Dropping out of university

Obstacles to overcome for non-traditional students

Paper presented in track 3 at the

EAIR 37th Annual Forum in Krems, Austria

30 August till 2 September 2015

Name of Author(s)

Nairz-Wirth, Erna
Feldmann, Klaus

Contact Details

Nairz-Wirth, Erna
Education Sciences Group; WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business)
Welthandelsplatz 1
Vienna, 1020
Austria
E-mail: erna.nairz-wirth@wu.ac.at

Abstract

Dropping out of university. Obstacles to overcome for non-traditional students.

Despite educational expansion, so-called non-traditional students still face a significant high risk of dropping out of university. Qualitative research has as yet not paid sufficient attention to the reconstruction of the obstacles such students fail to overcome. Drawing on the relational approach proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, 12 narrative, problem-centred interviews with non-traditional students who had dropped out of university were conducted. The analytical results indicate that habitus-habitus and field-habitus discrepancies as well as clandestine forms of symbolic violence play a significant role in the drop-out process, with the transition process into university assuming crucial relevance in this context.

Presentation

Dropping out of university. Obstacles to overcome for non-traditional students.

1. Baseline situation and background theory
Full-time students who go up to university shortly after completing high school, receive financial support from their parents and can complete their studies at their leisure are already in the minority in many tertiary education establishments (Choy 2002; Marshall et al. 2012; Munro 2011; Pechar & Wroblewski 2012; Schuetze & Slowey 2002). Another group of students – one that is currently undergoing rapid growth as a result of education expansion in recent decades – usually finds itself confronted with far less favourable economic circumstances and greater pressure to graduate in the minimum possible time. Students in this group are referred to as so-called non-traditional or new students. The term "non-traditional student" is not defined in a uniform manner in literature. However, experts do largely concur that such students exhibit at least one (and in many cases more) of the following identification criteria (Horn & Carroll 1996): regular, time-demanding employment; working-class background; low socioeconomic status (SES); regular care commitments; membership of an ethnic minority which is significantly underrepresented in universities; ill or disabled; behavioral and/or emotional problems (Horn & Carroll 1996; Maton 2005; Munro 2011; Quinn 2013).
Like many other EU Member States, Austria has yet to resolve the challenge that the relatively high dropout rate among non-traditional students poses to education policy (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015).
Although the social inequality in the make-up of the Austrian student population has been discussed in various publications (Nairz-Wirth & Wurzer 2015), the manifold causes of the significantly raised risk of dropout for "new students" with a working class background (Maton 2005) or non-traditional students in the broader sense (Quinn 2013) have only recently been accorded greater attention by research, education policy and university management (Pechar & Wroblewski 2012; Thaler & Unger 2014; Unger et al. 2009, 2012).
Qualitative baseline studies based on social sciences theories are rarely encountered in this field, and there is a clear lack of research which examines the problem from the long-term perspective. This paper seeks to focus on this research desideratum in Austria, where a long-term study is currently being prepared by our own research group.

2. Theoretical framework
The habitus and capital resources of students in the higher education fields play a significant role in determining their success at university (Bourdieu 1996, 1998). The familial habitus develops in the home from early childhood, while secondary habitus are shaped through socialisation, especially in the school fields. In our work, we distinguish between two forms of secondary habitus, namely the school and the university habitus. In schools and universities, the culture that is acquired and augmented in the form of knowledge and competences is primarily cultural capital but the other forms of capital, namely social and economic capital, are also of relevance to a student's chances of obtaining a higher secondary qualification or university degree. The big differences in the economic, social and cultural capital that pupils and students have at their disposal are central causes for the uneven distribution of educational opportunities. Accordingly, we define non-traditional students as students who are equipped with less favourable economic and social capital endowment than traditional students, i.e. who have to study under less supportive academic conditions.
Three further terms used by Bourdieu – doxa, illusion and cleft habitus – also need to be introduced here. The doxa is the prevailing and unquestioned worldview in the respective field. Aspects of the doxa that are of relevance in the fields of higher education are: the curricula, the method of assessing performance (grading), the formal qualifications and performativity of the teaching staff and the bureaucratic rules. The illusio of a student can be described as the belief that it is worthwhile investing one's energy and capital in the quest for the envisioned academic title. Further, the sense of not belonging that is experienced by many students can bring to the surface a so-called cleft or divided habitus, which is fed by the inner tensions between the familial habitus and the two secondary education habitus. It can also result in a cleft illusio.

A description of the non-traditional student and dropout phenomenon from a Bourdieusian perspective would thus be roughly as follows: non-traditional students are students whose habitus either does not correspond to the expectations of the field or only does so to a limited extent. Dropout occurs if the discrepancy between the school habitus and university habitus is too big or if the student habitus proves "unsuitable" for the field, if the student's capital endowment proves inadequate, if his/her illusio gives too little consideration to the open and covert rules of the field or if his/her heterodoxical positions are incompatible with a continuation of his/her studies.

Since habitus, field and the different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) are all intrinsically linked, they must be considered from the relational perspective. As our empirical case study below demonstrates, a student can still ultimately drop out even if he/she does have the necessary competences required in his/her chosen degree subject.

3. Empirical approach and results

Twelve problem-centred interviews with non-traditional students who had dropped out of university were carried out in 2014 and 2015. The interviews provide detailed insights into a dropout process in which habitus discrepancies and unfavourable habitus-field relations play a key role for non-traditional students. The interpretation of the interviews was led first and foremost by Bourdieusian theory, but due care was also taken to ensure that the process was both deductive and inductive, thus avoiding any mono-theoretical reductionism. For this purpose, the interviews were initially coded deductively by searching for interview sequences which allowed inferences to be made on three forms of habitus and any potential intra-habitus conflicts. These three habitus forms were 1) the familial habitus (e.g. social background, family, etc.), 2) the school habitus (Ingram 2009), and 3) the university habitus (Alheit 2014) which dominates in a particular discipline or subject. Possible conflicts identified between these three forms depended on their respective compatibility. The approach we selected for our research differs from mainstream student dropout research in two ways: firstly, we draw on the methodological experience gained in recent decades through qualitative Bourdieu-based research (Grenfell, Reay, Lingard, Hardy etc.) and, secondly, in our use of the constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2008, 2009) in the data collection and interpretation processes.

Given the limited space available, this paper can only briefly illustrate our empirical and theoretical approach using two cases (Adnan and Richard) as examples. After presenting these two cases, we conclude with a summary of our key findings and a brief look at possible measures to prevent dropout.

3.1. Adnan

Adnan's parents come from Macedonia and emigrated to Austria when he was four years old. His father is a lorry driver and his mother is a homemaker. In contrast to the overwhelming majority of students with this migrant background, Adnan succeeded in graduating from high school.

Familial habitus

Adnan's parents are working class and come from a country that is less economically developed than Austria. As in many countries in Europe, such migrants are subject to ethnic discrimination in Austria (Aschauer 2011; Zick et al. 2008). As a result, Adnan developed a habitus of necessity (Bourdieu 2003) which differs to a privileged middle class habitus (lifestyle, neighbours, travel, etc.). His parents' expectations of his education are labile and undifferentiated, whereby his mother does say she would like to see her son climb the career ladder.

So (…) as I said, I liked going to school. (…) And that meant I paid a lot of attention in class. (…) My mother encouraged me. She was also the one who gave me the tip that I had to make an impression at secondary [school] right from the start, which I did, and it was worth it. It helped me a lot throughout my five years there (Adnan, university dropout).

If Adnan encounters difficulties in the education system, he cannot count on support from his parents in dealing with cultural capital, i.e. on receiving tuition from his family or a private source, the

availability of literature, software and other technical aids, advice on how to prepare for exams, etc. His parents are also unable to support him in his social integration at school and university. Adnan received a stable familial habitus, but it could only be inadequately related to the secondary school habitus and, above all, to the university habitus. His personality is thus characterised by ambivalent attitudes, diverging wishes and partly unrealistic hopes of advancement. Studies into educational advancement indicate that success in education depends on how we handle our familial habitus. In Adnan's case, such success also depends on his ability to distance himself from this habitus. However, Adnan has a strong need for harmony with his cultural background and his parents. This cleft habitus represents a decisive hurdle for his education.

School habitus – conflicts with university habitus
Adnan's school habitus is characterised first by a middle school that does not prepare him for tertiary education and second by a technical high school that places too little emphasis on the additional qualifications needed for social integration in university. This combination of sub-optimal school habitus with low education familial habitus reduces his chances of success at university.

Well, my really close friends from the town I come from, most of them left school at an early age and did apprenticeships (ibid).

In contrast to most of his friends from his milieu, he switches at the age of 15 with the support of his mother to a technical secondary school, where he will be able to attain a university entrance qualification. Yet his schooling still does not provide him with an optimal secondary habitus for a university degree. His mind is filled with contradictory attitudes and motivations: high educational aspirations, doubts about his career prospects after graduation, a labile opinion of himself, self-blame and a lack of competence in self- and time management. These traits correspond to the symbolic violence and exclusion he has experienced since childhood.

That meant their mothers knew each other, so they too were also friends outside school. And they [his classmates] played together and visited each other. That always annoyed me (ibid.).

University habitus
Before he started at university, Adnan was already aware that with his capital endowment and his dispositions he was entering a risky field.

Even at that stage, part of my reason for going to university was to see how it was. If I would manage it, what would be taught, how detailed lectures would be, what university is like in general (ibid.).

Adnan is unable to integrate socially at university. As a result of his familial habitus, he experiences a social distance both to other students and to lecturers. He recognises that students from academic family backgrounds master the rules of play in the field better than he does.

I knew the parents of some of my fellow students were graduates; so they [the students] naturally already knew all the pitfalls and challenges (ibid.).

His uncertainty and his sense of not belonging inhibit him in talking to other students or to lecturers about decisions and problems.

Adnan unwittingly senses the structure of the student population in which he, as the son of a Macedonian lorry driver, belongs to a minority. This weakens both his belief in his ability to graduate and his illusio, i.e. his academic ambitions lose their force. Furthermore, his habitus and capital problems escalate, making exclusion unavoidable for him on the subjective level.

Then you start to see that you haven't actually put much into it, which means you have to work harder and have even more problems to deal with – the situation with your friends, your family situation and

your finances – they all go hand in hand. Everywhere you turn there are faces to look at and situations to deal with […] things you don't want to deal with and don't want to face (ibid.).

Given their own economic and cultural capital endowment, Adnan's parents resign themselves to the situation. He himself is ambivalent about his parent's behaviour: on the one hand he expects some resistance from them to his decision to drop out, yet, on the other he knows that his parents occupy a different place in the social space, a place from which they cannot intervene and help him in his attempts to position himself as a student in the university field.

That was what disappointed me most about them [his parents] […] I […] had […] hoped for at least some resistance, that they would say 'you can't just give up now' [..] But they didn't. […] They didn't share the blame for my dropping out […] but they did essentially prepare me for that scenario […] (ibid.).

In Austria, people with Adnan's capital endowment tend to opt more for universities of applied sciences, a less prestigious option than the traditional universities. Adnan himself has been thinking seriously about restarting his studies and enrolling at a university of applied sciences. He thus recognises the social stratification of the tertiary education system and associates this with the option of still obtaining a degree, albeit a less prestigious one. His failure at university has heightened his willingness to submit to symbolic violence.

Adnan: By the way, I do still intend to do a degree. But on a part-time basis (…). I was never really a big fan of universities of applied sciences, but I have now warmed to the idea. (ibid.).

3.2. Richard
Richard comes from a working-class background and grew up in a family setting in which the father placed great value on knowledge. Richard's father was a strong role model for his son, particularly because he was self-taught and had acquired a broad knowledge of history.

School habitus
Richard moves on from lower secondary school to grammar school, where he has to repeat 7th grade because of his poor grades but does ultimately go on to successfully attain a university entrance qualification. His interests at school lie primarily in Maths and Physics, and he indicates that he had a very good Maths teacher. He puts his failure in 7th grade down to his rebellious habitus; however it becomes evident in the analysis of subsequent interview passages that there were also other reasons for his need to repeat the year, namely his difficulties in adapting to the school habitus and his experiences with symbolic violence, which noticeably weakened his sense of belonging. The causes for his later dropping out of university are – as we will demonstrate below – similar in nature.

Well, I was a bit of a rebel in my youth; if I didn't like something, I boycotted it, but if I was interested in something then things were different, and I naturally wanted to show that I hadn't repeated a year because I was stupid but because I was a rebel (Richard, university dropout).

Richard was looking for a familial habitus that was not to be found in the prevailing institutional habitus in school or university. His description of himself as a rebel and his failures in school already indicate a cleft habitus at secondary school.

University habitus
Richard's cleft school habitus is not a good basis for the acquisition of a university habitus. Although he indicates that his Maths grades at school were very good, a degree in Mathematics proves too difficult for him, whereby he nonetheless rejects the teacher training option (where the requirements are lower). Inadequate degree counselling and transition planning are further aggravating factors in his choice of degree subject, i.e. good Maths grades in school are a subjectively seductive and objectively inadequate indicator of whether a student is suited to a degree in Mathematics or Physics.

Furthermore, these are particularly elite fields, where a specific tacit definition of non-traditional students applies and is reflected in the attention accorded by lecturers to the "chosen ones".

Who do the lecturers turn to with really difficult questions? Always to those who were really good. […] I wasn't insulted by this, but you do notice that you are not being asked, that you're not one of the best. […] And it was also correct, those people really were very good (ibid.).

After giving up his Mathematics degree, he starts a new degree in Biology, but also lets this slide and ultimately gives it up too. Given the lack of counsel from his parents, teachers and university staff, the illusio of these first two degree attempts favours failure. He finally begins a third degree and this time puts his – albeit costly – prior experiences to good use and chooses a course to which he is suited. The illusio is well developed, i.e. he is fascinated by the subject and wants to demonstrate his ability.

Paleobotany […] in principle an area that meant a lot to me personally, both in terms of the people who worked there and the subject itself (ibid.).

However, as a result of his evidently inseparable association of academic with social integration and his high expectations of and prompt disappointment with his lecturers – a consequence of his idolisation of his father – he also gives up this third course, although he has already completed his master thesis and would probably have passed the upcoming final exams.

And then, when I got to about the age of 30, I said to myself 'now I want to show that I really can finish a degree'. So I began studying Geosciences, Paleobotany, which I did in principle finish, including all the exams, but then never actually graduated (ibid.).

His rebellious habitus and his disappointment prevent him from submitting his master thesis. Although he uses his family circumstances and commitments to rationalise this decision – he now has a wife and daughter, needs a secure job and would not really have been able to put his degree to good use – the deeper reasons behind his dropping out lie in his experience with discrimination and in his vulnerability, i.e. the lack of interest shown in his master thesis by a professor specialised in that particular field.

Richard unconsciously tries to replace his late father with this professor and, in doing so, falls into a relationship trap, thereby disregarding the rules of play of instrumental rationality in the university field.

[…] so I always got a position as a tutor, they accommodated me in that respect. (…) But I myself sat very few exams – I basically always really only sat an exam when I 'felt like it' (ibid.).

His university habitus has not developed the dispositions to clearly distinguish between a familial and a bureaucratic structure. Paradoxically, his late father probably exercises even more influence over his son after his death. Richard now serves his father's memory, shutting out in the process the dynamics of communication and recognition that might otherwise have been possible and the motivation to acquire symbolic capital.

And then, during my last degree, a few years before I finally dropped out, my father died. He was one of my motivating factors, and I would perhaps have completed the degree for his sake. Yes. Because he would have been very happy about that. (ibid.)

He [the father] always told me how he would lie around the house with an atlas to hand, plan trips and (…) go out and get books – for no reason other than to quench his thirst for knowledge (ibid.).

It's the knowledge that's more important to me; what I've done, what I've experienced, what I've learned – all that is more important to me than having an academic title (ibid.).

Richard is personally hurt when his professor chooses another person instead of him for an auxiliary academic post. A striking aspect in this interview is that Richard speaks of his "family" in the university field. Although social integration is of central importance to him, he is evidently not inclined to integrate himself into the "family" at the institute.

I was also a bit disappointed by my family (ibid.).

Yes. Because it would have been with my professor, and I had thought he would have tried a bit harder for me (ibid.).

While some non-traditional students develop resilience through their experience(s) with discrimination, others – and Richard falls into this category –are driven by this out of the field. He entrenches himself in a world of his own, a world that is sacralised by his idolisation of his father, a world in which he can rule with his knowledge.

Like other non-traditional students we interviewed, Richard criticises the university lecturers, but doesn't "reproach them". He thus, like Adnan, submits to the symbolic structures of power within the university field, whose rules of play foresee no binding claims for people with a habitus like his.

Those lecturers who gave you the feeling […] that you were equal to the other people, I liked those a lot, but they also made me feel at the same time that I wasn't good enough. (…) Not through dirty rules or telling me I was too stupid, but through a simple 'Ask yourself whether you can do it'. (ibid.)

But I can't reproach him for it; it was probably just the, hmm, structures of power, and even if he had wanted to, he wouldn't have been able to do it. (ibid.)

The "fate" of the (familial) habitus
According to Bourdieu, habitus is not a fate, but "an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1996, p. 133). But Richard searches both in school and at university for an equivalent to a familial habitus that is not to be found in the prevailing institutional habitus. The reason for his search for a quasi-familial habitus in a bureaucratic institution could, for instance, lie in his traumatic experience at the age of 12 when illness took his mother out of his life for a long period. His father was his idol, yet was obviously unable to fill the gap in his son's education left by his wife's illness. In contrast to other non-traditional students, Richard lacks a critical analysis of his familial socialisation and education. By repressing this and capriciously stylizing himself as a "performance-oriented rebel", his primary habitus is not modified accordingly and, as a result, his school and university secondary habitus are not shaped for success.

4. Conclusion
Both Richard and Adnan did ultimately graduate successfully from high school, but neither of them acquired an education habitus that equipped them for lasting success in university (learning skills, time management, cooperative work, etc.). This can be unequivocally diagnosed as an institutional shortcoming. They would also both have required the help of their parents during their degree courses, help that their parents were not in a position to provide.
In both cases, their failure cannot be attributed primarily to cognitive deficits or lack of motivation. Instead, social integration and various pull-out factors play the decisive role. Incidentally, accustomisation to low-level part-time jobs which require no official qualifications is in itself also a pull-out factor. Such competences have an ambivalent effect: they allow people to acquire economic capital even when they drop out of education, and they reinforce a habitus that is characterized by a low-ranking lifestyle and a lack of self-confidence in one's ability to advance.
Both Adnan and Richard experience such symbolic violence at school and at university. Bourdieu's hypothesis that people who experience symbolic violence accept the underlying social structures and consider them legitimate was thus confirmed in our study. From childhood onwards, Adnan received

less symbolic capital than middle class children. Both Adnan and Richard report that university lecturers failed to show them recognition, yet insist at the same time that these lecturers were "not to blame" and were only acting as the institution required. In line with their familial habitus, they accept the symbolic violence, which is exercised, for instance, through the denial of symbolic capital. In Richard's case, his self-taught father serves as a role model. However, he tacitly communicates to his son that a person can forego externally bestowed symbolic capital in the form of an academic title. This attitude repeatedly serves Richard as a protective measure in his experiences with failure at university.

The study presented here shows that the tools developed by Bourdieu are clearly useful for an in-depth analysis of the factors that may cause dropout by non-traditional students. By analysing the empirical data using the relational concepts of habitus, field and capital, it can be shown how the (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) capital of students, their different forms of habitus (familial and secondary) and the disciplinary fields in which these are situated all relate to one another and the extent to which these relations influence a student's academic record. It thus becomes obvious that the criteria generally used by quantitative studies to explain dropout (such as parents' job, income and educational background) take insufficient account of the relevance of the attitudes and patterns of behaviour of the student's father, mother or other key persons of influence.

Internal conflicts between familial habitus and secondary habitus primarily surface in crisis situations. Transfer to university is a typical crisis situation, especially in cases of discrepancies between different intra- or interpersonal types of habitus or between habitus and field. Our study once again confirms that the transition to and first year at university are extremely challenging, particularly for non-traditional students, and that this challenge is difficult to handle without support from the educational institutions and appropriately trained teaching staff. As a consequence, dropout rates are significantly higher for non-traditional students than for their traditional student counterparts. To address this situation, measures have to be taken to strengthen student resilience from an early stage in education (beginning at (pre-)school and continuing through to graduation from university), and on multiple levels.

Our study also shows that cleft habitus or disruption in educational processes should be studied in the context of the student's personal biography. The two cases we present illustrate that cleft habitus do not just develop when educational advancement moves people away from their familial habitus (cf. Lee & Kramer 2013) but that they may also be the result of interaction effects between familial habitus, secondary habitus, field experiences, capital management and changes in illusio. Non-traditional students more frequently have to acquire missing economic and social capital than students from more privileged backgrounds. This requires additional energy, which can weaken the illusio and, as a consequence, raise the probability of dropout.

As our study shows, the complexity of the phenomenon can best be understood using qualitative analyses, a research approach which is also able to reveal experiences of symbolic violence that would normally only be indirectly accessible in interview statements. In this context, our study indicates that symbolic violence in education is not an isolated incident; such incidents normally cumulate and, as such, form the basis of self-blame and willingness to succumb to the given structures of domination.

Clues to structural deficiencies on the organisational and bureaucratic levels as well as ideas for how to improve the professionalization of university teaching staff are a valuable by-product of our study. Another outcome is the recognition of the need for prevention and intervention measures throughout the entire education process. To mitigate the increased risks faced by non-traditional students, personalised forms of teaching and access to social capital should be the guiding principles of early and long-term measures to prevent dropout.

References

Alheit, P. (2014). The Unwanted Student: Closure tendencies in European universities. The case of Germany. In F. Finnegan, B. Merrill & C. Thunborg (eds.), *Student voices on inequalities in European higher education. Challenges for theory, policy and practice in a time of change*. New York: Routledge, 134-148.

Aschauer, W. (2011). Which Societal Developments Lead to Ethnic Prejudice in Western European Societies? In M. Koch, L. McMillan & B. Peper (eds.), *Diversity, standardization and social transformation. Gender, ethnicity and inequality in Europe.* Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 99-120.

Bourdieu, P. (1996). *The state nobility. Elite schools in the field of power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Homo Academicus.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2003). Against objectivism: the reality of social fiction. In P. Sikes, J. Nixon & W. Carr (eds.), *The moral foundations of educational research: Knowledge, inquiry and values*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 68-85.

Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. (1996). *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Charmaz, K. (2008). Constructionism and the Grounded Theory Method. In J.A. Holstein & J.F. Gubrium (eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research.* New York: Guilford Press, 397-412.

Charmaz, K. (2009). Shifting the grounds: Constructivist grounded theory methods. In J.M. Morse, P.N. Stern, J.M. Corbin, B. Bovers, K. Charmaz & A.E. Clarke (eds.), *Developing grounded theory. The second generation*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 127-154.

Choy, S. (2002). *Findings from the Condition of Education 2002: Nontraditional Undergraduates.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015). *The European higher education area in 2015: Bologna process implementation report.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Horn, L.J. & Carroll, C.D. (1996). *Nontraditional Undergraduates: Trends in Enrollment from 1986 to 1992 and Persistence and Attainment among 1989-90 Beginning Postsecondary Students.: Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Reports. Statistical Analysis Report.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Ingram, N. (2009). Working-class boys, educational success and the misrecognition of working-class culture, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* **30(4)**, 421-434.

Lee, E.M. & Kramer, R. (2013). Out with the old, in with the new? Habitus and social mobility at selective colleges, *Sociology of Education* **86(1)**, 18-35.

Marshall, S., Zhou, M., Gervan, T. & Wiebe, S. (2012). Sense of Belonging and First-Year Academic Literacy, *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* **42(3)**, 116-142.

Maton, K. (2005). A question of autonomy: Bourdieu's field approach and higher education policy, *Journal of Education Policy* **20(6)**, 687-704.

Munro, L. (2011). 'Go Boldly, Dream Large!': The Challenges Confronting Non-Traditional Students at University, *Australian Journal of Education* **55(2)**, 115-131.

Nairz-Wirth, E. & Wurzer, M. (2015). On the Positioning of Business, Management and Economics Fields of Study in the University Space, *Education of Economists and Managers* (forthcoming)

Pechar, H., & Wroblewski, A. (2012). Non-traditional students in the 2000s. In H.G. Schütze & M. Slowey (eds.), *Higher education and lifelong learners revisited. International perspectives*. London: Routledge, 25-42.

Quinn, J. (2013). *Drop-Out and Completion in Higher Education in Europe: among students from under-represented groups.* Plymouth: European Commission, NESET.

Schuetze, H.G. & Slowey, M. (2002). Participation and exclusion: A comparative analysis of non-traditional students and lifelong learners in higher education, *Higher Education* **44**, 309-327.

Thaler, B. & Unger, M. (2014*). Dropouts ≠ Dropouts. Wege nach dem Abgang von der Universität.* Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies.

Unger, M. et al. (2012). *Studierenden-Sozialerhebung.* Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies.

Unger, M., Wroblewski, A., Latcheva, R., Zaussinger, S., Hoffmann, J. & Musik, C. (2009). *Frühe Studienabbrüche an Universitäten in Österreich.* Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies.

Zick, A., Pettigrew, T.F. & Wagner, U. (2008). "Ethnic prejudice and discrimination in Europe.", *Journal of Social Issues* **64(2)**, 233-251.