adults suffer from. In the case of the "Consequences Focusing Type", young adults attempt to overcome the situation themselves without institutional support, which, from their point of view, they may only succeed in with a certain level of basic education and qualifications relevant for the labor market. Thus, they show more experiences on the labor market, since this group of people tries to overcome the consequences of unemployment mainly through atypical form of work, and/or small working opportunities, whereas the "Disease Overcoming Type", due to the illness, is excluded from the labor market and does not have the opportunity to work.

Overall, the typology reveals different education and experience on the labor market, as well as different experiences of unemployment. However, it is evident that only the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" is characterized by overall good education and relevant labor market qualifications, whereas the other types more seems to lack certain school degrees or, in

most types, especially vocational qualifications. Moreover, it seems that *lower education correlates with unemployment experience*, particularly regarding the duration of unemployment in the typology. In addition, the typology indicates possible *linkage between unemployment experience (duration) and impaired well-being*. As shown in the previous chapters, different risk factors for well-being could be identified. Regarding the link between long-term unemployment and reduced/low well-being, inter alia, financial problems (up to existential fears) and lack of prospects, as well as stigmatization and impaired self-identity and burdensome dependency on one's situation, can play an important role in reducing well-being. However, (some of) these factors may not occur as strongly or at all if the duration of unemployment is shorter. This is seen in better well-being of the types. The study indicates a possible relationship between *education and well-being*, which could be linked to limited perspectives during unemployment due to their low educational background and the longer experience of unemployment (and its consequences) visible in this study. However, as already shown, coping and support play also an important role in the during unemployment regarding the individual well-being. *Figures 6* and *7* illustrate the differences between the types just described regarding the education as well as the duration of unemployment. The figures show a tendency and interpretation based on the empirical material and reflect the nature of the types. The presentation does (in most parts) not focus on measurable categories and classifications, but rather on interpretations occurring from narratives of the interviewees. Therefore, due to qualitative interpretations, these figures only give an approximate ordinal ranking as orientation, e.g., of well-being and of the amount of coping resources, rather than concrete numerical values. Education is presented using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) as used in the already presented results.

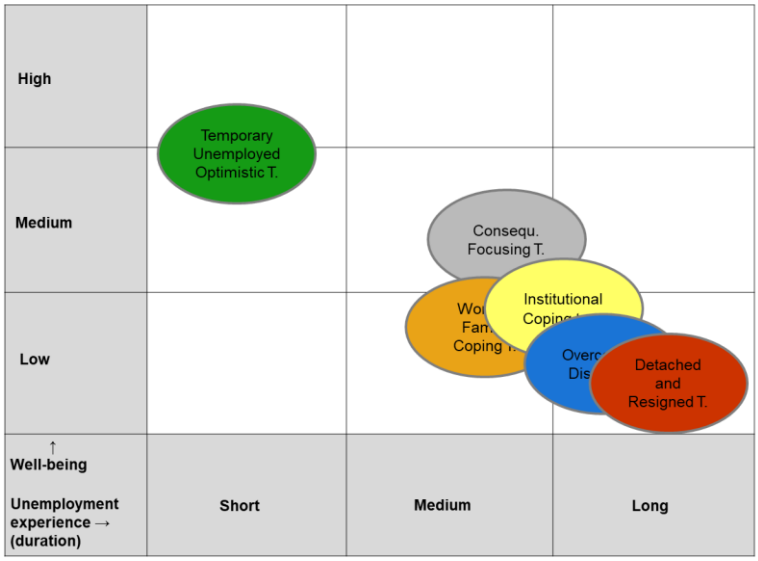
**Figure 6** Education and well-being of the types




*Source*: Own illustration.

*Notes:* Low level (ISCED 0-2), medium level (ISCED 3-4), high level (ISCED 5-8); well-being (low, medium, high) is an approximate interpretation reflecting the nature of the type.

**Figure 7** Unemployment experience and well-being of the types




*Source*: Own illustration.

*Notes:* Short (0-6 months), medium (7-12 months) or long-term (13 months and more) reflect the nature of the type, but deviations are possible in individual cases; well-being (low, medium, high) is an approximate interpretation reflecting the nature of the type.

Further differences between types can possibly be highlighted by the characteristic of *gender*. In this typology, for example, the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type", the "Institutional Coping Type", and the "Overcoming Disease Type" show a mixed gender pattern. For the "Consequences Focusing Type", women predominate in the present cases, whereas for the "Detached and Resigned Type", men predominate. At this point, it is unclear whether a concrete statement can be made based on these patterns, since the overall distribution of cases regarding the types is small, and it could only be a random phenomenon or caused by the sampling and recruiting procedure of this study. One possible explanation, however, regarding the "Detached and Resigned Type" could be that men generally have a lower school education, compared to women in Germany (Destatis, 2021, p. 106) which then may lead to unemployed for a long time (Solga, 2005, pp. 20–21), then visible in "Detached and Resigned Type". In addition, women can also have the possible substitute role of being mother and/or housewife, given the traditional role models. It is therefore more likely that they will find themselves in these roles than that they will be visible as long-term unemployed. Similarly, men can have the traditional role of family breadwinner. This may be why they perceive the unemployment situation as particularly challenging, as they cannot fulfill their role as breadwinner, which can impact their well-being (Forret et al., 2010, p. 650).

In terms of *age*, there is also a different picture, but this can be explained in most cases. The "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" is older than other cases due to its higher education and longer stay in the education system. In addition, people who have been unemployed for a very long time, such as the "Detached and Resigned Type", are logically among the older people in the sample. The "Worried Family Coping Type" is more likely to be represented by younger people, since they are most recently at school-to-work transition (mostly from school-to-vocational training) and has a lower level of education. And compared to the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type", which is mostly characterized by higher education, people of this type have been in the education system for a shorter period. The other types do not show any clear pattern regarding age.

In terms of *well-being* (see also again Figure 6 and 7), there are differences between the types. As already shown the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" has the best well-being during unemployment compared to the other types. It is characterized by better life satisfaction and less strong negative emotions, that impact overall well-being. Although young adults may experience unemployment and unmet expectations of transitioning to employment, their well-being is better compared to other types. As already mentioned, this is due to the better prospects

for the future because of good education and usually good (and successful) coping possibilities. The “Consequences Focusing Type” shows partly positive emotions and in some cases certain satisfaction (with its labor market situation), although being without full-time employment. This could be primarily due to the partially successful process of independent coping, i.e., striving for autonomy away from institutional support with all the constraints and obligations that it entails from young people’s point of view. This form of self-determination enables this type to improve its well-being to some extent, despite the lack of vocational training program or full-time employment. The “Institutional Coping Type” has already been able to improve its situation and/or perspective in some cases and thus shows improved well-being (in some cases). Nevertheless, this type is generally still characterized by clear limited well-being. Other types, the “Overcoming Disease Type, the “Worried Family Coping Type”, and the “Detached and Resigned Type”, show the lowest well-being in this typology. The emotions and satisfaction with the current situation vary among the different types and are lowest for the “Detached and Resigned Type”. Overall, strong emotions such as worries, fears, shame, frustration, hopelessness, and inferiority can strongly negative influence well-being in the cases. These are caused by different intensities and amount of potential risk factors, such as financial distress. The analyses indicate that work holds great meaning for young people in different areas, e.g., psychologically. For instance, work contributes to self-fulfillment. Additionally, work is crucial for financial stability and meeting daily needs. Furthermore, personal autonomy is also related to the functions of work. Moreover, external stigmatization can negatively impact well-being. The study indicates that the list of risk factors can be expanded further and may vary across the types. However, the “Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type” shows the least incidents and has the best coping opportunities, therefore best well-being.

### 6.7.3 Coping strategies of the types

Overall, it is visible that all types of the developed typology, and almost all cases in the sample, (try to) manage both consequences, e.g., financial shortcomings (consequences-focused), and causes of unemployment to improve well-being (problem-oriented). However, regarding some types a *specific orientation of coping*, i.e., either problem-oriented or consequences-focused can be highlighted. The “Overcoming Disease Type”, which primarily tries to get healthy to be able to work at all, makes a conscious decision to overcome the causes of unemployment. The “Institutional Coping Type” and the “Worried Family Coping Type” show no clear preference or focus and use both ways equally. In some cases, it may be unintentional, i.e., not conscious,

that one direction or the other is followed. As an example, it is worth noting that coping mechanisms, such as consequences-focused coping with financial difficulties through unemployment benefits II, can be accompanied by mandatory ALMPs, thus providing another form of coping that is problem-oriented, such as support in searching/finding employment, but was not previously intended. In this way, one situation may lead to another. In addition, family coping aims to provide financial or emotional resources to deal with consequences but can also serve and lead to finding a job through parental contacts. The strategies are closely interlinked. The field of individual coping, especially at the emotional and cognitive level, is sometimes complex and difficult to assess in the interviews. Nevertheless, it was generally possible to identify from the context of the interviews which efforts were particularly helpful in improving dimensions of well-being and how well-being was experienced.

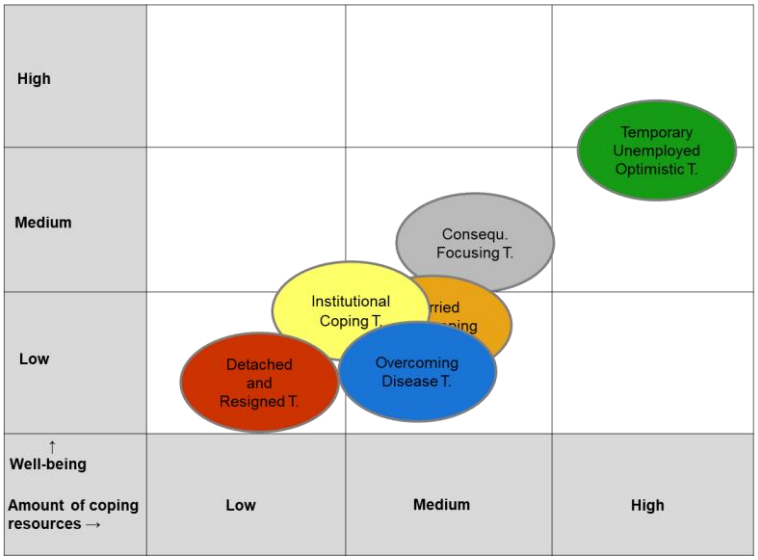
In the case of the "Detached and Resigned Type", it was evident that young people do not see any possibility of coping in the long-term but are in such an insecure situation that they have to focus on the present and try to cope with the current situation. Thus, long-term coping strategies are not in the center of attention here, in comparison to other types who pursue the goal of improving labor market integration opportunities through education and training measures, for example, and try to mitigate the consequences of unemployment. The "Consequences Focusing Type" is also short-term oriented, but this type already has vocational training or sees its future labor market opportunities better than the "Detached and Resigned Type". The focus is on independent coping with the consequences, for reasons of attitude.

There are cases that attempt to use all available coping mechanisms to deal with their situation and do not chose *resources*. Especially the types with severely impaired well-being, e.g., the "Detached and Resigned Type", tries to cope in any way it can. However, the focus is primarily on individual efforts and institutional support, as family support is in most parts not available. The "Worried Family Coping Type" draws mainly on family resources, i.e., social capital from their own social network, because people are still young and in some cases are not entitled to unemployment benefit I or II and legally their parents have a duty of care. Young adults also make a conscious decision to avoid a form of support, which is particularly evident in the "Consequences Focusing Type". These young adults reject institutional support and strive for autonomy and financial independence. Similarly, the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" rejects institutional support but has the possibility to fall back on family support or own savings and assumes (only) a brief period of unemployment until (new) employment could be found. Overall, some types, such as the "Institutional Coping Type", demonstrate that the use

of institutional support is valued in certain situations and individuals are appreciative. However, it is important to note that there can be negative consequences, such as feeling that the benefits received are insufficient or experiencing a sense of dependency. Additionally, unfair treatment by agency staff can also create tension and strain. What is interesting about the use of resources is that, wherever possible, the *family plays a key role in coping*, even though *institutional coping dominates in many cases*. In addition to financial and material support (food, housing, etc.), the family is used especially as a source of advice and emotional support and, above all, as a backup, although this seems to play especially a central role for younger people making the transition from school to work (mostly to vocational training).

The following *Figures 8 – 10* provide an overview of the amount of coping resources, the focus, and direction/intention of coping of the types and their well-being. This presentation supports the previous explanations. The amount of available coping resources seems to play a major role in relation to well-being (Figure 8). However, it is clear from the interviews that the quality of the resources, e.g., from one's own social network, and their appropriateness to the need matter in this regard. Although there is a certain focus on one or more level of coping and the utilization of resources, this focus seems not to be necessarily related to well-being (Figure 9), similar regarding the direction of coping (Figure 10). However, it is important to note that this is an assessment based on qualitative results and interpretations. Therefore, one should be careful with the assumed correlations at this point. In addition, as noted above, people in this study often use all three levels of coping resources, and although there is a focus on one or more levels in the types, one cannot rule out the possibility that another resource, although not in the focus of coping, is affecting, e.g., improving, well-being. In addition, the results of this typology suggest that in addition to the amount of resources, the *quality and succe*ss of coping during the process also play a role, as for example the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" and the "Consequences Focusing Type" show the best well-being, although they "only" refer to two areas. Both types also reject institutional support. Furthermore, based on this empirical data, it is not feasible or appropriate to make a general statement about whether young adults experience better well-being when they cope in either a problem-oriented or a consequences-focused way. In general, the field of coping strategies and resources remains complex and not always distinct. However, coping successes in both directions, such as improved prospects as well as financial improvement or security, in the interviews appears to be relevant to improving well-being during unemployment.

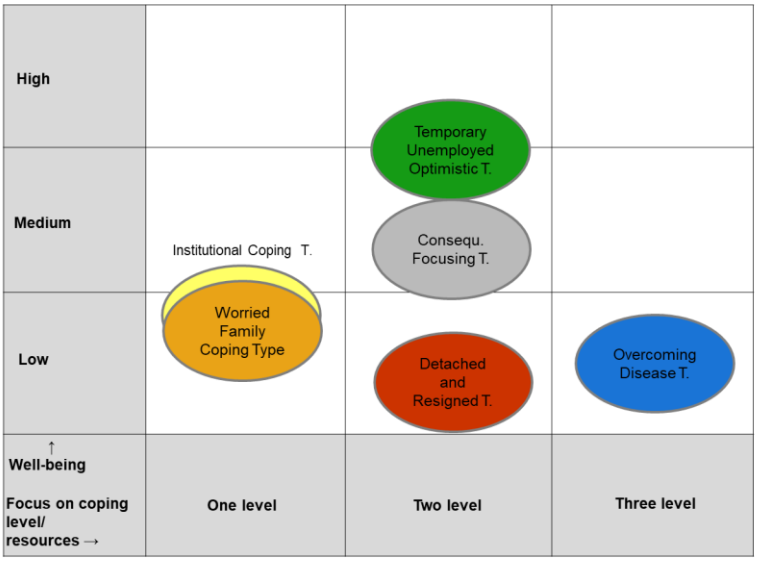
**Figure 8** Coping/support (opportunities) and well-being of the types




*Source*: Own illustration

*Notes*: Amount of coping (low, medium, high) and well-being (low, medium, high) are approximate interpretations reflecting the nature of the type.

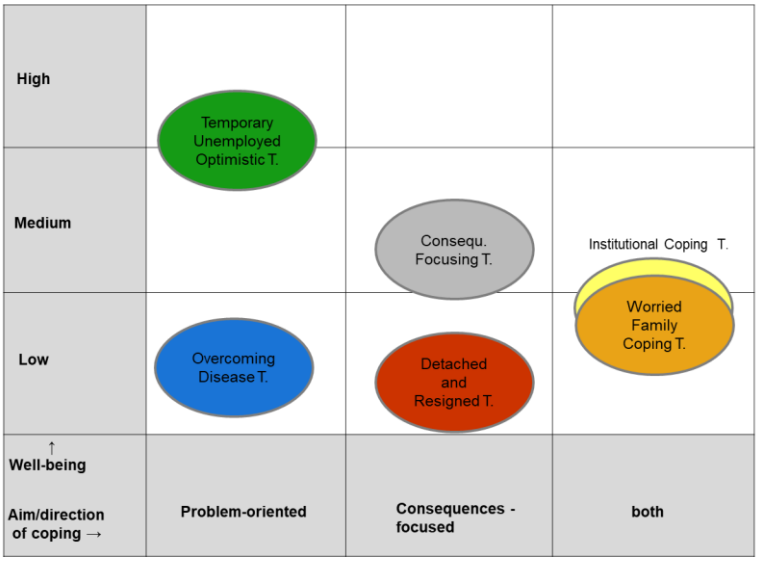
**Figure 9** Focus on coping level and well-being of the types




*Source*: Own illustration.

*Notes*: Well-being (low, medium, high) is an approximate interpretation reflecting the nature of the type.

**Figure 10** Direction/intention of coping and well-being of the types




Source: Own illustration.

Notes: Well-being (low, medium, high) is an approximate interpretation reflecting the nature of the type.

### 6.7.4 Time perspective and overview of the developed approach

An additional aspect that is important for understanding the situation of young adults regarding well-being and the developed typology is the *time perspective.* The results indicate that the experience of unemployment (and its consequences on well-being) and coping with the situation can change over time and is an ongoing process. This study and the developed typology attempt to take this process into account through retrospective interviews that have been conducted. However, depending on the exact time/moment of the interview, i.e., the time point of the individual course of unemployment, certain coping strategies or states of well-being were more prominent at the time of the interview. Nevertheless, it is possible that in the past people had a specific perception on unemployment and/or coped in a specific way, e.g., through family resources and now mainly institutionally. To further explain in a simplified way, it could be possible, that, for example, in the past one case would have been assigned to "Worried Family Coping Type", whereas later it would have been assigned to "Detached and Resigned Type". The reason for this could be, for example, that they were later in a much worse state of well-being, that previous coping strategies were not successful, that they later became eligible for state support, etc. and therefore changed their coping strategy. Or a person earlier rather tried to make ends meet (coping the consequences of unemployment) and later decided to catch

up with education/training etc. in a more long-term oriented way and would then possibly change from “Consequences Focusing Type” to “Institutional Coping Type”. It could be that a person who is currently assigned to the “Worried Family Coping Type”, but when the person is getting older and longer unemployed, the institutional coping (referring to the “Institutional Coping Type”) makes the main coping, e.g., because no family support is available anymore. For others, if the situation does not improve in the long run and they are unemployed for a long period of time, they can be assigned to the “Detached and Resigned Type”. Further, the “Overcoming Disease Type”, after having managed to improve its health, starts to find a job and uses family or institutional support for this. Of course, these are only very generalized examples of how it could change without taking into account every single characteristic of the type, such as education, but the cases show that there are definitely variations within the types in this respect.

There have been many changes over time, which were reported in the interviews. In particular young people of "Worried Family Coping Type", had to switch to institutionalized coping methods as financial support from the family was no longer possible. Or a consistently worsening situation eventually led to the perceived hopelessness of the "Detached and Resigned Type". However, it has become apparent that some individuals previously coped primarily with institutional support, e.g., unemployment benefit II, but that contact with the Federal Employment Agency or stigmatization accompanying this support became burdensome and they then decided to cope with unemployment primarily on their own (“Consequences Focusing Type”). For the developed typology, one can therefore conclude that types, could theoretically “transition” into other types over time. This shows once again how important it is to view unemployment and well-being (and coping) as a process and not as fixed states to understand the situation of young people.

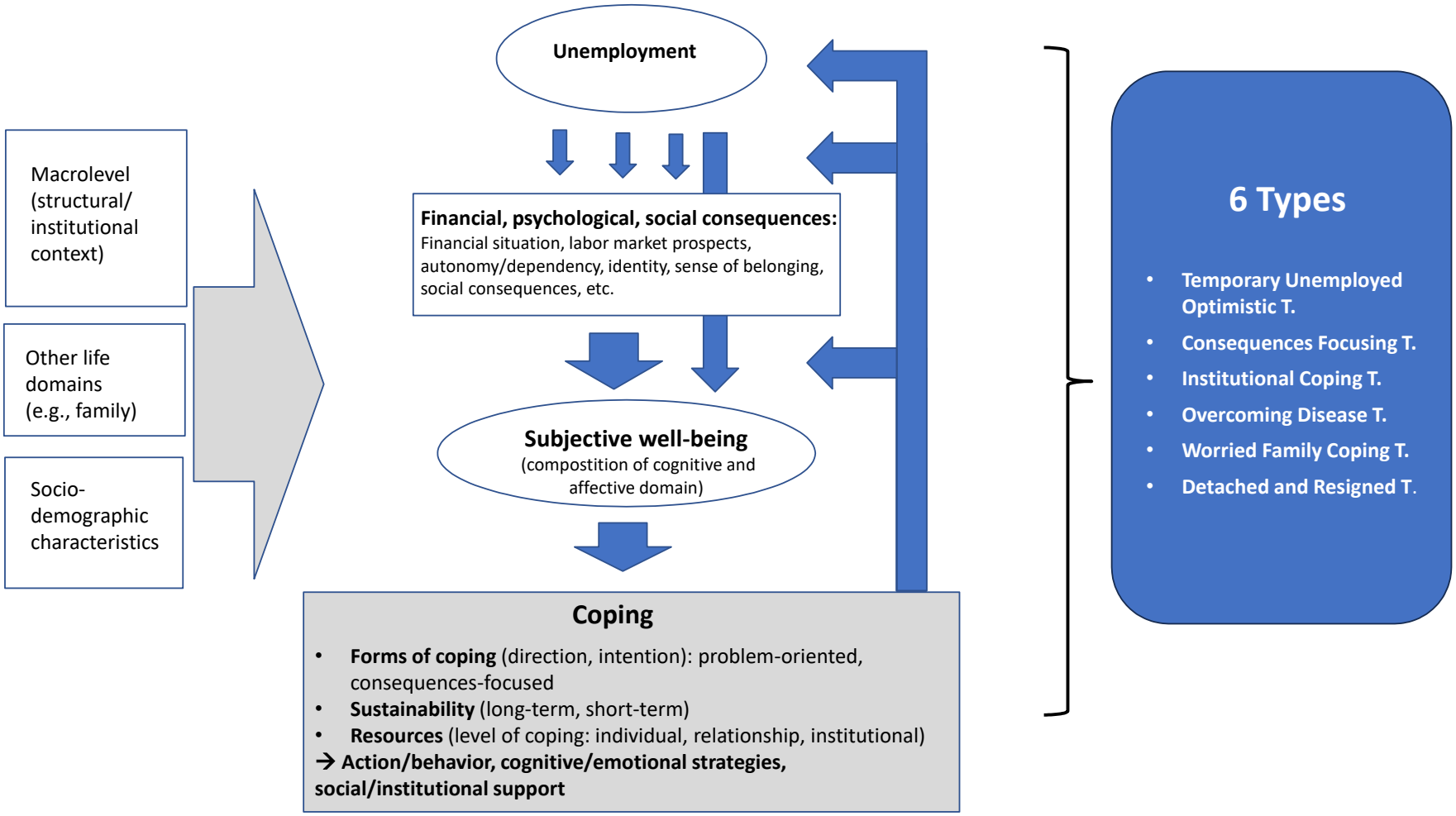
In addition to more precisely differentiating the empirical cases and highlighting certain patterns and characteristics of the types to better understand the situation of young unemployed adults in Germany, the typology could also provide an insight into certain phases of unemployment over time. However, it is important to note here, that these phases (types) do not necessarily have to occur one after the other. Young adults could only be assigned to one category during their entire period of unemployment. The “Temporary Unemployment Optimistic Type”, for example, is assumed to not transition into another type, as unemployment for them may be manageable. Overcoming unemployment can also occur in other groups of people (types). It is important to note that this typology is not a phase model (e.g., Eisenberg

& Lazarsfeld, 1938) to describe the course of unemployment. This typology is based on the empirical results of the thematic analysis and attempts to reflect the complexity of the individual situation, the perception of unemployment, and, above all, coping options and coping mechanisms. It does not attempt to describe and explain the course of unemployment within a general model; rather, it attempts to provide a holistic interpretation of the individual case. This typology can help to understand individual cases and classify them in the overall view of coping with unemployment.

In summary, the typology provides additional insights and a more precise contextualization of the previously developed themes and patterns, as well as attempting to achieve a degree of generalization regarding the heterogeneous group of unemployed young adults, in relation to their well-being. This approach has been taken to further capture the complexity of the conditions and composition of well-being during unemployment and the coping strategies associated with it, by using a grouping process to make the underlying relationships more comprehensible. The developed six types differ in terms of the manifestations of the comparison dimensions. This concerns the areas of labor market and unemployment experience and socio-demographic characteristics as well as well-being, perceived risks to well-being, and coping mechanisms, e.g., direction/goal and resources used.

Finally, Figure 11 presents an *overview* of the developed approach in this thesis and indicates the relationships that were analyzed in the thematic analysis and typology based on the empirical material. The illustration presents the analysis perspective, and the partial results achieved, while also emphasizing the complexity of the research topic. However, it should be noted that this is not a comprehensive view of all aspects of this thesis. The investigation and subsequent presentation are intended to enhance comprehension of the topic under consideration. It identifies several influences that have an impact on experiencing unemployment and thus on well-being. Furthermore, various aspects of coping strategies related to unemployment and well-being are identified in order to gain a deeper understanding of this complex issue.

**Figure 11** Overview of the research perspective and results




*Source*: Own illustration.

# 7 Discussion and conclusions

## 7.1 Main results

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the effects of unemployment on the well-being of young adults in Germany from their subjective perspective. To gain a better understanding of the situation of those affected, a qualitative research approach was followed, focusing on individual well-being and coping strategies.

Before discussing the main findings, the *background* and the *theoretical and methodological framework* (see chapters 1–4) of the thesis are briefly outlined again. Unemployment is a widespread and persistent phenomenon in many countries, which can have consequences for individuals, e.g., for their financial situation and mental health, and for society, e.g., in terms of costs for social security systems. To date, there has been a lot of national (in Germany) and international research on youth unemployment and its consequences that indicates negative consequences of unemployment on mental health and well-being, but the underlying mechanisms are not always clear. The existing and widespread theories on the impacts of unemployment on health appear important in explaining the underlying relationship but are largely limited to unemployment for the unemployed population in general. The group of young people often remains unaccounted for. In many theories, insufficient attention is paid to factors that can enhance or maintain well-being during periods of unemployment, such as coping strategies and social support. Young people in the transition from school to employment or vocational training, or from vocational training to employment, are in a special phase of life. They are often not yet fully integrated into the labor market and are particularly exposed to the risk of experiencing unemployment, which is a potential critical life event. In addition to the general consequences that can accompany unemployment, such as financial deprivation or poverty, and impacts on well-being, this early phase in the life course can have a lasting effect on individuals' future well-being and labor market situation. Young people transitioning into the labor market can have several options to shape their transitions, which is also the case when they become unemployed. The impact of unemployment on well-being can be complex as well, with many factors influencing it. However, the impact of this situation on well-being and the coping mechanisms of young people in Germany have received less attention so far.

To investigate the various facets of unemployment among young people, a broad and open approach has been chosen. The basis for this study were 45 semi-structured interviews from the context of the EXCEPT project with young people aged 18 to 30 years who were unemployed

at that time or had been unemployed before. Thematic analysis and typology construction methods were used, employing mainly an inductive research approach. However, this procedure was combined with a deductive procedure, e.g., in the analyses, in order to consider adequately prior knowledge and the context and theoretical framework (subjective well-being and unemployment context) in which the data had already been collected in the framework of the EXCEPT project. Therefore, it was a combination of bottom-up and top-down research approach.

This section highlights and discusses the main results of this thesis based on the thematic analysis and typology construction presented in chapters 5 and 6. In addition to the results of the thematic analysis, which reveal important patterns with regard to well-being and coping, six types could be developed: The "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type", the "Consequences Focusing Type", the "Institutional Coping Type", the "Overcoming Disease Type", the "Worried Family Coping Type", and the "Detached and Resigned Type". This typology represents an approach that attempts to abstract the complex relationships that exist in individual cases and thus make them more comprehensible. In the following, the results regarding well-being are discussed first (chapter 7.1.1), then results on the coping process (chapter 7.1.2), and finally further theoretical contribution and ideas are presented (chapter 7.1.3).

### 7.1.1 The well-being of young unemployed people in Germany

The findings indicate a *general negative impact of unemployment on well-being*, but this varies between the cases. At the cognitive level, the narratives reveal a *tendency towards life dissatisfaction* when talking about the unemployment situation. The analyses show a clear pattern that young people in the sample perceive unemployment problematical, e.g., due the consequences that accompany unemployment. The future perspective and opportunities, i.e., prospects regarding future employment or vocational training, also appear to be very relevant in this context. This shows that the labor market situation is very important and can determine satisfaction in the lives of young adults. Regarding the emotional level (affective level), extensive, mainly (strong) *emotions* (among others, malaise, worries, fear, feelings of shame, frustration, depression, despair, hopelessness, helplessness, inferiority, worthlessness) are present across the interviews, which negatively determine well-being. For most cases unemployment therefore is a critical life event because it can lead to a mismatch between desire

and reality in the lives of young adults (Reißig, 2010, p. 55), changes many aspects of everyday life, raises many challenges, and can be emotionally stressful (Filipp & Aymanns, 2018, p. 27).

In general, the results of this thesis are *in line with recent research on unemployment*, indicating a *negative impact on well-being* and concluding that unemployment has a causal negative effect on mental health or well-being (Gedikli et al., 2023; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 67; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999, p. 95; Paul & Moser, 2009, pp. 277–278). This thesis especially fills a gap in knowledge regarding young people (in Germany) since research often focuses on adults without a specific emphasis on young people or younger adults (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005, p. 60; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015, p. 11). Although national (for Germany) and international unemployment research indicate that unemployment of young people leads to mental health impairment (Bartelink et al., 2020; Hammarström, 1994; Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, 2006, p. 27; Paul & Moser, 2009; Reneflot & Evensen, 2014; Voßemer & Eunicke, 2015), the causal structure of different dimensions, such as economic, social, and psychological, has not been fully understood (Dietrich, 2012, p. 8, 2015, p. 25). This may be due to, among others, the complexity of interrelations (Dietrich, 2015, pp. 22–25).

Although the general picture of negative effects of unemployment on subjective health and well-being that exists in the literature on youth unemployment in Germany (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, p. 129) can be confirmed, this thesis also points to the inherent complexity and the need for a more differentiated approach, as there is a certain variation between the cases. This is demonstrated by the suggested typology, which was developed to consider the context of each case in order to identify reasons for the consequences on well-being and also to consider other relevant (moderating) factors, such as coping and support. In few cases *no or only few negative emotions* are visible regarding the situation of unemployment. The "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" has the best well-being and generally has no or only small restrictions on well-being due to unemployment, (e.g., shows even satisfaction during unemployment), compared to the five other types. People of this type also have good (vocational) educational qualifications, see the period of unemployment as a normal part of life, i.e., not problematic, and have the necessary resources to cope with, for example, financial shortages due to a lack of income. They assume that unemployment will only last for a short time, i.e., rather in the form of short period of frictional unemployment (search unemployment). In contrast, the "Detached and Resigned Type", with a very poor sense of well-being due to, among other things, high levels of dissatisfaction with the situation and feelings of despair, hopelessness, anxiety, and existential fear, shows a very problematic situation regarding

unemployment. The type is characterized by long-term unemployment experience and bad prospects, among others, due to lower education and missing qualifications necessary for the labor market. Gaining a foothold in the German labor market and finding a job can be challenging, especially without the required professional qualifications, in particular vocational education (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011, p. 493; Scherer & Kogan, 2004, p. 139). In Germany vocational training is crucial to avoid unemployment and establish oneself in the labor market in Germany (Blossfeld & Stockmann, 1998, pp. 10–14).

In this thesis comprehensive potential *(risk) factors for the state of well-being during unemployment* at different levels are identified from interviewees narratives. Among others, financial insecurities or problems, lack of/poor (labor market) prospects, lack of autonomy (dependency on others), lack of tasks/structure in daily life, lack of identity, restricted self-fulfillment, lack of sense of belonging, stressful contact with the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter, can be highlighted appearing from interviews. They can be present separately or cumulatively, in sometimes complex relationships, mediating or moderating, regarding the effect of unemployment on well-being and therefore can affect well-being in very different ways. This is also visible in different types of the typology. Overall, the results indicate the high individual meaning of work for well-being, which is consistent with previous research finding that young people in Germany show strong work orientation, and that employment is relevant for well-being (Kieselbach & Beelmann, 2000, p. 129). The findings from the young unemployed people's perspectives reveal that especially the financial consequences of unemployment are one of the most relevant factors for impaired well-being and can lead to a perceived sense of insecurity and burden in daily life. This is also consistent with previous research from Germany regarding youth unemployment (Schels, 2007) and suggests that the manifest function of work (Jahoda, 1981, 1982) can be one of the most important functions for young people (Roosmaa et al., 2021, pp. 159–160). There is a wide range of other potential factors determining well-being during unemployment, some of which may be connected to the financial situation. For example, dependency on parents or public income support is very stressful for many of the young people in the sample. This is visible across all developed types but varies. This dependency can also be problematic for young people during becoming adult or other biographical transitions such as parenthood. Literature shows, that family support can be an obstacle for becoming adult in regard to financial independence (Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 32) and the dependency on parents can be prolonged during unemployment (Kieselbach, 1983, p. 6). Also young adults' housing autonomy or (decision) moving out of the parental home can be affected due to unemployment (Bertolini, Hofäcker, & Torrioni, 2018; Jacob

& Kleinert, 2008; Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 32; Nilsson & Strandh, 1999). It is apparent in this thesis, that unemployment can have a detrimental effect on people's well-being if they are unable to achieve their life goals, such as financial independence or housing autonomy.

This study also shows that *identity* issues, which have been discussed as a possible factor for impaired well-being or health during unemployed (Jahoda, 1981, 1982), are also apparent in young people. It is also particularly evident in statements concerning feelings of inferiority, usefulness or worthlessness, among others, in this study similar to earlier qualitative research on youth unemployment in Germany (Kieselbach et al., 2000, p. 33). In this thesis, this is especially true for people who are dependent on external assistance. The shame associated with worklessness in young age, which is indicted in the literature (Björklund et al., 2015), also appears stressful and impairs identity in this study.

A socially particularly relevant factor for impaired well-being in previous qualitative studies on youth unemployment in Germany (Grimmer, 2016; Kieselbach et al., 2000; Schlee et al., 2021), and also in the current one, is the *stigmatization* experienced, especially by the long-term unemployed (visible in "Institutional Coping Type", "Worried Family Coping Type", "Detached and Resigned Type"). They are blamed for being lazy people who are unwilling to work, which is very hurtful. However, the stigmatization of young unemployed people may depend on the national context. For example by comparing the narratives of unemployed young people from Italy and Germany, it became clear that in Germany in particular there are strong signs of stigmatization, whereas in Italy joblessness is more likely to be seen as a common fate due to the high proportion of this generation affected by unemployment (Schlee et al., 2021).

In addition, *social isolation* during unemployment can appear different between the countries because of cultural (family) contexts (Gallie, 1999; Gallie et al., 2003). Various studies point out that the isolation during unemployment poses a risk to mental health (Hammarström & Janlert, 1997; Kieselbach, 1983, pp. 5–7). However, social isolation does not play a role in the young people's narratives in this study. While their social networks and friendships may change in some cases during unemployment, they generally continue to have contact with family and friends and receive various forms of support, such as housing, emotional support, or counseling. With her qualitative research approach, Grimmer (2016, p. 64) also showed that long-term unemployment among young people in Germany does not automatically lead to social isolation, as those affected have social contacts and try to use their social capital during unemployment.

Regarding *gender*, no clear differences were found in the experience of unemployment and the state of well-being. Within the typology the overall distribution of cases regarding types is small and it could only be a random phenomenon. One possible explanation, however, that men predominate in the type with overall worst well-being ("Detached and Resigned Type") could be that women could enter the possible substitute role of mother and housewife (Forret et al., 2010, p. 650) and are therefore more likely to be found there than in the labor market or in long-term unemployment. Previous research shows that unemployment among young adults in Germany has a greater negative impact on men's well-being than on women's well-being. For men, work can have a stronger personal value (Schels, 2007). In this regard, men can be more mentally burdened by unemployment due to the male breadwinner role (De Witte, 1999, p. 161). However, young adults are a special group owing to their phase in life. For example, most people in the sample have not become parents or started a family yet. As a coping strategy to buffer their well-being or to overcome unemployment, etc., alternative roles, such as family roles, are not primarily present (available) and/or the employment is given a high individual, personal meaning for women and men. In this respect, the study also shows that mothers and fathers generally mention the financial importance of work especially to be able to afford something for their child and to provide a good life. This is very relevant and plays a role in how one feels in this situation or how stressful it is.

The typology also takes into account the *heterogeneity of unemployment experiences*, i.e., what unemployment can be and what transitions can look like. Regarding the duration of the unemployment period and recurring periods of unemployment, the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" tends to have only a short period of unemployment, mainly single experience without repetition. People of this type are among the older ones and have a good education (vocational education), thus are transitioning from education/university graduation to the labor market or have been unemployed for a short period of time due to job loss, e.g., the end of a temporary employment contract. Besides, they have good prospects for the future and perceive the opportunity to cope well with the consequences of unemployment as well as with unemployment itself. They have no, or only a small impairment of their well-being. In contrast, those who are particularly affected by restricted well-being tend to have long-term unemployment or recurring periods of unemployment over several years. Here, too, the different situations of unemployment become clear among young people. For example, in many cases of the "Institutional Coping Type", the experience is more like a search for unemployment, a process of waiting, a transitional phase (from school to vocational training), but it can also be, in the case of a longer period of unemployment, a recurrent process of not

being able to gain a foothold in the labor market. The latter experience is perceived very stressful, and frustration and worries can appear. However, a permanent state of long-term unemployment (several years of being unemployed), sometimes interrupted by small working periods, is particularly present in the "Detached and Resigned Type". Compared to other types, it has the lowest well-being, determined by dissatisfaction and emotions such as hopelessness, despair, inferiority and anxiety. This type shows severe impacts of unemployment on all levels, from financial problems to psychological consequences. The "Worried Family Coping Type" primarily refers to the younger people in the sample, who are still in the transition phase from school to work or from school to training but who also have experienced some months or years of unemployment. Their well-being is also strongly impaired. The "Overcoming Disease Type" represents in particular people who are inactive due to illness. They also show a clear decline in well-being due to the lack of work. People assigned to the "Consequences Focusing Type" can be seen as a special group, as they have unemployment experience for several months, but are nevertheless employed on a marginal employment basis and try to get by with small jobs. These people may or may not be officially registered as unemployed in order to cope with the consequences on their own. They show a varying picture of well-being.

In general, it can be seen that the people in the sample are in different situations of unemployment, e.g., in a phase of job loss, others in a transitional phase (more of a search phase), (permanent state of) long-term unemployment or in a state of inactivity due to illness. It is visible that all experiences can have an impact on well-being, but the impact varies from case to case.

Overall, it is apparent that the *subjective perspective* plays a crucial role. Limiting the analysis to objective indicators such as unemployment status or income (Veenhoven, 2007, pp. 214–216; Voukelatou et al., 2021) is not sufficient. Unemployment and the loss of income can be objectively regarded as a precarious situation, but this objectively precarious situation could not be perceived as negative or problematic, and it generally also could have little impact on subjective well-being. In this regard it is beneficial to examine the individual meaning of work in the lives of young adults to clarify the role of unemployment in their lives. Although an open research approach has been used to investigate well-being, Diener's approach to subjective well-being with its two dimensions (affective and cognitive level) (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999) turned out to be useful and appropriate during the analysis process to understand various relevant facets and thus the overall well-being. It was found to be important to consider the individual situation of unemployment in broader context. Generally, it is visible that the causes

for the subjective well-being or an impairment in well-being are complex and factors from different life domains can be important to consider (Argyle & Martin, 1991). Risk factors for one's state of subjective well-being, especially concerning life satisfaction, can derive from the individual's unemployment and its consequences, but also from private domain, e.g., family problems. The same (multicausality) applies to positive aspects of the family domain that can influence well-being in a positive way, despite unemployment. This sometimes intermingles and was difficult to distinguish during the interviews. A closer look whether this relates to the private domain or to work and what role it plays in overall well-being was crucial in some cases. However, in general, it is apparent that the unemployment situation is the decisive factor for (impaired) well-being across the interviews. The thesis focused on the consequences of unemployment on overall well-being.

### 7.1.2 The coping process

The results indicate that coping mechanisms and support opportunities are important (moderating) factors for young people's well-being during unemployment. Although the coping processes and mechanisms appear *individual* and *complex*, the interviews demonstrate that they can generally help to reduce the impact on well-being or improve it.

The analyses reveal that coping is mainly addressed as a *combination of different* coping levels, such as the individual level, the social relationship level, and the institutional level. They represent the resources that are used in the coping process. In addition, coping mechanisms can vary, e.g., regarding *intention* (problem-oriented or consequences-focused), *sustainability* (long-term or short-term), and the implementation can be with behavior/action, or psychological mechanisms. In general, it can be stated that all people in the sample are coping in some way with unemployment and/or its consequences as they perceive it as a stressful situation (e.g., Lazarus, 1966) and/or a state that needs to be changed. However, differences in coping strategies among young unemployed individuals have been identified.

Regarding the coping intention the narratives show that in general all developed types of the typology show both directions, i.e., aim for coping the unemployment directly (*problem-oriented*) and the consequences on well-being (*consequences-focused*). However, there are people who mainly cope with the consequences in the short-term ("Consequences Focusing Type", "Detached and Resigned Type") but also people who mainly try to cope with the cause (find a job/vocational training place) and gain a foothold in the labor market in the long-term (e.g., "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type"). The "Worried Family Coping Type" and

the “Institutional Coping Type” use both directions, without specific focus. Coping mechanisms for dealing with unemployment (problem-oriented) can mostly be interpreted as *long-term strategies*, because a job remedies the causes of limited well-being and therefore can improve the well-being permanently when labor market integration is achieved. Strategies to reduce or minimize existing negative experiences (psychological, financial) or to improve or buffer well-being (consequences-focused) can mostly be seen as *short-term strategies*, because if the cause is not remedied, one will have to live with the consequences and to mitigate them.

There are various reasons as to why people mainly follow one direction. The “Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type” is concerned with finding work (again) quickly. People of this type are either financially secure, e.g., due to their own savings, or can fall back on family support, which is why the consequences, which are not perceived as problematic, do not play a major role for them. They also have the opportunity to find a new job and fully integrate into the labor market thanks to their education. In contrast, the “Detached and Resigned Type” has major problems with the consequences, both materially and psychologically, which is why they initially try to minimize or avoid the consequences on well-being. They are also characterized by hopelessness and sometimes no longer believe that they will ever be able to gain a foothold in the labor market. The “Consequences Focusing Type” initially concentrates on the consequences. That means, people of this type focus on coping with the situation resulting from unemployment. They sometimes do not even have ambitions to gain a foothold in the labor market in the long term. Others, such as the “Institutional Coping Type” and the “Worried Family Coping Type”, find themselves in a situation that is subjectively perceived as uncertain and problematic. Therefore, they try to do both ways, if possible, to maintain or improve well-being. They still need and aim to fully integrate into the labor market in the future. A special case in the developed typology, is the “Overcoming Disease Type”, whose primary goal is to improve their health because it is the reason for their current unemployment period. Regarding the coping intention in individual cases, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between single mechanisms that tackle poor well-being and mechanisms that tackle unemployment, which often led to poor well-being because of a strong overlap of both. With respect to implementation, the narratives show, that most interviewees use both psychological mechanisms and behaviors/actions as strategies to reach their coping aim.

Coping at the *individual level* appears as own behaviors/actions, cognitive mechanisms, and/or emotional strategies. The individual efforts are very important in coping with unemployment as such, whereas psychological mechanisms appear more in coping consequences on well-

being, at the emotional and cognitive level. This area has turned out to be very complex in the analyses, especially the strategies at the psychological level, which are very closely interrelated. All types show coping at the individual level, but the specific mechanisms vary, as does the intensity of focus. Most individuals seek employment or vocational training, except for those who have given up or are inactive due to illness. The "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type", for example, puts in a lot of effort to find a job and remains confident and optimistic. On the other hand, the "Detached and Resigned Type", for example, tries to live frugally and improve their mental well-being through resignation or by suppressing thoughts about their insecure situation. The "Consequences Focusing Type" concentrates on individual strategies because gaining autonomy, both financially and psychologically, is crucial for this type. The "Overcoming Disease Type" aims to improve health situations through individual efforts.

*Social relationship level coping* is broadly used in the interviews and means to fall back on or accept social support. The *resources from one's own social network* (own social environment) are used to combat or overcome unemployment (problem-oriented), or to improve the possible reduced well-being or to avert negative consequences on well-being (consequences-focused). Across the interviews, friends tend to provide rather companionship, information support, and a sense of belonging whereas most material and financial support received comes from the family of origin, partners, and close friends. The results show that the younger people tend to receive more support from their families than the older people in the sample. This is especially visible in the narratives from people of the "Worried Family Coping Type". Due to their age and missing employment, they often still live at the parental home. If social support is available it can buffer the negative effect of unemployment on health in young people (Hammarström, 1994). However, the analyses show that the success of the social support mechanisms in general depends largely on a variety of factors, including the "quality" of the individual's social network and related available resources. The specific family situation, e.g., education and incomeof parents (Kieselbach et al., 2000, pp. 31–33) and therefore the economic situation in the family (Grimmer, 2016, p. 62) can be important in terms of social support opportunities. All interviewees use some form of social support, especially from close social relationships (nuclear family, partners, or good friends). Individuals who have access to one or more resources generally experience better well-being, although not necessarily good well-being, compared to those who lack social support from their network. This, like other research, shows how important the social environment and the resources are for the perception and coping with the situation in (long-term) unemployment in Germany (Beelmann, 2003, pp. 201, 227). Social support can act as a protective factor and provide a backup. Using the resources of one's own

social network appears to be very important in the sample, especially as a financial/material backup, as a safety net (Manzoni & Gebel, 2023), and as emotional and informational source. Qualitative research indicates that social support can be especially helpful against emotional distress (Blustein et al., 2013, p. 263), which is also evident here in this study. The general importance of social support for the young unemployed is apparent across Europe, albeit with different meanings and support resources in different countries (Kieselbach et al., 2000, pp. 31–33). The EXCEPT project showed across different countries that young people reported benefiting from their own social network, especially the nuclear family during unemployment and job insecurity (Meo et al., 2021). However, in Italy for example, the family seems to have a higher priority in terms of coping, but in Germany the family and the social network are also important giving emotional support and advice or assistance in financial emergencies (Meo et al., 2021; Schlee et al., 2021). The in-depth analyses in this thesis indicate that social support is the preferred option. If social support is insufficient, e.g., due to long-term unemployment, not available (anymore), or not wanted (anymore), institutional support in the form of financial assistance seems to be used.

The *institutional level strategies* – actively seeking support from public institutions and the state – appear to be very relevant for individual coping processes in this sample. However, this varies strongly across the cases. Especially long-term unemployed people and people who are unable to cope on their own or with social support benefit in particular. It can also be distinguished between actively coping with unemployment (problem-oriented) or coping with the (financial) consequences of unemployment. For this, among others, ALMPs, e.g., specific qualification measures, and PLMPs, mainly unemployment benefits II, are used but are appraised differently. Generally, institutional support is appreciated, especially in form of financial support (unemployment benefits) to mitigate financial hardships during unemployment. However, it can be accompanied by negative impacts on well-being as well.

Overall, the interviews suggest that for young people with ALMP experience it sometimes is not possible to report name or category of the specific measures. Then they only state what the content and/or who the specific provider is. This could be due to the many different measures and variations of programs in Germany (Dietrich, 2001, pp. 432–434), which have also changed over the last years (Geyer, 2022, pp. 145–174). However, some pattern from the interviews can be shown: Those measures which include a job-related activity are rated particularly positively, as are those with which qualifications and certificates can be acquired, which act as a positive signal to employers on the labor market. In addition, personal prospects and well-being may be

enhanced due to participation from the young people's perspectives. Practical activities and internships are also helpful in gaining orientation and possibly getting a foot in the door. Successes through application training are also observable in some cases. In general, measures that improve labor market prospects are considered beneficial for well-being (Behle, 2007). Conversely, measures that are not seen as useful tend to be rated as unhelpful and can even worsen well-being. In certain cases, the perceived lack of support, pressure from certain measures, and poor treatment by employment agency staff play a significant role. Previous research in Germany about youth unemployment also points out that support is perceived insufficient and in some cases people do not feel treated fairly and respectfully (Shore & Tosun, 2019, pp. 35–36). Moreover, in this study people reported that some interventions are not tailored to their individual needs and therefore are even seen as an obstacle to improving their individual situation (and thus their well-being).

Previous research shows a mixed picture regarding the role of PLMPs and ALMPs in the context of well-being during unemployment. While unemployment benefits can significantly mitigate the impact on well-being, ALMPs show a negative effect on well-being. Although ALMPs imply the idea that they compensate for functions of work and improve job skills, the potential force to attend such measures and/or a mismatch in fit can also have a negative effect and can lead to lower their well-being (Voßemer et al., 2018, pp. 1254–1255). Wulfgramm (2014) also indicates a moderating effect on life satisfaction regarding generous unemployment benefits, but no robust moderating effects of ALMPs (Wulfgramm, 2014). The observations from the interviews of this thesis can confirm and/or explain the relationships and differences in institutional support. The policies were experienced differently by the interviewees. Financial shortcomings, identified as one of the most important risk factors in this study, can be addressed in particular through financial support, mainly unemployment benefit II. However, the success of active labor market policies (ALMPs) in improving well-being depends largely on the individuals' ability to use these measures to improve their situation, e.g., to improve prospects (in finding a vocational training or an employment). Compulsory measures that are not adapted to their needs can lead to an impaired well-being and do not contribute to improving it. Qualitative interviews in Bulgaria, Estonia, Italy, and Poland, also show that experiences with policies were problematic. These issues included, among others, the treatment of young people and the lack of suitability for individual needs (Ricucci et al., 2021, pp. 287–289). The often negatively perceived interaction and contact (unfair treatment, pressure, arbitrariness, etc.) with the institutions of the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter also proved to be relevant on how unemployment is perceived in this study.

In conclusion, differences and similarities can be identified among coping resources for young adults. In terms of the availability and focus of individual resources, it can be seen, for example, that people of the "Temporary Unemployed Optimistic Type" mostly cope by using their own resources and those of their parents or partner, while the "Detached and Resigned Type" or the "Institutional Coping Type" are, for example, likely to deal with the situation institutionally, using unemployment benefits (mostly unemployment benefits II) and/or ALMPs or for example food banks, because social support is not sufficiently available. Stronger mixed forms are also possible among the types (e.g., "Consequences Focusing Type", "Overcoming Disease Type"). Overall, people, across all types, attempt to use basically all forms of coping resources (individual level, social relationship level, institutional level). Often people do not use either one or the other form of resources, but rather a mixture of different coping mechanisms. However, some types focus more on a specific resource or on a combination of resources, and aim more at one thing, for example, finding a new job and coping with the consequences.

### 7.1.3 Theoretical contribution

Although it has not been the intention to develop a full theory in this thesis, some (brief) theoretical considerations can be drawn, since a typology can be seen as an important part in the theory building process (Kluge, 1999, pp. 43–51). In addition to the above discussions on findings from existing research and theory, further reflections can be addressed based on the present research approach.

There are widespread theories that attempt to explain the relationship between unemployment and health through different mechanisms (see chapter 2). Classical theories about unemployment/work and health provide, among other things, insights into the functions of work (Jahoda, 1981, 1982, 1983), such as the financial function of making a living, which strongly influences well-being, as well as latent functions that affect well-being, such as time structure, social relationships/contacts, meaningful activity, status, or identity. Similarly, the vitamin analogy model (Warr, 1987b, 2008) on employment can provide necessary information about the need for employment and shifts the focus more on the environmental context. Other theoretical approaches, such as the agency restriction model (Fryer, 1986; Fryer & Payne, 1984) or the incongruence approach (Paul & Moser, 2006), also refer to, for example, reduced opportunities for action or unachieved goals, which can have a negative impact on well-being. The social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) can be referred to the meaning of work in relation to the individuals' own identity. As shown in this thesis, the functions and

subjective meanings of employment also appear important for the well-being of young unemployed people, especially concerning the financial situation, but also the social and psychological functions. Identity through work, the ability to act, and the ability to achieve individual goals play important roles. Young people place a high value on autonomy and identity.

As shown, certain elements and explanations of the theories can be generally applied to the well-being of young unemployed people. However, the well-being of individuals during unemployment depends on various factors, and the mechanisms can vary between cases. This *complexity* is captured (in parts) in the developed typology. It is crucial to pay attention to individual cases and consider the entire context (social, institutional) when addressing well-being and coping. This is especially important for understanding the situation and making appropriate offers.

It can also be beneficial to adopt *a broader view* regarding the concept of youth unemployment. The thesis takes into account various aspects and does not only look at the long-term unemployed nor only at the officially registered unemployed. It also considers the existence of transition phases, search phases, inactive phases, and other related situations. Thus, it provides an opportunity to examine different life circumstances of young people. The literature presents a diverse picture of youth unemployment (Dietrich, 2012). This study shed light on different situations on the one hand, and on the other hand tries to include these in one approach. Classic theories do not describe unemployment among young people transitioning from school to work. Instead, these models mostly consider unemployment as the actual loss of a job. This could be an important difference regarding the perception of the situation. However, this thesis also shows similar important functions are missing for them in this transition, which can impair their well-being. These functions, such as those previously provided by schools (e.g., structure, identity) or the family (e.g., financial security), are now lacking because they cannot be acquired through work.

The situation of unemployment should be viewed *holistically*, and relevant coping and support structures that help to understand the effects on well-being should be included as the underlying processes are too complex and individual. Traditional theoretical approaches concerning unemployment tend to be insufficient in this regard. In theories of unemployment/employment (e.g., Fryer, 1986; Jahoda, 1981, 1982, 1983; Warr, 2008), the coping/support situation is not (sufficiently) taken into account. Admittedly, the life-facet model (McKee-Ryan & Kinicki, 2002) addresses job loss and coping, but it does not focus on young people in transition from

school to work (for whom job loss may not apply). Although young people experience a change in status, some come out of school and become unemployed without having worked before. Other theories of coping (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) are more general and relate to critical life events or stressful events in general. However, they were valuable for this approach on unemployment and helped to understand the situation of young people. The developed approach in this thesis is therefore oriented on previous approaches. It involves the identification of the reasons for impaired well-being as well as the consequences of well-being. It further addresses the direction/function of coping and highlights how the coping process is done. The approach refers to the resources used, e.g., one's own resources as well as those of the social network or institutions. It also shows where coping mechanisms that help to improve well-being or avert negative consequences are implemented: at the psychological level or in terms of behavior/action.

Theories about *social support and resources* (e.g., Pearlin & Aneshensel, 1986) are useful for understanding how individuals cope with unemployment. In this study, in addition to social support, e.g., from families, institutional support and a combination of different resources could be considered. It turns out that social support and institutional support are often used together and are relevant for young people in Germany.

Furthermore, the approach taken here shows how important it is to consider the *process perspective*. The present study indicates a tendency towards a change in well-being over the period of (long-term) unemployment, however it is not automatically in the form of specific phases as in previous considerations (Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938). The different existing models and assumptions in this respect have been criticized many times (Ezzy, 1993, pp. 43–44).

There are some indications here that the negative influence on well-being increases depending on the *duration of the unemployment period*, e.g., in the "Detached and Resigned Type", and the "Temporary Unemployment Optimistic Type". Yet, the process appears to be more complex, with a variety of influencing factors, including the individual evaluation of the situation and the coping and support options. In this respect, the developed typology could also provide insights into different phases of unemployment and/or into possible transitions from one type to another during long-term unemployment. It is not intended to represent a phase or stage model but rather to reflect the individuality and heterogeneity of unemployment situations in the context of well-being and coping as well as the process involved (Ezzy, 1993, pp. 43–44). As previously mentioned, an individual's economic situation may change during a period

of unemployment. People may also change their coping mechanisms, such as utilizing other resources or receiving new support. Additionally, the situation itself may be perceived differently and can either worsen or improve. For example, new perspectives may be achieved through certain measures or experience in the labor market. There is a clear, but not exclusive, negative relationship between the duration of unemployment and well-being. The role of coping and support options is also relevant in this context. However, it is not apparent that the well-being of the long-term unemployed has increased substantially over time. Among other reasons, young people are at the beginning of their lives and may have many life goals, such as starting a family or achieving professional success. Due to a lack of work and prospects, these goals may not be achievable at the present or in the future, which severely reduces their well-being (Paul, Vastamäki, & Moser, 2016).

In summary, this approach contributes to the research field by looking at the complex issue of youth unemployment and its consequences for well-being from the perspective of the young people concerned, by identifying reasons why well-being may be limited, and by clarifying the role that coping or the coping process and the associated support options or resources from family and friends as well as from the state (e.g., unemployment benefits, ALMPs) play for well-being during the experience of unemployment.

## 7.2 Methods reflection

On the basis of a very broad and multidimensional interview approach, the EXCEPT project has examined different areas of employment (e.g., unemployment) and various consequences of exclusion from the labor market in relation to social exclusion, both as current experiences and retrospectively. Therefore, the interviews have provided a good basis for this thesis' research interest on the consequences on unemployment on well-being. Although the EXCEPT project was based on a framework related to labor market insecurity/exclusion and social exclusion, a more *open approach* to the analysis in this thesis allowed new areas to be explored, particularly regarding the coping process. Being part of the EXCEPT project, I had conducted and analyzed all the interviews myself, so I was already familiar with them. This occurred advantageousness for a further and more in-depth analysis. Thus, by considering the overall context of the interviews (i.e., the entire interview) during coding, it was possible to avoid misinterpretation, knowing the overall context of each interviewee's situation. The context of the interviews, i.e., the complete interview, was of crucial importance for the interpretation. Moreover, having conducted all the interviews and worked with the interview transcripts

beforehand could have been an advantage when it comes to understanding the meaning of the texts. At the same time, of course, there was still the risk of not being open enough, i.e., open to new and unexpected details during the process, which is a main characteristic of qualitative social research (Lamnek & Krell, 2016, pp. 33–34; Mey & Ruppel, 2018, p. 209). However, I tried to minimize it by being aware of this risk and constantly reflecting, as well as applying a very conscious, step-by-step analysis procedure when implementing the new coding of all interviews. In addition, discussions and reflections on the procedure and consultation with supervisors and other researchers, e.g., with a working group with other doctoral students from sociology and other scientific subjects, also appeared to be of great benefit in this regard. Again, it should be noted that this was an extended analysis rather than a completely new secondary data analysis. I had conducted the interviews and had already analyzed the data for other research questions that also had a certain overlap with the present research questions for this study.

The *analysis consisted of two parts*, and therefore the corresponding results were twofold. Thematic analysis was used to gain insight into the situation of young unemployed people through their subjective statements. The aim was to identify patterns in their experiences with unemployment, their well-being, and their coping processes. Based on the comparative dimensions identified in the preliminary work of the thematic analysis, a typology of young people and their well-being and coping strategies during unemployment was also developed. The results of the thematic analysis and typology should be interpreted as overall findings. Both approaches had different focuses, but they both contribute to understanding the situation of unemployed young adults in Germany and therefore complement each other. The thematic analysis showed how people in the sample, i.e., unemployed young adults in Germany, perceive and feel about their situation in terms of well-being and how they deal with it. However, the complexity of relationships and the considerable variation due to the individuality of coping required further, deeper interpretation. A typology was the next step in trying to capture and reduce this complexity of the processes related to unemployment and well-being (including support and coping processes) in the individual cases. By forming types based on previously developed relevant patterns and comparative dimensions, the typology tried to kind of generalize the situation of the unemployed (Kelle & Kluge, 2010). These types can additionally help to better understand the young people's situation and make more concrete statements about specific groups of young people with different experiences of unemployment.

Further aspects can be discussed regarding *data collection.* The EXCEPT project interview design and the use of a common guide for all countries meant that compromises had to be made in order to allow for comparative studies. However, this does not necessarily imply that the quality of the interviews was limited. Although a guideline had been created with specific topics and areas, it was applied in an open and flexible manner. Despite its structured and rigid appearance, care was taken to ensure proper implementation, allowing for the inclusion of new and previously unconsidered aspects. The interviewees' assignments of meaning to certain topics could be addressed appropriately.

A similar conclusion can be drawn about the *sampling procedure*. On the one hand, a structured and deliberate approach had made it possible to obtain suitable interview participants (in EXCEPT) for all countries. Nevertheless, the process was implemented openly, and adjustments were made. In retrospect, however, certain groups could have been included in the sample to a greater extent, especially when looking at the group of unemployed people. For instance, in retrospect it would have been interesting to interview more homeless people, as this group shows a high level of insecurity and limited well-being in the context of unemployment. Additionally, interviewing more inactive individuals, particularly those not seeking employment, would have provided further insight, into different experiences with unemployment. It would have also been useful to conduct more interviews with individuals from (different) federal states in Germany, to consider more different geographical contexts in Germany, such as the north of Germany. In addition, other migrant backgrounds, such as refugees, would be interesting to include. They are part of the society and represent a special group with particular challenges in terms of education and labor market integration (Edele et al., 2021; Struck, 2019). Although they can catch up to other new migrants after few years regarding language knowledge, they know less of their new country's language in the first years (Kosyakova et al., 2022, p. 1007). An additional focus on young families would also be interesting because of their specific situation in life and responsibility for their children, which appeared to be additionally stressful in the interviews. Further interviews with people with the mentioned characteristics would have provided a more qualitative representation of the broad study group (Kelle & Kluge, 2010, pp. 54–55). However, in this study recruiting NEETs, e.g., regarding the inactive group, was challenging, because they mostly could not be contacted through gatekeepers. Access to this group was rather achieved via notices and online postings. In addition, it must be mentioned that the EXCEPT project also investigated other people, e.g., temporary employed, and so a broader field had to be covered in the sample. During the data collection, the specifications of the project were fulfilled, and it was not necessary to conduct

further interviews. The procedure based on a combination of a sampling plan and content/informational saturation. It must also be noted that I conducted five more interviews, which were included in the analyses of the thesis. These were another five unemployed people, including one academic person who had already known that he would be unemployed in the future since he voluntarily decided to quit his job. These five cases also provided further insights into the topic of the different forms of unemployment, i.e., the heterogeneity of the young unemployed. In general, the very extensive sampling in EXCEPT has provided valuable in-depth insights into young people's unemployment and their well-being. In general, it is also worth mentioning that recruiting and conducting the interviews involved a great deal of effort as I collected all the data by myself, and interviews were conducted in several federal states in Germany. I was also reliant on local support (support onsite) and then had to decide who would be included in the sample and who would not. Overall, the research benefited greatly from the support of a wide range of local institutions, and it would not have been possible to implement the data collection in this way without it. In retrospect, however, sometimes it became apparent that a few interviewees from certain measures were rather similar, e.g., in terms of age and level of education what could have been considered more carefully. All in all, however, it can be said that the sampling plan served as an orientation due to its flexible handling and thus there was always the possibility to react and include further interesting and for the research interest relevant cases.

## 7.3 Limitations of the results and future research

This thesis aimed to give an insight into the situation of young people in Germany with focus on the perspective of those affected. As this was a qualitative research approach, a *generalization* in form of statistical inference was not possible, but also not intended. A kind of generalization was achieved with the case comparisons during the thematic analysis and the typology, but these results are, nevertheless, linked to the context of the underlying data (Kelle & Kluge, 2010). The results should therefore be seen more as an insight into the research topic than as generally applicable to all young unemployed people in Germany. There may be additional or diverse experiences with unemployment or well-being that have not been discovered in this study. However, the heterogeneity of the sample in terms of the (socio-demographic) characteristics of the participants (including "extreme" cases, such as very short or long unemployment periods, university graduates or people without a school-leaving qualification, age 18 or 30) and the comparative analyses have revealed patterns that may be

applicable in general, not only in the present sample. Nevertheless, further research is needed in this area, including qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research, to test and further examine the relationships and underlying mechanisms in well-being and coping processes in Germany.

Although the *data was collected in the context of the EXCEPT project* with a slightly different focus of research interest, the topics and aspects relevant to the research interest of this thesis are included in the interviews. This is due to the broad scope and openness of the project. However, it cannot be ruled out that certain topics and questions in the interviews would have been asked or explored differently if the data collected for the thesis had been tailored to the topic of the thesis. This must be considered when interpreting the data. That means, the context of the EXCEPT project must be taken into account when considering the results, as the framing of the data and the procedure originate from there.

Although insights and relevant findings have been gained, the field remains complex and there are *open questions for future research.* There is still the question as to how the young people's situation has developed since then. This study has also provided a retrospective insight into the young people's past experiences, but of course it remains unclear, for example, how the individual process of coping has continued. For example, longer observation during the process of unemployment or after potentially overcoming unemployment could provide further insights into potential changes over time about well-being and the coping process. Nevertheless, it was possible to include a retrospective by interviewing individuals with past experiences of unemployment, which could help to identify and investigate in-depth some successful strategies. Most of the young people in the sample had been still in the coping process and too few have already successfully reached employment or vocational training at the time of the interview. However, for example, improvements in well-being (as well as averting negative consequences on well-being) or perceived employment prospects during the unemployment period could indeed be identified in the interviews.

Nonetheless, further investigation into the longitudinal view of situations after returning to or reaching employment, including the role of the type of employment (temporary or permanent), or vocational training would be valuable regarding the individual well-being and health (see also Gebel & Voßemer, 2014). A *follow-up* study with the participants of this research would be beneficial, as several years have passed since the original study was conducted. This would fit in with longitudinal life course research and contribute to investigating the impact of previous unemployment on the future well-being or employment career, which indicates that

unemployment at a young age is a critical life event and can have consequences for future employment/unemployment (Brand, 2015; Brandt & Hank, 2014; Dieckhoff, 2011; Filomena, 2023; Schmillen & Umkehrer, 2014) and well-being (Eberl et al., 2022; Lucas et al., 2004; Richter et al., 2020). Currently, our chair is considering the feasibility of re-interviewing individuals from the current sample.

In addition, a *country comparison*, following the underlying approach of this thesis, would be valuable as well. The results presented here relate to the social and institutional context of Germany. They show, for example, that coping strategies can be used through the possibility of unemployment benefit II and specific measures in the area of vocational training that are relevant to the German labor market. Largely accepting and using institutional support showed to improve well-being. However, there are differences. In general, six types concerning the well-being and coping situation of young people have been developed. However, the question arises as to whether these types also occur in other countries with different contexts. Research shows that people tend to cope differently across the countries. For example, the main focus in Italy seems to be rather on social support (Meo et al., 2021).

Another topic to consider is the *general changes* that have occurred since the data was collected and their potential consequences. Society is constantly changing. It is important to note, however, that there have been specific changes or events since the data was collected that may be relevant to the topic of this thesis. When interpreting the results of this thesis, it is important to note that certain events and changes, such as the refugee crisis in Europe (2015/2016), the economic crisis (2020–2021), the Covid-19 pandemic (2019–2023), and the current Ukraine war, as well as the introduction of the citizens' benefit in Germany in 2023 (change of unemployment benefit II in Germany), were not considered in the interviews. Therefore, further research is required on these aspects concerning the topic of this thesis. For instance, the recent crises can have presented new challenges to the labor market and society. The Covid-19 pandemic, for example, has affected the labor market and youth unemployment increased temporarily (Dietrich et al., 2021).

Furthermore, it is important to consider the possible impact of political decisions and the government's new approach to unemployment benefit II for the young unemployed. The reform of the unemployment benefit II into citizen's benefit by the current government in 2023 could change the conditions for young people in Germany. Some of the changes include a stronger focus on the participation and the cooperation between the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter and the unemployed, which is reflected, for example, in the design and

execution of the integration process and the sanctions (Bauer et al., 2022, p. 33). However, research is needed to investigate these new conditions for (young) people.

This thesis has shown that the well-being of some young adults is impaired by their dependence on the Federal Employment Agency for reasons such as sanctions, inadequate unemployment benefit II, insufficient support, or pressure. If the Federal Employment Agency/Jobcenter, for example, now focuses more on job placement support and on the individual needs of the unemployed (Bauer et al., 2022), possible changes need to be investigated. The present study suggests that there may be a need for improvement from the young people's point of view in this regard. To date it is uncertain whether reforming this system will be advantageous for young people regarding their well-being, as they are a highly specific and complex group with diverse characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary to approach this topic in a more detailed manner and to consider the recent changes. In general, since unemployment is a worldwide and ever-present phenomenon in many countries further studies will always be needed in the future (Paul et al., 2006, p. 35).

Overall, this thesis, with its qualitative research approach, provides valuable insights into the well-being of young unemployed people and their coping strategies. It contributes to a better understanding of the challenges related to unemployment in Germany for this vulnerable group. The insights gained from this research provide new starting points for further studies.

# 8 References


Achatz, J., Jahn, K., & Schels, B. (2022). On the non-standard routes: vocational training measures in the school-to-work transitions of lower-qualified youth in Germany. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *74*(2), 289–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2020.1760335

Achatz, J., Reims, N., Sandner, M., & Schels, B. (2022). *Disadvantaged young people find the transition from school to work particularly difficult* (IAB Forum). Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung. https://doi.org/10.48720/IAB.FOO.20220208.01

Allmendinger, J., & Hinz, T. (1997). Mobilität und Lebensverlauf: Deutschland, Großbritannien und Schweden im Vergleich. In S. Hradil & S. Immerfall (Eds.), *Die westeuropäischen Gesellschaften im Vergleich* (pp. 247–285). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-95979-9_7

Allmendinger, J., Ludwig-Mayerhofer, W., & Spitznagel, E. (2012). Arbeitslosigkeit. In G. Albrecht & A. Groenemeyer (Eds.), *Handbuch soziale Probleme* (2nd ed., pp. 320–366). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Argyle, M., & Martin, M. (1991). The psychological causes of happiness. In F. Strack, M. Argyle, & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *International series in experimental social psychology: Vol. 21. Subjective well-being: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 77–100). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Athanasiades, C., & Flouli, A. (2018). Part 3 - Thematic section on health and well-being. In S. Bertolini et al. (Eds.), *Labour market insecurity and social exclusion: Qualitative comparative results in nine countries* (EXCEPT Working Papers No. 53, pp. 153–165). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from https://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP53_Labour_market_insecurity_and_social_exclusion_V3(1).pdf.

Aymanns, P. (1992). *Krebserkrankung und Familie: Zur Rolle familialer Unterstützung im Prozeß der Krankheitsbewältigung*. *Psychologie-Forschung*. Bern: Huber.

Bach, H.-U., & Spitznagel, E. (2006). Unter der Oberfläche – Die wahren Kosten der Arbeitslosigkeit. *IAB-Forum*. (1/2006), 48–52.

Baranowska-Rataj, A., & Strandh, M. (2021a). Health effects of unemployment in couples: Does becoming unemployed affect a young partner's health? In M. Unt, M. Gebel, S. Bertolini, V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, & D. Hofäcker (Eds.), *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity* (pp. 58–80). Bristol: Policy Press.

Baranowska-Rataj, A., & Strandh, M. (2021b). When things go wrong with you, it hurts me too: The effects of partner's employment status on health in comparative perspective. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *31*(2), 143–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928720963330

Barrett, L. F. (2006). Valence is a basic building block of emotional life. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *40*(1), 35–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2005.08.006

Bartelink, V. H. M., Zay Ya, K., Guldbrandsson, K., & Bremberg, S. (2020). Unemployment among young people and mental health: A systematic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, *48*(5), 544–558. https://doi.org/10.1177/1403494819852847

Bauer, F., Bernhard, S. [Sarah], Bernhard, S. [Stefan], Beste, J., Bruckmeier, K., Dietz, M., . . . Zabel, C. (2022). *Bürgergeld-Gesetz*. Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung. https://doi.org/10.48720/IAB.SN.2207

Beelmann, G. (2003). *Langzeitarbeitslose Jugendliche in Deutschland: Eine handlungsorientierte Analyse personaler und situativer Faktoren*. *Schriften zur Arbeits-, Betriebs- und Organisationspsychologie: Vol. 5*. Hamburg: Kovac.

Beelmann, G., Kieselbach, T., & Traiser, U. (2001). Jugendarbeitslosigkeit und soziale Ausgrenzung: Ergebnisse einer qualitativen Analyse in Ost- und Westdeutschland. In J. Zempel, J. Bacher, & K. Moser (Eds.), *Psychologie sozialer Ungleichheit: Vol. 12. Erwerbslosigkeit: Ursachen, Auswirkungen und Interventionen* (pp. 133–148). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Behle, H. (2007). *Veränderung der seelischen Gesundheit durch arbeitsmarktpolitische Maßnahmen: Eine Analyse am Beispiel des Jugendsofortprogramms JUMP*. *IAB-Bibliothek: 308: Dissertationen*. Nürnberg, Roggentin: IAB.

Berngruber, A. (2021). Der Auszug aus dem Elternhaus als räumliche Verselbstständigung im jungen Erwachsenenalter. In A. Berngruber & N. Gaupp (Eds.), *Erwachsenwerden heute: Lebenslagen und Lebensführung junger Menschen* (pp. 145–155). Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag.

Bertolini, S. (2011). The heterogeneity of the impact of labor market: Flexibilization on the transition to adult life in Italy: When do young people leave the nest? In H.-P. Blossfeld, D. Hofäcker, & S. Bertolini (Eds.), *Youth on globalised labour markets: rising uncertainty and its effects on early employment and family lives in Europe* (pp. 163–188). Opladen: Budrich.

Bertolini, S. (2018a). General introduction. In S. Bertolini et al. (Eds.), *Labour market insecurity and social exclusion: Qualitative comparative results in nine countries* (EXCEPT Working Papers No. 53, pp. 7–10). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from https://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP53_Labour_market_insecurity_and_social_exclusion_V3(1).pdf.

Bertolini, S. (2018b). Synthesis of methodology of WP3: Development and implementation of qualitative interviews of youth. In M. Unt & M. Gebel (Eds.), *Synthesis of the main empirical findings of EXCEPT project* (EXCEPT Working Papers No. 57, pp. 49–54). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from https://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP57_Synthesis_of_the_main_empirical_findigs_of_EXCEPT_project.pdf.

Bertolini, S., Bolzoni, M., Moiso, V., & Musumeci, R. (2018). *The comparative qualitative research methodology of the EXCEPT project* (EXCEPT Working Papers No. 56). Tallinn. Retrieved from https://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP56_The_comparative_qualitative_research_methodology_of_the_EXCEPT_project.pdf

Bertolini, S., Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, V., Gebel, M., Hofäcker, D., & Unt, M. (2021). Conclusions: Integrating perspectives on youth transitions and the risk of social exclusion. In M. Unt, M. Gebel, S. Bertolini, V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, & D. Hofäcker (Eds.), *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity* (pp. 362–378). Bristol: Policy Press.

Bertolini, S., Hofäcker, D., & Torrioni, P. M. (2018). Labour market flexibility and home-leaving in different welfare states: does labour force and contractual status matter? *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, *10*(3), 28–50.

Biewen, M., & Steffes, S. (2008). *Unemployment persistence: Is there evidence for stigma effects?* (ZEW Discussion Paper No. 08-057). Retrieved from https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/24753/1/dp08057.pdf.

Björklund, O., Söderlund, M., Nyström, L., & Häggström, E. (2015). Unemployment and health: Experiences narrated by young Finnish men. *American Journal of Men's Health*, *9*(1), 76–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988314536725

Blossfeld, H.-P. (1986). Career opportunities in the Federal Republic of Germany: A dynamic approach to the study of life-course, cohort, and period effects. *European Sociological Review*, *2*(3), 208–225.

Blossfeld, H.-P., & Stockmann, R. (1998). Guest editors' introduction: The German dual system in comparative perspective. *International Journal of Sociology*, *28*(4), 3–28.

Blumer, H. (1954). What is wrong with social theory? *American Sociological Review*, *19*(1), 3. https://doi.org/10.2307/2088165

Blustein, D. L., Kozan, S., & Connors-Kellgren, A. (2013). Unemployment and underemployment: A narrative analysis about loss. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *82*(3), 256–265. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2013.02.005

BMAS (2014). *National implementation plan to establish the EU Youth guarantee in Germany*. Retrieved from Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs website: https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/a761-implementierungsplan-jugendgarantie-en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

Bode, V., & Burdack, J. (2001). Jugendarbeitslosigkeit - ein sozialer Sprengstoff. In P. Gans & F.-J. Kemper (Eds.), *Nationalatlas Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Nationalatlas Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (pp. 84–85). Heidelberg, Berlin: Spektrum.

Bolzoni, M., Moiso, V., & Musumeci, R. (2018). Methodology for comparative report. In S. Bertolini et al. (Eds.), *Labour market insecurity and social exclusion: Qualitative comparative results in nine countries* (EXCEPT Working Papers No. 53, pp. 11–19). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from https://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP53_Labour_market_insecurity_and_social_exclusion_V3(1).pdf.

Bourdieu, P. (1983). Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital. In R. Kreckel (Ed.), *Soziale Welt. Sonderband: Vol. 2. Soziale Ungleichheiten* (pp. 183–198). Göttingen: Schwartz.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.

Brand, J. E. (2015). The far-reaching impact of job loss and unemployment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *41*, 359–375. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043237

Brandstätter, H. (1991). Alltagsereignisse und Wohlbefinden. In A. E. Abele-Brehm (Ed.), *Juventa-Materialien. Wohlbefinden: Theorie - Empirie - Diagnostik* (pp. 191–225). Weinheim: Juventa Verlag.

Brandt, M., & Hank, K. (2014). Scars that will not disappear: Long-term associations between early and later life unemployment under different welfare regimes. *Journal of Social Policy*, *43*(4), 727–743. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279414000397

Braun, F., & Geier, B. (2012). Bildungsgänge des „Übergangssystems": Genese, Rechtsgrundlagen, Profile und Anschlüsse. *Recht Der Jugend Und Des Bildungswesens*, *60*(3), 361–374. https://doi.org/10.5771/0034-1312-2012-3-361

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022a). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative Psychology*, *9*(1), 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022b). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Melbourne: SAGE Publications.

Brenke, K. (2012). *Arbeitslosigkeit in Europa: Jugendliche sind viel stärker betroffen als Erwachsene* (DIW Wochenbericht No. 30). Berlin.

Brinkmann, C. (1984). Die individuellen Folgen langfristiger Arbeitslosigkeit: Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Längsschnittuntersuchung. *Mitteilungen Aus Der Arbeitsmarkt- Und Berufsforschung*, *17*(4), 454–473.

Brinkmann, C., & Wiedemann, E. (1994). Individuelle und gesellschaftliche Folgen von Erwerbslosigkeit in Ost und West. In L. Montada (Ed.), *Schriftenreihe. Arbeitslosigkeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit* (pp. 175–192). Frankfurt: Campus Verl.

Brydsten, A., Hammarström, A., Strandh, M., & Johansson, K. (2015). Youth unemployment and functional somatic symptoms in adulthood: Results from the Northern Swedish cohort. *European Journal of Public Health*, *25*(5), 796–800. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckv038

Buchholz, S., & Blossfeld, H.-P. (2011). Jugend und Arbeit. In W. Heitmeyer, J. Mansel, & T. Olk (Eds.), *Jugendforschung. Individualisierung von Jugend: Zwischen kreativer Innovation, Gerechtigkeitssuche und gesellschaftlichen Reaktionen* (pp. 67–84). Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.

Buchholz, S., Hofäcker, D., Mills, M., Blossfeld, H.-P., Kurz, K., & Hofmeister, H. (2008). Life courses in the globalization process: The development of social inequalities in modern societies. *European Sociological Review*, *25*(1), 53–71. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcn033

Buchmann, M. C., & Kriesi, I. (2011). Transition to adulthood in Europe. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *37*(1), 481–503. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150212

Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2014). *Der Arbeitsmarkt in Deutschland – Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund auf dem deutschen Arbeitsmarkt* (Arbeitsmarktberichterstattung, Juni 2014).

Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2016). Arbeitsmarkt 2015. *Amtliche Nachrichten Der Bundesagentur Für Arbeit*, *63*(Sondernnummer 2), 1–205. Retrieved from https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/Statistikdaten/Detail/201512/ama/heft-arbeitsmarkt/arbeitsmarkt-d-0-201412-pdf.pdf.

Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2024a). Arbeitslosengeld: Anspruch, Höhe, Dauer. Retrieved from https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/arbeitslos-arbeit-finden/arbeitslosengeld/finanzielle-hilfen/arbeitslosengeld-anspruch-hoehe-dauer (Accessed 18.04.2024).

Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2024b). Arbeitslosigkeit und Erwerbslosigkeit. Retrieved from https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Navigation/Grundlagen/Definitionen/Arbeitslosigkeit-Unterbeschaeftigung/Arbeitslosigkeit-Erwerbslosigkeit-Nav.html (Accessed 29.03.2024).

Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2024c). Bedarfsgemeinschaft. Retrieved from https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/lexikon/bedarfsgemeinschaft (Accessed 18.04.2024).

Buscher, H. (2003). Arbeitslosengeld II – Anmerkungen zur Zusammenlegung von Arbeitslosenhilfe und Sozialhilfe, Wirtschaft im Wandel. *Wirtschaft Im Wandel*, *9*(6), 178–184.

Buscher, H. (2004). Arbeitslosengeld II und das kommunale Optionsgesetz. *Wirtschaft Im Wandel*, *10*(9-10), 183–288.

Buttler, D. (2019). Employment status and well-being amongst youth: Explaining variation across European countries. In C. Hyggen, J. O'Reilly, B. Hvinden, & M. A. Schoyen (Eds.), *Negotiating early job insecurity: Well-being, scarring and resilience of European*

*youth*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788118798.00008

Castel, R. (2000). *Die Metamorphosen der sozialen Frage: Eine Chronik der Lohnarbeit*. *Édition discours: Vol. 13*. Konstanz: UVK Univ.-Verl. Konstanz.

Cobb, S. (1976). Social support as a moderator of life stress. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *38*(5), 300–314. https://doi.org/10.1097/00006842-197609000-00003

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (1990). Grounded theory research: procedures, canons and evaluative criteria. *Zeitschrift Für Soziologie*, *19*(6), 418–427.

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Boston: SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Dargentas, M. (2006). Conference essay: Secondary analysis in qualitative research—Utopia and perspectives. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *7*(4). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-7.4.197

De Witte, H. (1999). Job insecurity and psychological well-being: Review of the literature and exploration of some unresolved issues. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *8*(2), 155–177. https://doi.org/10.1080/135943299398302

De Witte, H., Hooge, J., & Vanbelle, E. (2010). Do the long-term unemployed adapt to unemployment? *Romanian Journal of Applied Psychology*, *12*(1), 8–14.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1–26). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Destatis (2017). *Zahl der Erwerbstätigen im Jahr 2016 um 1 Prozent gestiegen* [Press release]. Retrieved from https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2017/01/PD17_001_13321.html (Accessed 18.04.2024).

Destatis (2019). Arbeitsmarkt: Erwerbslose. Retrieved from https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt/Glossar/erwerbslose.html (Accessed 18.04.2024).

Destatis (2021). *Datenreport 2021: Ein Sozialbericht für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Retrieved from http://www.gbv.de/dms/maecenata/1750939096.pdf.

Destatis (2023a). Tag der Jugend: 61 % der 15- bis 24-Jährigen lebten 2022 hauptsächlich von familiärer oder staatlicher Unterstützung. Retrieved from https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2023/08/PD23_N046_13_12.html (Accessed 22.08.2023).

Destatis (2023b). *Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen: Inlandsproduktberechnung Vierteljahresergebnisse* (Fachserie 18 Reihe 1.2). Retrieved from https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Wirtschaft/Volkswirtschaftliche-Gesamtrechnungen-Inlandsprodukt/Publikationen/Downloads-Inlandsprodukt/inlandsprodukt-vierteljahr-pdf-2180120.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

Destatis (2024). Migrationshintergrund. Retrieved from https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Glossar/migrationshintergrund.html (Accessed 18.04.2024).

Deutsches Jugendinstitut (n.d.). Jugend heute. Retrieved from https://www.dji.de/themen/jugend.html (Accessed 28.03.2024).

Dieckhoff, M. (2011). The effect of unemployment on subsequent job quality in Europe: A comparative study of four countries. *Acta Sociologica*, *54*(3), 233–249. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699311412798

Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-Being. *Psychological Bulletin*, *95*(3), 542–575.

Diener, E. (1994). Assessing subjective well-being: Progress and opportunities. *Social Indicators Research*, *31*(2), 103–157. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01207052

Diener, E., Suh, Eunkook, M., Lucas, Richard, E., & Smith, Heidi, L. (1999). Subjective well-Being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, *125*(2), 276–302.

Dietrich, H. (2001). Wege aus der Jugendarbeitslosigkeit - Von der Arbeitslosigkeit in die Maßnahme? *Mitteilungen Aus Der Arbeitsmarkt- Und Berufsforschung*, *34*(4), 419–439.

Dietrich, H. (2012). *Youth unemployment in Europe: theoretical considerations and empirical findings*. *Study*. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Retrieved from https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/09227.pdf.

Dietrich, H. (2013). Qualitative und quantitative Dimensionen von Jugendarbeitslosigkeit in Europa. *Wirtschaftsdienst*, *93*(8), 572–574. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10273-013-1567-4

Dietrich, H. (2015). *Jugendarbeitslosigkeit aus einer europäischen Perspektive: Theoretische Ansätze, empirische Konzepte und ausgewählte Befunde* (IAB Discussion Paper No. 24). Nürnberg.

Dietrich, H. (2018). Erwerbsarbeit und Arbeitslosigkeit Jugendlicher. In A. Lange, H. Reiter, S. Schutter, & C. Steiner (Eds.), *Handbuch Kindheits- und Jugendsoziologie* (pp. 205–239). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04207-3_13

Dietrich, H., Henseke, G., Anger, S., Christoph, B., & Patzina, A. (2021). *Youth unemployment in Germany and the United Kingdom in times of Covid-19* (IAB Forum No. 4th of August 2021). Retrieved from https://www.iab-forum.de/en/youth-unemployment-in-germany-and-the-united-kingdom-in-times-of-covid-19/.

Dietrich, H., & Möller, J. (2016). Youth unemployment in Europe – business cycle and institutional effects. *International Economics and Economic Policy*, *13*(1), 5–25. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10368-015-0331-1

Dietrich, H., Patzina, A., Chesters, J., & Reissner, V. (2022). School-to-work transition and subjective well-being in Australia. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *73*(1), 78–111. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12895

DIW (2019). Jugendarbeitslosigkeit. Retrieved from https://www.diw.de/de/diw_01.c.462718.de/presse/glossar/jugendarbeitslosigkeit.html (Accessed 18.04.2024).

Dresing, T., & Pehl, T. (2015). *Praxisbuch Transkription: Regelsysteme, Software und praktische Anleitungen für qualitative ForscherInnen* (6th ed.). Marburg: Eigenverlag.

Du Toit, M., Witte, H. de, Rothmann, S., & van den Broeck, A. (2018). Contextual factors and the experience of unemployment: A review of qualitative studies. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, *21*(1). https://doi.org/10.4102/sajems.v21i1.2083

Eberl, A., Collischon, M., & Wolbring, T. (2022). Subjective well-being scarring through unemployment: new evidence from a long-running panel. *Social Forces*, *101*(3), 1485–1518. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soac022

Edele, A., Kristen, C., Stanat, P., & Will, G. (2021). The education of recently arrived refugees in Germany: Conditions, processes, and outcomes. *Journal for Educational Research Online*, *2021*(1), 5–15. https://doi.org/10.31244/jero.2021.01.01

Ehlert, M. (2012). Buffering income loss due to unemployment: Family and welfare state influences on income after job loss in the United States and western Germany. *Social Science Research*, *41*(4), 843–860. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.02.002

Ehlert, M. (2016). *The Impact of Losing Your Job: Unemployment and influences from market, family, and state on economic well-being in the US and Germany*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Eichhorn, J. (2014). The (non-) effect of unemployment benefits: Variations in the effect of unemployment on life-satisfaction between EU countries. *Social Indicators Research*, *119*(1), 389–404. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-013-0474-9

Eisenberg, P., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1938). The psychological effects of unemployment. *Psychological Bulletin*, *35*(6), 358–390. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0063426

Eurofound (2012). *NEETs: Young people not in employment, education or training : characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

EXCEPT Project (n.d.). EXCEPT project website. Retrieved from https://www.except-project.eu/ (Accessed 18.12.2023).

Ezzy, D. (1993). Unemployment and mental health: A critical review. *Social Science & Medicine*, *37*(1), 41–52. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(93)90316-V

Faltermaier, T. (1987). *Lebensereignisse und Alltag: Konzeption einer lebensweltlichen Forschungsperspektive und eine qualitative Studie über Belastungen und Bewältigungsstile von jungen Krankenschwestern*. *Reihe Wissenschaft : Schwerpunkt Psychologie: Bd. 7*. München: Profil.

Filipp, S.-H., & Aymanns, P. (2018). *Kritische Lebensereignisse und Lebenskrisen: Vom Umgang mit den Schattenseiten des Lebens* (2nd ed.). Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag.

Filomena, M. (2023). Unemployment scarring effects: An overview and meta-analysis of empirical studies. *Italian Economic Journal.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40797-023-00228-4

Flick, U. (2004). Design and process in qualitative research. In U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 146–152). London, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, California: SAGE.

Flick, U. (2014). Gütekriterien qualitativer Sozialforschung. In N. Baur & J. Blasius (Eds.), *Handbuch. Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung* (pp. 411–424). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Flick, U., Kardorff, E. v., & Steinke, I. (2004). What is qualitative research? An introduction to the field. In U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 3–10). London, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Forret, M. L., Sullivan, S. E., & Mainiero, L. A. (2010). Gender role differences in reactions to unemployment: Exploring psychological mobility and boundaryless careers. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *31*(5), 647–666. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.703

Franzkowiak, P., & Hurrelmann, K. (2022). *Gesundheit*. Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (BZgA). https://doi.org/10.17623/BZGA:Q4-I023-1.0

Frese, M. (1994). Psychische Folgen von Arbeitslosigkeit in den fünfneuen Bundesländern: Ergebnisse einer Längsschnittstudie. In L. Montada (Ed.), *Schriftenreihe. Arbeitslosigkeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit* (pp. 193–213). Frankfurt: Campus Verlag

Frese, M., & Mohr, G. (1978). Die Psychopathologischen Folgen des Entzugs von Arbeit: Der Fall Arbeitslosigkeit. In M. Frese, S. Greif, & N. Semmer (Eds.), *Schriften zur Arbeitspsychologie: Vol. 23. Industrielle Psychopathologie* (pp. 282–320). Bern, Stuttgart, Wien: Huber.

Fryer, D. (1985). Stages in the psychological response to unemployment: A (dis)integrative review. *Current Psychological Research & Reviews*, *4*(3), 257–273. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02686575

Fryer, D. (1986). Employment deprivation and personal agency during unemployment: A critical discussion of Jahoda's explanation of the psychological effects of unemployment. *Social Behaviour*, *1*(1), 3–23.

Fryer, D. (1988). The Experience of Unemployment in Social Context. In S. Fisher & J. Reason (Eds.), *Handbook of life stress, cognition and health* (pp. 211–240). Chichester [etc.]: J. Wiley & Sons.

Fryer, D. (1997). International perspectives on youth unemployment and mental health: Some central issues. *Journal of Adolescence*, *20*(3), 333–342. https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.1997.0089

Fryer, D., & Payne, R. (1984). Proactive behaviour in unemployment: findings and implications. *Leisure Studies*, *3*(3), 273–295. https://doi.org/10.1080/02614368400390231

Gallie, D. (1999). Unemployment and social exclusion in the European Union. *European Societies*, *1*(2), 139–167. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.1999.10749930

Gallie, D., Paugam, S., & Jacobs, S. (2003). Unemployment, poverty, and social isolation: Is there a vicious circle of social exclusion? *European Societies*, *5*(1), 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461669032000057668

Gangl, M. (2004). Welfare states and the scar effects of unemployment: A comparative analysis of the United States and West Germany. *American Journal of Sociology*, *109*(6), 1319–1364. https://doi.org/10.1086/381902

Gangl, M. (2006). Scar effects of unemployment: An assessment of institutional complementarities. *American Sociological Review*, *71*(6), 986–1013. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240607100606

Gebel, M. (2010). Early career consequences of temporary employment in Germany and the UK. *Work, Employment and Society*, *24*(4), 641–660. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017010380645

Gebel, M. (2015). Labor market instability, labor market entry, and early career development. In R. A. Scott & S. M. Kosslyn (Eds.), *Emerging trends in the social and behavioral sciences: An interdisciplinary, searchable, and linkable resource* (Vol. 12, pp. 1–16). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0198

Gebel, M., & Giesecke, J. (2016). Does reregulation help? The impact of employment protection reforms on youths' unemployment and temporary employment risks in Europe. *European Sociological Review*, *32*(4), 486–500. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcw022

Gebel, M., Hofäcker, D., Jeliazkova, M., Schadow, S., Täht, K., & Unt, M. (2018). *Proposal for future research based on EXCEPT project* (EXCEPT Working Papers: No. 58). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from http://www.except-

project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP58_Proposal_for_future_research_based_on_EXCEPT_project.pdf.

Gebel, M., Unt, M., Bertolini, S., Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, V., & Hofäcker, D. (2021). Introduction: Youth transitions in times of labour market insecurity. In M. Unt, M. Gebel, S. Bertolini, V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, & D. Hofäcker (Eds.), *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity* (pp. 1–31). Bristol: Policy Press.

Gebel, M., & Voßemer, J. (2014). The impact of employment transitions on health in Germany. A difference-in-differences propensity score matching approach. *Social Science & Medicine (1982)*, *108*, 128–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.02.039

Gedikli, C., Miraglia, M., Connolly, S., Bryan, M., & Watson, D. (2023). The relationship between unemployment and wellbeing: an updated meta-analysis of longitudinal evidence. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *32*(1), 128–144. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2022.2106855

Gerhardt, U. (1979). Coping and social action: Theoretical reconstruction of the life-event approach. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, *1*(2), 195–225. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.ep10478961

Gerhardt, U. (1986). *Patientenkarrieren: Eine medizinsoziologische Studie*. *Edition Suhrkamp*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Geyer, L. (2022). *The political economy of active labour market policy for young people: A comparative analysis of the effects of employers, employers' organisations and collective training systems on the use of youth ALMPs in European countries between 1998 and 2014*. *Dissertation*. Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg. https://doi.org/10.20378/irb-54258

Giesecke, J., & Groß, M. (2003). Temporary employment: Chance or risk? *European Sociological Review*, *19*(2), 161–177. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/19.2.161

Giugni, M., & Lahusen, C. (2016). Experiencing long-term unemployment in Europe: A conclusion. In C. Lahusen & M. Giugni (Eds.), *Experiencing Long-Term Unemployment in Europe* (pp. 209–222). Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Giuntoli, G., Hughes, S., Karban, K., & South, J. (2015). Towards a middle-range theory of mental health and well-being effects of employment transitions: Findings from a qualitative study on unemployment during the 2009-2010 economic recession. *Health*, *19*(4), 389–412. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459314554314

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. L. (1979 [1967]). *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research* (10th ed.). New York: Aldine (Original work published 1967).

Goffman, E. (1986). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goglio, V., & Bertolini, S. (2021). Housing autonomy of youth in Europe: Do labour and housing policies matter? In M. Unt, M. Gebel, S. Bertolini, V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, & D. Hofäcker (Eds.), *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity* (pp. 166–191). Bristol: Policy Press.

Grimmer, B. (2016). Being long-term unemployed in Germany: social contacts, finances and stigma. In C. Lahusen & M. Giugni (Eds.), *Experiencing Long-Term Unemployment in Europe* (pp. 39–72). Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Grunow, D., & Evertsson, M. (Eds.) (2016). *Couples' transitions to parenthood: Analysing gender and work in Europe*. Cheltenham, GB, Northampton, US: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 59–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Haan, N. (1977). *Coping and defending: Processes of self-environment organization*. New York: Academic Press.

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1975). Development of the job diagnostic survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *60*(2), 159–170.

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1980). *Work redesign*. *Addison-Wesley series on organization development: Vol. 2779*. Reading, Mass., Don Mills, Ont.: Addison-Wesley.

Hammarström, A. (1994). Health consequences of youth unemployment-review from a gender perspective. *Social Science & Medicine*, *38*(5), 699–709. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(94)90460-X

Hammarström, A., & Janlert, U. (1997). Nervous and depressive symptoms in a longitudinal study of youth unemployment--selection or exposure? *Journal of Adolescence*, *20*(3), 293–305. https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.1997.0086

Hartmann, M., & Riede, T. (2005). Erwerbslosigkeit nach dem Labour-Force-Konzept – Arbeitslosigkeit nach dem Sozialgesetzbuch: Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede. (Statistisches Bundesamt). *Wirtschaft Und Statistik*, (4), 303–310.

Heider, F. (1958). *Psychology of interpersonal relations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc. Retrieved from http://lib.myilibrary.com/detail.asp?id=493845.

Heineck, G., Kleinert, C., & Vosseler, A. (2011). *Regionale Typisierung: Was Ausbildungsmärkte vergleichbar macht* (IAB-Kurzbericht No. 13/2011).

Heinemann, K. (1978). *Arbeitslose Jugendliche: Ursachen und individuelle Bewältigung eines sozialen Problems; eine empirische Untersuchung*. *Soziologische Texte*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Heinz, W. R. (2011). Jugend im gesellschaftlichen Wandel: soziale Ungleichheiten von Lebenslagen und Lebensperspektiven. In E. M. Krekel & T. Lex (Eds.), *Berichte zur beruflichen Bildung. Neue Jugend, neue Ausbildung? Beiträge aus der Jugend- und Bildungsforschung* (pp. 15–30). Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.

Helfferich, C. (2011). *Die Qualität qualitativer Daten: Manual für die Durchführung qualitativer Interviews* (4th ed.). *Lehrbuch*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Hermanns, H. (2004). Interviewing as an Activity. In U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 209–213). London, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Heyne, S., & Voßemer, J. (2023). Gender, unemployment, and subjective well-Being: Why do women suffer less from unemployment than men? *European Sociological Review*, *39*(2), 301–316. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcac030

Hillmert, S. (2020). Bildung und Lebensverläufe in einer differenzierten und dynamischen Gesellschaft. In B. Schmidt-Hertha, E. Haberzeth, & S. Hillmert (Eds.), *Lebenslang lernen können: Gesellschaftliche Transformationen als Herausforderung für Bildung und Weiterbildung* (pp. 17–31). Bielefeld: wbv Publikation.

Hinz, A., Hübscher, U., Brähler, E., & Berth, H. (2010). Ist Gesundheit das höchste Gut? - Ergebnisse einer bevölkerungsrepräsentativen Umfrage zur subjektiven Bedeutung von Gesundheit [Is health really the most important value? - Results of a representative survey of the German general population concerning the subjective meaning of health]. *Gesundheitswesen (Bundesverband der Ärzte des Öffentlichen Gesundheitsdienstes (Germany))*, *72*(12), 897–903. https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0029-1246151

Hinz, T., & Abraham, M. (2018). Theorien des Arbeitsmarktes. In M. Abraham & T. Hinz (Eds.), *Arbeitsmarktsoziologie: Probleme, Theorien, empirische Befunde* (3rd ed., pp. 9–76). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Hiswåls, A.-S., Marttila, A., Mälstam, E., & Macassa, G. (2017). Experiences of unemployment and well-being after job loss during economic recession: Results of a qualitative study in east central Sweden. *Journal of Public Health Research*, *6*(3), 995. https://doi.org/10.4081/jphr.2017.995

Hollederer, A. (2002). Arbeitslosigkeit und Gesundheit: Ein Überblick über empirische Befunde und die Arbeitslosen- und Krankenkassenstatistik. *Mitteilungen Aus Der Arbeitsmarkt- Und Berufsforschung*, *35*(3), 411–428.

Hopf, C. (2016). *Schriften zu Methodologie und Methoden qualitativer Sozialforschung*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

House, J. S. (1983). *Work stress and social support* (2. print). *Addison-Wesley series on occupational stress: Vol. 4*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

ILOSTAT (2023). Statistics on youth. Retrieved from https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/youth/ (Accessed 19.11.2023).

ILOSTAT (2024). Data. Retrieved from https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/#elementor-toc__heading-anchor-0 (Accessed 29.03.2024).

Jackson, P. R., & Warr, P. B. (1984). Unemployment and psychological ill-health: The moderating role of duration and age. *Psychological Medicine*, *14*(3), 605–614. https://doi.org/10.1017/s003329170001521x

Jacob, M., & Kleinert, C. (2008). Does unemployment help or hinder becoming independent? The role of employment status for leaving the parental home. *European Sociological Review*, *24*(2), 141–153. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcm038

Jacob, M., & Kleinert, C. (2014). Marriage, gender, and class: The effects of partner resources on unemployment Exit in Germany. *Social Forces*, *92*(3), 839–871. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sot130

Jahoda, M. (1981). Work, employment, and unemployment: Values, theories, and approaches in social research. *American Psychologist*, *36*(2), 184–191. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.36.2.184

Jahoda, M. (1982). *Employment and unemployment: A social-psychological analysis*. *The Psychology of social issues*. Cambridge, Angleterre: Cambridge University Press.

Jahoda, M. (1983). Die sozialpsychologische Bedeutung von Arbeit und Arbeitslosigkeit: Vortrag vom April 1982 in der Universität Bremen. In M. Jahoda, T. Kieselbach, & T. Leithäuser (Eds.), *Bremer Beiträge zur Psychologie: Vol. 23. Arbeit, Arbeitslosigkeit und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung* (1-8). Bremen: Universität Bremen.

Jahoda, M., Lazarsfeld, P. F., & Zeisel, H. (1978 [1933]). *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal: Ein soziographischer Versuch über die Wirkungen langandauernder Arbeitslosigkeit* (2nd ed.). Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Jeliazkova, M., Minev, D., Draganov, D., Krasteva, V., & Stoilov, A. (2017). *An overview of good practices on youth labour market inclusion in Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Sweden, the UK, and Ukraine* (EXCEPT Working Papers: No. 14). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from http://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP14_An_overview_of_good_practices_on_youth_labour_market_inclusion.pdf.

Katz, P., & Schmidt, A. R. (1991). *Wenn der Alltag zum Problem wird: Belastende Alltagsprobleme und Bewältigungsmöglichkeiten*. Stuttgart: Verlag für Angewandte Psychologie.

Kelle, U., & Kluge, S. (2010). *Vom Einzelfall zum Typus: Fallvergleich und Fallkontrastierung in der qualitativen Sozialforschung* (2nd rev. ed.). *Qualitative Sozialforschung: Bd. 15*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Keller, B., & Seifert, H. (2006). Atypische Beschäftigungsverhältnisse: Flexibilität, soziale Sicherheit und Prekarität. *WSI-Mitteilungen*. (5), 235–240. Retrieved from https://www.boeckler.de/pdf/wsimit_2006_05_Keller.pdf.

Kelley, H. H., & Michela, J. L. (1980). Attribution theory and research. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *31*, 457–501. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ps.31.020180.002325

Keyes, C. L. M. (2006). Subjective well-being in mental health and human development research worldwide: An introduction. *Social Indicators Research*, *77*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-005-5550-3

Kieselbach, T. (1983). Die individuellen und sozialen Kosten von Arbeitslosigkeit: Als offizielle Stellungnahme von 13 Fachverbänden im April 1983 veröffentlicht. In M. Jahoda, T. Kieselbach, & T. Leithäuser (Eds.), *Bremer Beiträge zur Psychologie: Vol. 23. Arbeit, Arbeitslosigkeit und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung* (pp. 1–10). Bremen: Universität Bremen.

Kieselbach, T. (2000). Psychosoziale Folgen der Arbeitslosigkeit: Perspektiven eines zukünftigen Umgangs mit beruflichen Transitionen. In B. Badura (Ed.), *Fehlzeiten-Report. Psychische Belastung am Arbeitsplatz: Zahlen, Daten, Fakten aus allen Branchen der Wirtschaft* (pp. 107–127). Berlin: Springer.

Kieselbach, T. (2001). Executive summary. In T. Kieselbach, K. Van Heeringen, M. La Rosa, L. Lemkow, & B. Starrin (Eds.), *Psychology of Social Inequality: v. 11. Living on the edge: An empirical analysis on long-term youth unemployment and social exclusion in Europe* (pp. 17–26). Opladen [Germany]: Leske + Budrich.

Kieselbach, T. (2003). Long-term unemployment among young people: The risk of social exclusion. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *32*(Nos. 1/2), 69–76.

Kieselbach, T., & Beelmann, G. (2000). Youth unemployment and health in Germany. In T. Kieselbach (Ed.), *Psychology of Social Inequality: Vol. 9. Youth unemployment and health: A comparison of six European countries* (pp. 109–136). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

Kieselbach, T., & Beelmann, G. (2006). Arbeitslosigkeit und Gesundheit: Stand der Forschung. In A. Hollederer & H. Brand (Eds.), *Programmbereich Gesundheit. Arbeitslosigkeit, Gesundheit und Krankheit* (pp. 13–34). Bern: Huber.

Kieselbach, T., Beelmann, G., & Stitzel, A. (2000). Comparative Report. In T. Kieselbach (Ed.), *Psychology of Social Inequality: Vol. 9. Youth unemployment and health: A comparison of six European countries* (pp. 15–34). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

Kieselbach, T., Beelmann, G., Traiser, U., & Meyer, R. (2001). Empirical analysis of the risk of social exclusion of long-term unemplyoed people in Germany. In T. Kieselbach, K. Van Heeringen, M. La Rosa, L. Lemkow, & B. Starrin (Eds.), *Psychology of social inequality: v. 11. Living on the edge: An empirical analysis on long-term youth unemployment and social exclusion in Europe* (pp. 183–242). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Kleemann, F., Krähnke, U., & Matuschek, I. (2013). *Interpretative Sozialforschung: Eine Einführung in die Praxis des Interpretierens* (2nd corr. and rev.). *Lehrbuch*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Kleinert, C., & Jacob, M. (2013). Demographic changes, labor markets and their consequences on post-school-transitions in West Germany 1975–2005. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, *32*, 65–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2013.01.004

Kleinert, C., & Jacob, M. (2019). Vocational education and training in comparative perspective. In R. Becker (Ed.), *Elgaronline. Research handbook on the sociology of education*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788110426.00026

Kluge, S. (1999). *Empirisch begründete Typenbildung: Zur Konstruktion von Typen und Typologien in der qualitativen Sozialforschung*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-97436-5

Kluge, S. (2000). Empirically grounded construction of types and typologies in qualitative social research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.1.1124

Kohli, M. (1985). Die Institutionalisierung des Lebenslaufs: Historische Befunde und theoretische Argumente. *Kölner Zeitschrift Für Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie*, *37*(1), 1–29.

Konle-Seidl, R. (2009). *Erfassung von Arbeitslosigkeit im internationalen Vergleich: Notwendige Anpassung oder unzulässige Tricks?* (IAB-Kurzbericht No. 4/2009).

Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung (2006). *Bildung in Deutschland: Ein indikatorengestützter Bericht mit einer Analyse zu Perspektiven des Bildungswesens im demografischen Wandel*. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.

Kosyakova, Y., Kristen, C., & Spörlein, C. (2022). The dynamics of recent refugees' language acquisition: how do their pathways compare to those of other new immigrants? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *48*(5), 989–1012. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1988845

Kowal, S., & O'Connell, D. C. (2004). The Transcription of conversations. In U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 248–252). London, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Kronauer, M. (2010). *Exklusion: Die Gefährdung des Sozialen im hoch entwickelten Kapitalismus* (2nd ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verl.

Kronauer, M., Vogel, B., & Gerlach, F. (1993). *Im Schatten der Arbeitsgesellschaft: Arbeitslose und die Dynamik sozialer Ausgrenzung. Eine Studie des Soziologischen Forschungsinstituts Göttingen - SOFI*. Frankfurt: Campus-Verl.

Kruse, J. (2014). *Qualitative Interviewforschung: Ein integrativer Ansatz. Grundlagentexte Methoden*. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.

Kuckartz, U. (2016). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Methoden, Praxis, Computerunterstützung* (3rd. ed.). *Grundlagentexte Methoden.*

Kuckartz, U., & Rädiker, S. (2022). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Methoden, Praxis, Computerunterstützung* (5th ed.). *Grundlagentexte Methoden*. Weinheim: Juventa Verlag ein Imprint der Julius Beltz GmbH & Co. KG.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (Third edition).

Lamnek, S., & Krell, C. (2016). *Qualitative Sozialforschung: Mit Online-Materialien* (6th ed.).

Latack, J. C., Kinicki, A. J., & Prussia, G. E. (1995). An integrative process model of coping with job loss. *The Academy of Management Review*, *20*(2), 311. https://doi.org/10.2307/258849

Lazarus, R. S. (1966). *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process*. New York [et al.]: McGraw-Hill.

Lazarus, R. S. (1993). Coping theory and research: Past, present, and future. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *55*(3), 234–247. https://doi.org/10.1097/00006842-199305000-00002

Lazarus, R. S. (1994). *Emotion and Adaptation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lazarus, R. S. (2000). Toward better research on stress and coping. *American Psychologist*, *55*(6), 665–673. https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.6.665

Lazarus, R. S. (2006). *Stress and emotion: A new synthesis* (rev. ed.). *EBL-Schweitzer*. New York: Springer.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1987). Transactional theory and research on emotions and coping. *European Journal of Personality*, *1*(3), 141–169. https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2410010304

Leibfried, S., Leisering, L., Buhr, Petra, Ludwig, Monika, Mädje, E., Olk, T., Voges, W., & Zwick, M. (1995). *Zeit der Armut: Lebensläufe im Sozialstaat*. *Edition Suhrkamp*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Lindbeck, A., & Snower, D. (1984). *Involuntary unemployment as an insider-outsider dilemma* (Seminar paper, Institute for International Economic Studies, University of Stockholm No. 282).

Lindbeck, A., & Snower, D. (2001). Insiders vs. outsiders. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *15*(1), 165–188.

Lorenzini, J., & Giugni, M. (2016). Long-term unemployed youth in Switzerland: Coping with exclusion from the labor market in a country with low unemployment. In C. Lahusen & M. Giugni (Eds.), *Experiencing Long-Term Unemployment in Europe* (pp. 73–106). Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Löwe, P. S., & Unger, S. A. (2022). Welfare sanctions and deprivation in Germany: Do first sanctions lead to higher levels of deprivation among the long-term unemployed and recipients of basic income support? *Journal of Social Policy*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279421000994

Lucas, R. E., Clark, A. E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E. (2004). Unemployment alters the set point for life satisfaction. *Psychological Science*, *15*(1), 8–13. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2004.01501002.x

Ludwig-Mayerhofer, W. (2018). Arbeitslosigkeit. In M. Abraham & T. Hinz (Eds.), *Arbeitsmarktsoziologie: Probleme, Theorien, empirische Befunde* (3rd ed., pp. 155–192). Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Mansel, J., & Speck, K. (2012). Jenseits der Erwerbsarbeit: Arbeitsmarktchancen und biografische Perspektiven. In J. Mansel & K. Speck (Eds.), *Jugendforschung. Jugend und Arbeit: Empirische Bestandsaufnahme und Analysen* (pp. 9–28). Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.

Manzoni, A., & Gebel, M. (2023). Young adults' labour market transitions and intergenerational support in Germany. *European Sociological Review.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcad006

Marten-Mittag, B. (2004). *Bewältigung chronischer Krankheiten am Beispiel der Leberzirrhose*. Inauguraldissertation. Retrieved from http://archiv.ub.uni-marburg.de/diss/z2005/0135/pdf/dbmm.pdf.

Mastekaasa, A. (1996). Unemployment and health: Selection effects. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *6*(3), 189–205. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1298(199608)6:3<189::AID-CASP366>3.0.CO;2-O

Mayer, D., & Hollederer, A. (2022). What helps the unemployed to stay healthy? A qualitative study of coping with the negative effects of job loss. *Journal of Public Health Research*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/10.4081/jphr.2021.2492

Mayer, K. U. (2001). Lebensverlauf. In B. Schäfers & W. Zapf (Eds.), *Handwörterbuch zur Gesellschaft Deutschlands* (pp. 446–460). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-94976-9_39

Mayer, K. U. (2004). Whose lives? How history, societies, and institutions define and shape life courses. *Research in Human Development*, *1*(3), 161–187. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427617rhd0103_3

Mayring, P. (2015). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken* (12th ed.). *Beltz Pädagogik*. Weinheim, Bergstr: Beltz, J.

Mayring, P. (2016). *Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung* (6th ed.). *Beltz Studium.*

McKee-Ryan, F., Song, Z., Wanberg, C. R., & Kinicki, A. J. (2005). Psychological and physical well-being during unemployment: A meta-analytic study. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, *90*(1), 53–76. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.90.1.53

McKee-Ryan, F. M., & Kinicki, A. J. (2002). Coping with job loss: A life-facet perspective. In C. L. Cooper & I. T. Robertson (Eds.), *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (pp. 1–29). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470696392.ch1

McKernan, S.-M., & Ratcliffe, C. (2005). Events that trigger poverty entries and exits. *Social Science Quarterly*, *86*(s1), 1146–1169. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2005.00340.x

Medjedovic, I., & Witzel, A. (2005). Secondary analysis of interviews: using codes and theoretical concepts from the primary study, *6*(1). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-6.1.507

Meo, A., Ricucci, R., Schlee, C., Helemäe, J., & Kazjulja, M. (2021). The role of informal social support for young people in unemployment and job insecurity in Italy, Estonia, and Germany. In M. Unt, M. Gebel, S. Bertolini, V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, & D. Hofäcker (Eds.), *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity* (pp. 239–262). Bristol: Policy Press.

Merkens, H. (2004). Selection procedures, sampling, case construction. In U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 165–171). London, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Mey, G. (2016). Qualitative Forschung: Zu einem Über(be)griff und seinen (Ver)Wendungen: Ein Kommentar zu Ronald Hitzler. *Zeitschrift für Qualitative Forschung*, *17*(1_2), 185–197.

Mey, G., & Ruppel, P. S. (2018). Qualitative Forschung. In O. Decker (Ed.), *Sozialpsychologie und Sozialtheorie. Sozialpsychologie und Sozialtheorie: Band 1 Zugänge* (pp. 205–244). Wiesbaden: Springer VS. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-19564-3_14

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (Fourth edition, International student edition). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Morrell, S. L., Taylor, R. J., & Kerr, C. B. (1998). Unemployment and young people's health. *Medical Journal of Australia*, *168*(5), 236–240. https://doi.org/10.5694/j.1326-5377.1998.tb140139.x

Mückenberger, U. (1985). Die Krise des Normalarbeitsverhältnisses: Hat das Arbeitsrecht noch Zukunft? *Zeitschrift Für Sozialreform*, *31*(7), 415–475.

Mückenberger, U. (1989). Der Wandel des Normalarbeitsverhältnisses unter Bedingungen einer "Krise der Normalität". *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte (FRG 092)*, (04), 211–223.

Müller, S. (2012). Zwischen letzter Chance und Warteschleife. In J. Mansel & K. Speck (Eds.), *Jugendforschung. Jugend und Arbeit: Empirische Bestandsaufnahme und Analysen*. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.

Murphy, G. C., & Athanasou, J. A. (1999). The effect of unemployment on mental health. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *72*(1), 83–99. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317999166518

Mutz, G., Ludwig-Mayerhofer, W., Koenen, E. J., Eder, K., & Bonß, W. (1995). *Diskontinuierliche Erwerbsverläufe: Analysen zur postindustriellen Arbeitslosigkeit*. *Biographie und Gesellschaft: Vol. 22*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-97301-6

Nilsson, K., & Strandh, M. (1999). Nest leaving in Sweden: The importance of early educational and labor market Careers. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *61*(4), 1068–1079. https://doi.org/10.2307/354025

Nordenmark, M., & Strandh, M. (1999). Towards a sociological understanding of mental well-being among the unemployed: The role of economic and psychosocial factors. *Sociology*, *33*(3), 577–597. https://doi.org/10.1177/S003803859900036X

OECD (2019). Unemployment. Retrieved from https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/long-term-unemployment-rate/indicator/english_76471ad5-en (Accessed 29.03.2024).

OECD (2023). Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET). Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/youth-not-in-employment-education-or-training-neet.html (Accessed 19.11.2023).

OECD (2024). Long-term unemployment rate. Retrieved from https://data.oecd.org/unemp/long-term-unemployment-rate.htm (Accessed 29.03.2024).

Offe, C. (1991). *Arbeitsgesellschaft: Strukturprobleme und Zukunftsperspektiven* (reprint from 1984). Niedernberg: Repro Pfeffer.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Paul, K. I., & Batinic, B. (2009). The need for work: Jahoda's latent functions of employment in a representative sample of the German population. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *31*(1), 45–64. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.622

Paul, K. I., Hassel, A., & Moser, K. (2006). Die Auswirkungen von Arbeitslosigkeit auf die psychische Gesundheit: Befunde einer quantitativen Forschungsintegration. In A. Hollederer & H. Brand (Eds.), *Programmbereich Gesundheit. Arbeitslosigkeit, Gesundheit und Krankheit* (pp. 35–51). Bern: Huber.

Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2006). Incongruence as an explanation for the negative mental health effects of unemployment: Meta-analytic evidence. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *79*(4), 595–621. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317905X70823

Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2009). Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *74*(3), 264–282. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001

Paul, K. I., Vastamäki, J., & Moser, K. (2016). Frustration of life goals Mediates the negative effect of unemployment on subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *17*(2), 447–462. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-014-9603-7

Paul, K. I., Zechmann, A., & Moser, K. (2016). Psychische Folgen von Arbeitsplatzverlust und Arbeitslosigkeit. *WSI-Mitteilungen*. (5), 373–380.

Pearlin, L. I. (1991). The study of coping: An overview of problems and directions. In J. Eckenrode (Ed.), *The Plenum series on stress and coping. The social context of coping*. New York: Plenum Press.

Pearlin, L. I., & Aneshensel, C. S. (1986). Coping and social supports: Their functions and applications. In L. H. Aiken (Ed.), *Applications of social science to clinical medicine and health policy* (pp. 417–437). New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Pearlin, L. I., & Schooler, C. (1978). The structure of coping. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *19*(1), 2. https://doi.org/10.2307/2136319

Pearlin, L. I., & Skaff, M. M. (1996). Stress and the life course: A paradigmatic alliance. *The Gerontologist*, *36*(2), 239–247. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/36.2.239

Picchio, M., & Ubaldi, M. (2022). *Unemployment and Health: A Meta-Analysis* (IZA Discussion Paper Series No. 15433). Bonn.

Popp, S., & Schels, B. (2008). 'Do you feel excluded?' The subjective experience of young state benefit recipients in Germany. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *11*(2), 165–191. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260701851111

Przyborski, A., & Wohlrab-Sahr, M. (2014). *Qualitative Sozialforschung: Ein Arbeitsbuch* (4th ed.). *Lehr- Und Handbucher Der Soziologie*. Oldenbourg: De Gruyter.

Raithel, T. (2012). *Jugendarbeitslosigkeit in der Bundesrepublik: Entwicklung und Auseinandersetzung während der 1970er und 1980er Jahre*. *Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte: Vol. 105*. München: Oldenbourg.

Rapley, T. (2011). Some pragmatics of data analysis. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Issues of theory, method, and practice* (3rd ed., pp. 273–290). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Reichertz, J. (2016). *Qualitative und interpretative Sozialforschung: Eine Einladung*. *Studientexte zur Soziologie.* Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Reinders, H. (2016). *Qualitative Interviews mit Jugendlichen führen: Ein Leitfaden* (3rd updated ed.). Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

Reißig, B. (2010). *Biographien jenseits von Erwerbsarbeit: Prozesse sozialer Exklusion und ihre Bewältigung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften; Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kxp/detail.action?docID=750911.

Reneflot, A., & Evensen, M. (2014). Unemployment and psychological distress among young adults in the Nordic countries: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, *23*(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12000

Richter, E. P., Brähler, E., Stöbel-Richter, Y., Zenger, M., & Berth, H. (2020). The long-lasting impact of unemployment on life satisfaction: Results of a longitudinal study over 20 years in East Germany. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, *18*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-020-01608-5

Ricucci, R., Ghislieri, C., Krasteva, V., Jeliazkova, M., Taru, M., & Rokicks, M. (2021). How young people experience and perceive labour market policies in four European countries. In M. Unt, M. Gebel, S. Bertolini, V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, & D. Hofäcker (Eds.), *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity* (pp. 263–291). Bristol: Policy Press.

Rogge, B. (2013). *Wie uns Arbeitslosigkeit unter die Haut geht: Identitätsprozess und psychische Gesundheit bei Statuswechseln*. Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft.

Rokicka, M., Kłobuszewska, M., Palczyńska, M., & Shapoval, N. (Eds.) (2015). *Composition and cumulative disadvantage of youth across Europe* (EXCEPT Working Papers: No. 1). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from http://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP1_Composition_and_cumulative_disadvantage_V5.pdf.

Roosmaa, E.-L., Reiska, E., Stasiowski, J., Bertolini, S., & Torrioni, P. M. (2021). Meanings of work in the narratives of Italian, Estonian, and Polish young people who experience labour market insecurity. In M. Unt, M. Gebel, S. Bertolini, V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, & D. Hofäcker (Eds.), *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity* (pp. 139–165). Bristol: Policy Press.

Rothe, T., & Tinter, S. (2007). *Jugendliche auf dem Arbeitsmarkt: Eine Analyse von Beständen und Bewegungen* (IAB Forschungsbericht No. 4).

Ryff, C. D., & Heidrich, S. M. (1997). Experience and well-being: Explorations on domains of life and how they matter. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *20*(2), 193–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/016502597385289

Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. *Understanding qualitative research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Scarpetta, S., Sonnet, A., & Manfredi, T. (2010). *Rising youth unemployment during the crisis: How to prevent negative long-term consequences on a generation?* (OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 106/2010). https://doi.org/10.1787/5kmh79zb2mmv-en

Schatzman, L., & Strauss, A. L. (1973). *Field research: Strategies for a natural sociology*. *Prentice-Hall methods of social science series*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Schaufeli, W. B. (1997). Youth unemployment and mental health: Some Dutch findings. *Journal of Adolescence*, *20*(3), 281–292. https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.1997.0085

Schels, B. (2007). *Jugendarbeitslosigkeit und psychisches Wohlbefinden* (IAB Forschungsbericht: Ergebnisse aus der Projektarbeit des Instituts für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung No. 13/2007).

Schels, B. (2018). NEET und sozial benachteiligte junge Menschen im Übergang in das Erwerbsleben: Konzepte, Befunde, Diskussionen. In A. Lange, H. Reiter, S. Schutter, & C. Steiner (Eds.), *Handbuch Kindheits- und Jugendsoziologie* (pp. 241–252). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04207-3_14

Schels, B. (2021). Materielle Lebenslagen, Bildungs- und soziale Ungleichheiten im Jugend- und jungen Erwachsenenalter. In A. Berngruber & N. Gaupp (Eds.), *Erwachsenwerden heute: Lebenslagen und Lebensführung junger Menschen* (pp. 56–66). Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag.

Schels, B., & Wöhrer, V. (2022). Challenges in school-to-work transition in Germany and Austria: Perspectives on individual, Institutional, and structural inequalities. *Social Inclusion*, *10*(2), 221–225. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.5770

Scherer, S. (2005). Patterns of labour market entry – Long wait or career instability? An empirical comparison of Italy, Great Britain and West Germany. *European Sociological Review*, *21*(5), 427–440. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jci029

Scherer, S., & Kogan, I. (2004). Erwerbseintritt in Europa. *Bildung Und Erziehung*, *57*(2), 133–154. https://doi.org/10.7788/bue.2004.57.2.133

Schlee, C. (2018). *Young adults in insecure labour market positions in Germany: The results from a qualitative study* (EXCEPT Working Papers No. 19). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from https://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP19_Young_adults_in_insecure_labour_market_positions_in_Germany_-_results_from_qualitative_survey.pdf

Schlee, C., Musumeci, R., & Ghislieri, C. (2021). Experiencing unemployment and job insecurity in two European countries: German and Italian young people's well- being and coping strategies. In M. Unt, M. Gebel, S. Bertolini, V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, & D.

Hofäcker (Eds.), *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity* (pp. 112–135). Bristol: Policy Press.

Schmillen, A., & Umkehrer, M. (2014). *Verfestigung von früher Arbeitslosigkeit* (IAB-Kurzbericht No. 16/2014).

Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. London: SAGE.

Seiffge-Krenke, I. (2017). *Widerstand, Abwehr und Bewältigung*. *Psychodynamik kompakt*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666405792

Shore, J., & Tosun, J. (2019). Assessing youth labour market services: Young people's perceptions and evaluations of service delivery in Germany. *Public Policy and Administration*, *34*(1), 22–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076717722192

Shuman, V., Sander, D., & Scherer, K. R. (2013). Levels of valence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *4*, 261. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00261

Siebers, R., & Vonderach, G. (1991). Unterschiedliche lebensgeschichtliche Bewältigungsmuster junger Menschen gegenüber langandauernder Arbeitslosigkeit, *24*(1), 193–205.

Solga, H. (2005). *Ohne Abschluss in die Bildungsgesellschaft: Die Erwerbschancen gering qualifizierter Personen aus soziologischer und ökonomischer Perspektive*. Opladen: Budrich.

Staiger, T., Waldmann, T., Oexle, N., Wigand, M., & Rüsch, N. (2018). Intersections of discrimination due to unemployment and mental health problems: The role of double stigma for job- and help-seeking behaviors. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, *53*(10), 1091–1098. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-018-1535-9

Staudinger, U. M. (2000). Viele Gründe sprechen dagegen, und trotzdem geht es vielen Menschen gut: Das Paradox des subjektiven Wohlbefindens. *Psychologische Rundschau*, *51*(4), 185–197. https://doi.org/10.1026//0033-3042.51.4.185

Strandh, M. (2000). *Varying unemployment experiences? The economy and mental well-being*. *Doctoral theses at the Department of Sociology, Umeå University: Vol. 18*. Umeå: Umeå University.

Strandh, M., Winefield, A., Nilsson, K., & Hammarström, A. (2014). Unemployment and mental health scarring during the life course. *European Journal of Public Health*, *24*(3), 440–445. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cku005

Strehmel, P., & Halsig, N. (1988). Bewältigung von Arbeitslosigkeit. In L. Brüderl (Ed.), *Materialien. Belastende Lebenssituationen: Untersuchungen zur Bewältigungs- und Entwicklungsforschung* (pp. 57–75). Weinheim, München: Juventa Verlag

Strübing, J. (2013). *Qualitative Sozialforschung: Eine komprimierte Einführung für Studierende*. *Soziologie kompakt.* München: Oldenbourg.

Struck, O. (2019). Fluchtmigration und Arbeitsmarktintegration. In B. Blättel-Mink, T. Noack, C. Onnen, K. Späte, & R. Stein-Redent (Eds.), *Sozialwissenschaften und Berufspraxis. Flüchtigkeiten: Sozialwissenschaftliche Debatten* (pp. 11–28). Wiesbaden, Heidelberg: Springer VS.

Suh, E., Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Triandis, H. C. (1998). The shifting basis of life satisfaction judgments across cultures: Emotions versus norms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*(2), 482–493. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.2.482

Tajfel, H. (1978). Social categorization, social identity and social comparison. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *European monographs in social psychology: Vol. 14. Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 61–76). London usw.: Acad. Pr.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1979). An Integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Tham, B. (1999). *Jugendarbeitslosigkeit in der Europäischen Union: Integration oder Marginalisierung? Schriftenreihe der Forschungsgruppe Jugend und Europa*. Bonn: Europa-Union-Verlag.

Thoits, P. A. (1986). Social support as coping assistance. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *54*(4), 416–423. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.54.4.416

Thoits, P. A. (2013). Self, Identity, Stress, and Mental Health. In C. S. Aneshensel, J. C. Phelan, & A. Bierman (Eds.), *Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research. Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health* (pp. 357–377). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4276-5_18

Thompson, P. (2000). Re-using qualitative research data: A personal account. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(3). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.3.1044

Ulich, D. (1995). *Das Gefühl: Eine Einführung in die Emotionspsychologie* (3rd ed.). Weinheim: Psychologie Verlags Union.

United Nations (n.d.). Youth. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth (Accessed 19.11.2023).

Unt, M., & Gebel, M. (2018). *Synthesis of the main empirical findings of EXCEPT project* (EXCEPT Working Papers No. 57). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from https://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP57_Synthesis_of_the_main_empirical_findigs_of_EXCEPT_project.pdf.

Unt, M., Gebel, M., Bertolini, S., Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, V., & Hofäcker, D. (Eds.) (2021). *Social exclusion of youth in Europe: The multifaceted consequences of labour market insecurity*. Bristol: Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.47674/9781447358756

Vandecasteele, L. (2011). Life course risks or cumulative disadvantage? The structuring effect of social stratification determinants and life course events on poverty transitions in Europe. *European Sociological Review*, *27*(2), 246–263. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcq005

Veenhoven, R. (2007). Subjective measures of well-being. In M. McGillivray (Ed.), *Springer ebook collection / Palgrave Economics and Finance Collection 2000 - 2013. Human well-being: Concept and measurement* (pp. 214–239). London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230625600_9

Veenhoven, R. (2008). Sociological theories of subjective well-being. In M. Eid (Ed.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 44–61). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Vonderach, G., Siebers, R., & Barr, U. (1992). *Arbeitslosigkeit und Lebensgeschichte: Eine empirische Untersuchung unter jungen Langzeitarbeitslosen*. *Biographie und Gesellschaft*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Voßemer, J. (2019). *The economic and non-economic consequences of job loss, unemployment, and inadequate re-employment in Germany and Europe* (Dissertation). Bamberg. https://doi.org/10.20378/irbo-54547

Voßemer, J., & Eunicke, N. (2015). *The impact of labour market exclusion and job insecurity on health and well-being among youth - a literature review* (EXCEPT Working Papers No. 2). Tallinn: Tallinn University. Retrieved from: https://www.except-project.eu/files/filemanager/files/WP2_The_impact_of_labor_market_exclusion_and_job_insecurity_on_health_and_well-being_among_youth_literature_review.pdf

Voßemer, J., Gebel, M., Täht, K., Unt, M., Högberg, B., & Strandh, M. (2018). The effects of unemployment and insecure jobs on well-being and health: The moderating role of labor market policies. *Social Indicators Research*, *138*(3), 1229–1257. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1697-y

Voukelatou, V., Gabrielli, L., Miliou, I., Cresci, S., Sharma, R., Tesconi, M., & Pappalardo, L. (2021). Measuring objective and subjective well-being: dimensions and data sources. *International Journal of Data Science and Analytics*, *11*(4), 279–309. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41060-020-00224-2

Wanberg, C. R. (2012). The individual experience of unemployment. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *63*, 369–396. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100500

Warr, P. B. (1987a). The psychological impact of continuing unemployment: Some longitudinal data and a general model. In D. Schwefel, P.-G. Svensson, & H. Zollner (Eds.), *Health Systems Research. Unemployment, Social Vulnerability, and Health* (pp. 267–280). Berlin: Springer-Verlag. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-83112-6_18

Warr, P. B. (1987b). *Work, unemployment, and mental health*. *Oxford science publications*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Warr, P. B. (2008). *Environmental "Vitamins", Personal Judgments, Work Values, and Happiness*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199211913.003.0004

Weis, D., & Joachim, P. (2017). Der Übergang in Arbeit und seine Auswirkungen auf die gesellschaftliche Integration und das Erwachsenwerden. Transitionsverläufe, Probleme und Bewältigungsmuster von Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen. In S. Lessenich (Chair), *Geschlossene Gesellschaften. Verhandlungen des 38. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Bamberg 2016.* Retrieved from https://publikationen.soziologie.de/index.php/kongressband_2016/article/view/446/pdf_72.

Witt, H. (2001). Forschungsstrategien bei quantitativer und qualitativer Sozialforschung. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *2*(1). Retrieved from https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/969/2114.

Witzel, A. (2000). The problem-centered interview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.1.1132

World Health Organization (2022). Mental Health. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response (Accessed 20.11.2023).

World Health Organization (1948). Constitution of the World Health Organization.

Wulfgramm, M. (2014). Life satisfaction effects of unemployment in Europe: The moderating influence of labour market policy. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *24*(3), 258–272. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928714525817

Young, J. E., Klosko, J. S., & Weishaar, M. E. (2005). *Schematherapie: Ein praxisorientiertes Handbuch* (2nd. ed.). *Reihe Fachbuch: Schematherapie*. Paderborn: Junfermann.

# 9 Appendix

**A 1** Informed consent form

## Informed consent form[5]

**EXCEPT*** (Social Exclusion of Youth in Europe: cumulative disadvantage, coping strategies, effective policies and transfer) is a research project within Horizon 2020, the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme.

**http://www.except-project.eu**

Youth unemployment and insecurities in the labour market have significantly increased over the recent years in Europe.
EXCEPT is a research project that aims at analysing the situation of young people in the labour market and the risks of poverty and social exclusion this might imply, as well as to assess the related policy measures in the EU-28 and in Ukraine.
The final goal of the EXCEPT project is to develop effective and innovative policy initiatives to help young people in Europe to overcome labour market insecurities and related risks.

I, the undersigned, confirm that:

I have read and understood the information about the EXCEPT project
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation
I voluntarily agree to participate in the project
I give my consent to the recording of the interview
I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me
The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me

I have understood the information about the interview and the EXCEPT project

_____
Signature Date:

I agree and sign this informed consent form

_____
Signature Date:

* The **Except** consortium brings together research teams of ten European research institutes: Tallinn University in Estonia; University of Bamberg & University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany; Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge in Bulgaria; Aristotle University in Greece; University of Turin in Italy; The Educational Research Institute in Poland; Umeå University in Sweden; University of Kent in UK; Kyiv School of Economics in Ukraine.

[5] This document was used as a template for the data collection process in Work Package 3 (led by the University of Turin) during the EXCEPT project.

**A 2** Details on the informed consent form

# Details on the informed consent form[6]

*by WP6 lead team University of Duisburg-Essen and EXCEPT Ethical Representative*

*General interviewer advice: Please make sure that the respondents understand what you are saying. It must be insured that all appropriate efforts have been undertaken to ensure a full understanding of the information provided such that those persons can make a conscious and well-informed personal decision.*
*Please give the respondent opportunities to ask additional questions.*

## 1. Information about the EXCEPT project

*Interviewer advice: The following information has to be provided by the interviewer to each potential respondent. The information is structured in terms of questions. This is just to make the information in a respondent-friendly casual style and it allows you to easily get back to specific questions if the respondent repeats questions at another stage of the information provision.*

*What is the EXCEPT project and how it is funded?*
**EXCEPT** is a research project within Horizon 2020, which is financed by the European Union (EU). The EXCEPT project is purely academic scientific research by universities and research institutes. It is not influenced by political parties, interest groups or private companies.

*Who is involved in the EXCEPT project?*
57 researchers from 10 universities and research institutes from 9 countries are involved in the EXCEPT project. The following academic institutions are involved into the EXCEPT project:

- Tallinn University, Estonia
- University of Bamberg, Germany
- University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany
- Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
- University of Turin, Italy
- Educational Research Institute, Warsaw, Poland
- Umeå University, Sweden
- University of Kent, Centre for Health Services Studies, United Kingdom
- Kyiv School of Economics, Kyiv Economics Institute, Ukraine

*What is the topic and what are the aims of the EXCEPT project?*

[6] This document was developed during the EXCEPT project by WP6 (led by the University of Duisburg-Essen) and EXCEPT ethical representative and served as a template for the data collection process.

We are interviewing experts in 8 EU countries (Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, Italy, Poland, Estonia) and Ukraine, which are experts in the field of pension system from different perspectives. The objective is both a scientific perspective and prospects of private and occupational pension insurance, to investigate the opportunities of young people today to save for their old age pension provision. In an international comparison, we would like to examine the long-term consequences that may result from atypical employment and unemployment for young Europeans.
The results of the research project will be made available to the European public and should help to improve the life situation and social inclusion of young generations. The main objective of the except project is to develop innovative and effective policy programmes to help young people cope with market uncertainties.

*Where can I read more about the EXCEPT project?*
You can read more about the project on its official webpage:

**http://www.except-project.eu**

Please feel free to have a look at the homepage now before the interview starts.

*Do you have any additional questions about the EXCEPT project?*

*Whom can I contact if I have any questions about the EXCEPT project?*
Contact information of national contact point

Name:
Institutional postal address:
Phone number:
Email address:

## 2. Information about the interview

Prior to participating in the interviews, I will inform you about the following issues. If you don't understand something I am saying please interrupt me and I will explain it to you again and in more detail. Moreover, please feel free to ask questions at any time.

### 2.1. The qualitative methodology of expert interviews or in-depth personal interviews

I will conduct a qualitative expert interview with you. I have prepared a set of question that I am going to ask you during the interview. You can answer each question with your own words, i.e. it is completely free. I am interested in your professional opinion. You can decide on your own what you like to tell us regarding the question I am asking.

### 2.2 Process of interviewing, especially the right not to answer specific questions and the right to withdraw their consent at any stage

You have the right to refuse answering specific questions for any reasons. Single responses will be deleted and not used for further analysis upon your request. However, due to the data anonymization it is important that you make this request before the end of the interview, i.e. the

moment the anonymization of your data will start.

If you feel uncomfortable during the interview please tell me immediately such that we can make a break or stop the interview. I will give you support if necessary.

### 2.3 The recording of interviews for analytical purposes

If you agree to participate in the interview, the interview will be recorded. Data collected via recording are immediately downloaded from the recorder on return to my office into a secure directory. Information on the recorder is deleted directly afterwards.

### 2.4 The length of data collection

The interview will last about 45 minutes to one hour. You can ask at any time for a break or interruption of the interview.

### 2.5 The ethical guidelines of the EXCEPT project

All researchers of the project, including me, signed the ethical guidelines of the EXCEPT project. This ethical guideline defines strict ethical rules. Specifically, the declaration guarantees that other EXCEPT researchers and me follow the ethical guidelines of the European Union, the principles of scientific integrity and specific guidelines that protect you as a participant and the data collection, storage, protection, retention and destruction for the data of your interview.

### 2.6 Anonymization, data protection and the use of data only for the purpose of the investigation

All the following data security regulations I will explain apply to all forms of data you provided.

In processing and analysing the data, all legal regulations regarding confidentiality will be strictly followed in order to ensure that the anonymity of participants is being protected. It is ensured that collection, storage and use of personal data are in line with EU-level, nation-specific and EXCEPT project-specific legal regulations.

No data collection is undertaken without the informed consent of you, i.e. the voluntary declaration to take part in the interview.

In data storage, the anonymity of you is guaranteed. In particular, individual information on you (your name and contact details) will be separately stored so that no interview information can be directly linked to you in person. Data that can identify you will not be published or made available or passed on to third parties.

Information that you provide as responses to the questions that may allow identifying yourself but also any other private person (such as names of companies you worked for, place of residence you mention, etc.) will be anonymized, too. The distinguishing personal information will be replaced with pseudonyms.

The transcribed anonymized interviews will be stored in a secured directory that is accessible only by the authorized researchers of the EXCEPT project that signed a data protection statement for using the specific data set. Computers and networks are protected by firewalls.

Researchers are not allowed to make copies of the data sets or allow others to access the data sets.

While the EXCEPT project is ongoing, data will be used for scientific research by EXCEPT researchers only. For the purpose of the EXCEPT project, the full transcribed anonymized interviews will only be analysed by the national team of the EXCEPT project in your country. Only short analytical summaries of the anonymized interviews, so called "synopses" will be analysed by other EXCEPT researchers in a cross-national perspective. These are not the original data but scientific interpretations/analyses of data that contain a few anonymized quotes from the interview.

Anonymised data will be stored after the end of the project on 30 April 2018 in secure data storages and accessible only for EXCEPT researchers for the purpose of scientific documentation of the scientific publications of the project, i.e. if there is scientific need to replicate analyses that was done by the respective EXCEPT researchers, and for other scientific purpose only (that are consistent with the Ethical standard of the EXCEPT project).

### 2.7 Information about what will happen to the results of the research

The analysis and presentation of data and findings does not allow identifying specific single individuals. It is not allowed to publish full personal interviews. Researchers may only quote short passages of individual interviews in anonymised form.

Results of the research based on the interviews will be used only for scientific publication, which will be made available to various stakeholders (European Commission, researchers, youths, interested public, etc.). Data that can identify you will not be published as results or made available or passed on to third parties.

### 2.8 Compensation

*Interviewer advice: Please explain in detail the nation-specific compensation scheme if one is applied. Please make sure that the interviewee confirms the receipt of the compensation.*

### 2.9 Right to refuse to participate

The interview will only be started if you agree to participate in the survey. You have the right to refuse to participate in the survey.

*Interviewer advice: Ask the respondent now whether he or she has any additional questions.*

### 2.10 Informed consent form

If you are willing to starting this interview I would like to ask you to confirm that you have been informed about the previous issues. We have prepared an informed consent form that needs to be signed by you if you are willing to participate in the interview.

*Interviewer advice: Please provide the informed consent form to the interviewee. Read the informed consent form again to the interviewee.*

**A 3** Interview guideline and questionnaire

# Interview outline[7]

The outline is divided into the following sections:

- Warm up question
- A. Educational and working paths
    - A1. Work: perceptions, feelings and satisfaction
    - A2. Informal and institutional support
- B. Living conditions, economic situation and autonomy
- Conclusion of interview, plans and future prospects

In each section, you will find:
- the explanation of the thematic focus of the section (aim)
- a list of suggested questions (first column). Mandatory questions are in bold. The others have to be used to sustain the narrative flow, if they are consistent with the interviewee's situation and if that information does not come up spontaneously
- a list of topics to be investigated during the narrative flow (second column)

**Well-being** and **coping** are cross-sectional topics that have to be investigated during the interview.
Specifically, we are interested in:
- personal perceptions and definitions of their own situation of well-being
- concrete experiences connected to well-being (or lack of)
- coping strategies at different levels: individual; informal social networks; institutional support (labour-market, educational, social and other specific policies). Regarding institutional support: knowledge, motivation, access (how they got into the policy/measure/benefit), assessment (fulfilment of the expectations and impact on life), suggestions for improvement.

**Potential questions** that can be used to further investigate well-being and coping when the issue comes up during the interview:
- **What was the main problem for you in that situation?/What bothered you in that situation?**
**- How did you feel about that? Could you tell me how you reacted to that?**
**- What did you do?**

## WARM UP QUESTION

*Start with an easy question in order to put the interviewee at their ease*

**Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?**
*(use the information to start to construct the work and educational timeline)*

## A) EDUCATIONAL AND WORKING PATHS

*Aim: this section focuses on education and work. In particular, job conditions and working experiences; perceptions and evaluations about educational/working paths and connections/coherence between the two of them.*

[7] This document was jointly developed during the EXCEPT project in Work Package 3 (WP3) (led by the University of Turin) and served as a template for the data collection process.

*How to use the timelines: go back and retrace the educational and working paths. Apart from basic facts about education/work, we are interested in the **flow**, focusing on the **why** and the **how**. It is relevant to understand turning points and key moments (a subjective reconstruction rather than an objective report).*

**Educational and working timelines**

*now*

*To introduce the section:* ***I would like to talk to you about your education and your work experiences until now. Take a look at these timelines…***

| ***Questions*** | ***Topics to be investigated during the narrative flow*** |
|---|---|
| **Could you point out the main moments in both your educational and working paths? Please focus on the most important experiences. Also, indicate periods of unemployment, if any.**<br><br>*About working experiences (current + past)*:<br>- When and how did you find your job?<br>- What kind of contract do you have?<br>- What do you do exactly?<br><br>*About periods of unemployment*:<br>- Have you ever been unemployed?<br>- What did you do in those moments?<br>- Did you receive any social benefits (from the state or private foundations)?<br>- What kind? | We are interested in:<br>- turning points<br>- expectations<br>- reasons behind decisions and changes<br>- coherence between education and work<br><br>About job experiences:<br>- temporary vs. open-end<br>- full-time vs. part-time<br>- formal vs. informal (e.g. verbal agreement)<br>- paid vs. unpaid<br><br>About periods of unemployment:<br>- looking for jobs<br>- training<br>- programs for unemployed (active labour policies)<br>- unemployment benefits (passive labour policies) and other social benefits |

**A1) Work: perceptions, feelings and satisfaction**

*Aim: this section investigates feelings, evaluations and satisfaction in relation to working experiences.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **What have been your best and worst working experiences?** | We are interested in (in relation to work experience):<br>- perceptions and evaluations |

| | |
|---|---|
| **What makes you happy about your work?**<br><br>**What worries you the most about your work?**<br><br>**Generally speaking, what does work mean to you?** | - (perceptions of) opportunities and constraints<br><br>We are interested in:<br>- subjective job insecurity<br>- worry about job loss<br>- worry about not finding a new job<br>- worry about income insecurity<br><br>We are interested in (in relation to meanings of work):<br>- instrumental vs. self-realization<br>- other professional values (e.g. self-interest vs. other orientation) |

**A2) Informal and institutional support**

*Aim: this section investigates the support from personal networks (family, friends, neighbours, associations etc.) and from private/public institutions. In relation to both, we want to investigate facts, knowledge, expectations and mismatches.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Who would you ask for help if you lost your job? And to find a new job?**<br><br>**Are there any programs and/or measures (promoted by public institutions or private organizations) you have turned to/you would turn to? What do you think about them?**<br><br>**Have you ever taken part in a specific program for training and/or for employment?** *[for the interviewer: name local examples and investigate further]*<br><br>**What kind of help/support would you like to receive from the institutions to improve your working situation?** | We look for references to:<br>- family and partner<br>- social networks (friends, colleagues, other relevant people, community)<br>- public/private institutions or specific programs<br><br>We are interested in:<br>- strong vs. weak ties<br>- kind of support expected (emotional, informational, practical, material)<br>- reasons behind non-involvement in specific program (lack of knowledge/lack of interest/lack of prerequisites/ lack of trust) |

*Only for those involved in programs*

| | |
|---|---|
| **If you took part into a specific program, could you tell me something more about it?**<br><br>In practice, how did you know about this program? Could you describe the features of the program that you experienced?<br><br>**What did you think about the program?**<br>What expectations did you have, and were they fulfilled? | We are interested in:<br>- policies or programs they know about/are involved in<br>- reasons behind the decision to take part<br>- source of information<br>- evaluation and satisfaction about the program<br>- possible future improvements |

| | |
|---|---|
| **How did the program affect your life?**<br><br>What would you suggest to improve this program to fit your needs better? | |

*To close the section about work:*

| | |
|---|---|
| **We've been talking about your work experiences. What would be your ideal job?** | We are interested in:<br>- expectations about work and working conditions |

**B) LIVING CONDITIONS, ECONOMIC SITUATION AND AUTONOMY**

*Aim: this section investigates the relationships among work, living conditions and financial situation. We are particularly interested in the topics of autonomy and transition to adulthood.*

*To introduce the section:* ***We have been talking about your working experiences and your ideal job. I would like to ask your opinion about other general issues…***

| ***Questions*** | ***Topics to be investigated during the narrative flow*** |
|---|---|
| **In your opinion, what does it mean to become an adult?**<br><br>**What does personal autonomy mean to you?**<br><br>How do you evaluate your current level of autonomy?<br><br>Have you ever talked about this with your parents, partner, friends? | We are interested in:<br>- definitions and meanings of autonomy and adulthood<br>- social expectations (about way of life, transition to adulthood and responsibilities)<br>- perceptions by other relevant people |

*To introduce the section:* ***now we would like to focus more on your own experiences and the interactions between your work and other dimensions of your life…***

| | |
|---|---|
| **Could you tell me something about your current living conditions? Where and who do you live with?**<br><br>**How do you feel about your current living conditions?**<br><br>**What about your past living conditions: where and who did you live with before?**<br><br>**What made you decide to leave your parents' house (or why did you stay there)?**<br><br>**Did you talk about this with your parents, partner and friends before? Did they agree with your decision?**<br><br>How do you think your working conditions influence your current living conditions? | We are interested (in terms of past and present living conditions) in:<br>- where, who with, since when<br>- perceptions and evaluations<br>- turning points<br>- reasons behind decisions<br>- expectations about living conditions<br>- expectations by other relevant people, disagreements and conflicts<br>- period(s) out of parental home<br>- return to parents' home<br>- rent vs. ownership |

| | |
|---|---|
| What kind of help did you receive (if any) to leave the parental home and set up your own? Who from?<br><br>**Have you ever made use of public/private benefits such as housing benefits and/or other kinds of allowances/programs? What do you think about them?** | We are interested in knowledge, use, expectations about:<br>- housing policies<br>- policies in support of autonomy |
| **Talking about your current living conditions, I would like to understand better how you manage your household financially, and your everyday life expenses: could you tell me something about them?**<br><br>**What types of income do you count on?**<br>Do you have other resources different from your salary? | We are interested in:<br>- household budget (e.g. savings and debts)<br>- difficulties in making ends meet, deprivations, renunciations<br><br>We are interested in:<br>- Earnings: amount, regularity<br>- Money received; Goods received by/shared with family, social networks, public/private institutions |
| **Do you have any worries about significant life events in your future?** E.g. starting a family, setting up house, but also more critical such as being fired losing your job or facing an illness.<br><br>**Are you thinking about financial security for the future with regard to savings?** E.g., do you have any insurance, private savings or retirement plans? | We are interested in:<br>- anticipating critical events<br>- savings behaviour over lifecycle |
| **How do you feel about your standard of living and the financial resources you have at your disposal?**<br>Compare them to:<br>… the way you would like to live<br>… the way your friends live<br>… the way your parents lived at your age | We are interested in:<br>- feelings and satisfaction<br>- social expectations about way of life, transition to adulthood, and responsibilities<br>- intergenerational comparison |

**CONCLUSION OF THE INTERVIEW, PLANS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS**

*Aim: this section concludes the interview by investigating wishes, expectations and plans on the future, in terms of family, work and housing*

*To introduce the section:* ***We would like to conclude by speaking about your future***

| | |
|---|---|
| **Could you tell me something about your plans for your personal, family, educational and working life?**<br><br>**Imagine there is a time machine and you can move into the future and look at yourself in 5 years time. How do you expect to see yourself? What would you like to see?** | We are interested in:<br>- leaving the parental home<br>- setting up house<br>- starting a family<br>- training<br>- going abroad<br>- self-employment |

**Thank you so much for your time and your answers! Is there anything else you would like to tell me?**

**GENERAL INFORMATION – Questionanaire (to be completed by the interviewer)**

*Personal details*

Sex:

Male |__| Female |__|

Year of birth: |__||__||__||__|

Country of birth_____

City of birth:_____

Where do you live?

Country: _____

City: _____

Neighbourhood: _____

Citizenship:_____

Did you have a previous citizenship?_____

**[If achieved citizenship]** What was your previous citizenship?_____

**[If not national citizen]** Residence permit:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| None | | |__| |
| Employment | | |__| |
| Self-employment | | |__| |
| Family reunion | | |__| |
| Seeking for employment | | |__| |
| Long-stay permit | (CE permit) | |__| |
| Refugee permit | | |__| |

Which religious affiliation do you belong to _____

Marital status:

| | |
|---|---|
| Single | |__| |
| Married | |__| |
| Cohabitant | |__| |
| Widow | |__| |
| Divorced | |__| |

Now you live *(more than one option is possible)*

| | |
|---|---|
| On your own | |__| |
| With a spouse or a partner | |__| |
| With brothers and sisters | |__| |
| With one or both parents and/or their partners/spouses | |__| |
| With one or more children | |__| |
| With other relatives | |__| |
| With people who are not your relatives (eg. Roommates) | |__| |
| Other_____ | |__| |

Number of Children:_____

Education [tick the voice]

| | |
|---|---|
| 0 Less than primary education | |__| |
| 1 Primary education | |__| |
| 2 Lower secondary education | |__| |
| 3 Upper secondary education | |__| |
| 4 Post-secondary non-tertiary education | |__| |
| 5 Short-cycle tertiary education | |__| |
| 6 Bachelor's or equivalent level | |__| |

7 Master's or equivalent level |__|
8 Doctoral or equivalent level |__|
9 Not elsewhere classified |__|

Training experiences (about the last five years)
Specific educational courses |__|……
Training courses |__|……
Voluntary activities |__|……
[…..if necessary, add pages]

**[If employed]** About your current job:
Current job
_____
Type of contract, if any (please specify if self-employed, temporary workers, etc.)
_____
Start of job (month, year)
_____
How job was found
_____
Full-time, part-time
_____
Hours per week
_____
Regular income or not
_____
Monthly net earnings
_____
Special qualifications needed
_____

**[If unemployed]** Since when?
_____

**Partner**

| |
|---|
| Year of birth: \|__\|\|__\|\|__\|\|__\| |
| Education [tick the voice]<br>0 Less than primary education<br>1 Primary education<br>2 Lower secondary education<br>3 Upper secondary education<br>4 Post-secondary non-tertiary education<br>5 Short-cycle tertiary education<br>6 Bachelor's or equivalent level<br>7 Master's or equivalent level<br>8 Doctoral or equivalent level<br>9 Not elsewhere classified |
| Citizenship:_____ |
| Labour market position [tick the voice]<br>Employed/self-employed \|__\|<br>Unemployed: \|__\|<br>How long? _____<br>Retired/Inactive \|__\| |
| Type of job [If not employed ask the last job]_____ |
| [If migrant] Does he live in (NATION)? Since when? Why? (work, temporary stay, medical care, etc) |

**Family of origin**

| *Father* | *Mother* |
|---|---|
| Year of birth: \|__\|\|__\|\|__\|\|__\| | Year of birth: \|__\|\|__\|\|__\|\|__\| |
| Education [tick the voice]<br>0 Less than primary education<br>1 Primary education<br>2 Lower secondary education<br>3 Upper secondary education<br>4 Post-secondary non-tertiary education<br>5 Short-cycle tertiary education<br>6 Bachelor's or equivalent level<br>7 Master's or equivalent level<br>8 Doctoral or equivalent level<br>9 Not elsewhere classified | Education [tick the voice]<br>0 Less than primary education<br>1 Primary education<br>2 Lower secondary education<br>3 Upper secondary education<br>4 Post-secondary non-tertiary education<br>5 Short-cycle tertiary education<br>6 Bachelor's or equivalent level<br>7 Master's or equivalent level<br>8 Doctoral or equivalent level<br>9 Not elsewhere classified |
| Citizenship:_____ | Citizenship:_____ |
| Labour market position [tick the voice]<br>Employed/self-employed \|__\|<br>Unemployed: \|__\|<br>How long?_____<br>Retired/Inactive \|__\| | Labour market position [tick the voice]<br>Employed/self-employed \|__\|<br>Unemployed: \|__\|<br>How long?_____<br>Retired/Inactive/housewife \|__\| |
| Type of job [If not employed ask the last job]_____ | Type of job [If not employed ask the last job]_____ |
| [If migrant] Does he live in (NATION)? Since when? Why? (work, temporary stay, medical care, etc) | [If migrant] Does she live in (NATION)? Since when? Why? (work, temporary stay, medical care, etc) |

**A 4** General transcription guidelines

# General transcription guidelines[8]

| Signs/symbols | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| (***) (brief description) | Use (***) to encrypt names of persons, firms, locations, addresses and everything that could damages the interviewee's privacy. Next, in brackets, specify the kind of name. | Interviewee: (***) (daughter's name) likes very much French food. |
| … | Use to indicate the point at which the interviewee interrupts his/her talk. | Interviewee: I was wondering that… Yes… perhaps… |
| (…) | Short pause | Interviewee: Yes. (…) I have to say that I liked it. |
| [ | Left brackets indicate the point at which interviewee's talk is overlapped by interviewer's talk. | Interviewee: quite a [while Interviewer: [yeah |
| ] | Right brackets indicate the point at which two overlapping talks end. | Interviewee: and I thought] Interviewer: you said] |
| CAPITALS | Capitals indicate loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk. | Interviewee: I was WORRIED ABOUT that. |
| *(unable to hear what was said)* | Use to indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said. | Interviewee: I think that (*unable to hear what was said*). |
| (word) | Parenthesized words are possible hearings. | Interviewee: Would you see (there) anything positive |
| "direct speech" | Use to report speech or thought in its original form phrased by the original speaker. | Interviewee: When I was a child my mother said to me "you are wonderful". |
| , | Short stopping | |
| //mhm// | Comment of non-speaking person | It was a sad day //okay// and I walked around. |
| = | Fast follow up of another word | |
| **bold** | accentuation | |
| ((take a deep breath)) | Nonverbal comments | |
| (4) | Indicates length of break in seconds | |
| ? | Increasing intonation | |
| […] | German institution, law… which is not translated | [Hartz-IV = German unemployment benefit] |

[8] This document was provided by WP3 (led by the University of Turin) during the EXCEPT project for the interview transcription.

**A 5** Overview of the main codes and the subcodes

| Main codes | Subcodes | Description (and definition) |
|---|---|---|
| **Well-being (and health)** | • Cognitive (positive/negative)<br>• Affective (positive/negative)<br>• Health/illness (mental/physical) | All text passages from the narratives indicating well-being during unemployment were coded. To capture well-being, both the cognitive and affective domains, as distinguished by Diener (1984), Diener et al. (1999), were considered appropriate during the open coding process and served as orientation. This is because, among other, young people reported on their emotions as well as their satisfaction in life during the interviews, indicating these as relevant dimensions for their well-being. Therefore, two dimensions were distinguished: the cognitive domain, which includes a general assessment of life satisfaction, prospects, and perception of the situation, etc. and the affective domain, which includes emotions, feelings, and moods. They were then interpreted and further differentiated as positive or negative for their own well-being.<br><br>General health was also coded, e.g., when (mental, physical) illnesses were mentioned. |
| **Coping** | • Level of coping (psychological/ behavioral/action level)<br>• Coping intention/function (problem-oriented or consequences-focused)<br>• Coping resources | The focus was on the processes involved in maintaining or improving well-being. In addition to open coding, aspects of coping approaches (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) were also taken into account (and appeared relevant).<br><br>One category was the level of the coping process, e.g., whether it is action (e.g., leisure activities) or psychological processes (e.g., suppressing).<br><br>In addition, the intention/function was considered, developing two codes, problem-oriented and consequences-focused. The former means what is done to cope with unemployment, which can have a negative impact on well-being. Consequences-focusing refers to the consequences of unemployment that can have a negative impact on well-being, e.g., the financial situation or certain emotions.<br><br>In addition, the resources used during coping were taken into account, differentiating the resources, e.g., in emotional/cognitive mechanisms, financial resources etc. |
| **Support** (support resources) | • Institutional support (governmental/non-governmental)<br>• Social support from the own social network | Support relates to all support measures (help) that are used in connection with unemployment from external sources in any form; in general, institutional support, e.g., ALMP, PLMP, can be used but also support from food banks or social worker. The second dimension is social support through one's own social network, such as family, friends, neighbors, etc. This was differentiated in the origin, e.g., family or friends, and further in the forms, instrumental (e.g., financial), emotional (e.g., trust), and informational (e.g., advice), other support. |
| **Education and training** | • School education<br>• Vocational education | All text passages from the narratives regarding education were coded, differentiated in the categories school education, vocational education, further education/other education. This was based on text |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | • | Further education/other education | passages containing statements on education, but also on information from the supplementary standardized socio-demographic questionnaire. |
| **Work/employment** | • | Meaning of work | All text with reference to work experience was coded. The meaning of work is described, i.e., what the young associates with it and why it is important to him/her. The entire employment career was considered, such as experiences with gainful employment and internships. Generally perceived opportunities on the labor market were considered. |
| | • | Labor market experience/ working career | |
| | • | Perceived labor market chances/prospects | |
| **Unemployment** | • | Everyday life | All text passages related to the unemployment situation were coded. Special attention was given to the everyday life during unemployment, the individual meaning, reported consequences, perceived causes, and job/training search. In addition, all changes during unemployment were coded to understand the process of unemployment |
| | • | Meaning | |
| | • | Consequences | |
| | • | Perceived causes | |
| | • | Job/vocational training search | |
| | • | Changes | |
| **Contextual /complementary codes** | • | Financial situation | These codes were used to document further contexts and topics that proved to be relevant for the investigation of well-being and coping e.g., the financial situation, the feeling of autonomy, the housing situation, the social relationships, such as family, friends, etc. |
| | • | Independence | |
| | • | Becoming an adult | |
| | • | Housing situation | |
| | • | Social relationships/social contacts | |
| | • | Future perspective | |

*Notes*: This presentation is a summarized version of the complete coding scheme.

*Source*: Own illustration.