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Organizational and Post-Organizational Career Aspirations, Personality Traits and Behavior

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We examine the relationship between career aspirations of business school graduates defined as their intention to be active in particular career fields and four personality and behavioral traits: (1) adaptability, (2) sociability, (3) power and politics motive pattern, (4) need for achievement and (5) accuracy. Results demonstrate a one factor solution differentiating between an Organizational-Career-Aspiration and a Post-Organizational-Career-Aspiration. Our results suggest that the more actors show a tendency towards post-organizational career pattern the more they display attributes of high flexibility, self-monitoring, leadership-motivation, openness for social contacts and less conscientiousness. For individuals preferring an organizational career pattern, inverse relationships apply.

INTRODUCTION

Today's professional careers are more diverse than ever, empirically we know little about them and we do not have adequate theoretical concepts to describe and explain them. Career research has been dealing with careers in general and with professional careers in specific for a long time. Researchers from a great number of disciplines, from various perspectives and focusing on different levels of analysis have contributed to the understanding of what happens when individuals travel through their professional lives on various routes (see, e.g., Hughes, 1951; Becker & Strauss, 1956; Super, 1957; Glaser, 1968; Dalton, 1972; Holland, 1973; Slocum, 1974; Spilerman, 1977; van Maanen, 1977; Schein, 1980; Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989; Hall, 1987a; Ornstein & Isabella, 1993 for overviews and comprehensive views). Implicitly or explicitly, organizations were the point of reference (e.g., Dyer, 1976; Hall, 1976; Schein, 1978; Gunz, 1989). As long as organizations can be regarded as one of the core characteristics of industrial societies, this was quite adequate. But things have changed. Since the 1980's the situation has become more complex. Change drivers like globalization, virtualization, demographic developments or value changes have led to new forms of organizations, new forms of organizing and new forms of private and professional life concepts of individuals (e.g., Sennett, 1998; Ruigrok, Pettigrew, Peck, & Whittington, 1999; Ohmae, 2001). These developments did not leave careers untouched. Several influential writers have proclaimed and analyzed a period of transition leading to new forms of careers (e.g., Arthur & Rousseau, 1996b; Hall, 1996). Although controversial on a number of claims, analyses and expectations, they have at least two things in common. First, the significance of organizations as the central arena for professional careers will decrease. Partly replacing the 'traditional' organizational career, new forms of careers 'outside' of organizations will develop. Whether deliberately or because of a lack of choice, people's careers will increasingly take place either entirely or to a great extent outside of organizations. Labels like 'newly self-employed', 'one-person-employer', 'dependent independents' or 'own account self-employed' have been coined to describe these phenomena (Mayrhofer & Meyer, 2001). Second, professional careers have become more diverse and this will be increasingly the case in the future. The 'traditional' model of 'one career' starting with a specific kind of training in one's early career stages leading to a quite stable career path in the same profession or area of expertise, sometimes even in the same (kind of) organizations for the rest of the life is currently being replaced. Substituted by more varied types of career that lead individuals to

different professions in or outside of different organizations in different places in the world. Protean or patchwork careers are just two of many examples Hall & Mirvis, 1996). Replaced, however, also by a greater variety of combinations of private and professional activities. Sabbaticals, new forms of work - non-work combinations, new forms of partnerships with one's spouse etc. lead to career patterns hitherto not well known (Auer, 2000). Compared to the body of empirical evidence about 'traditional' careers, our knowledge about such 'new careers' is rather limited. Only a small number of studies have gathered some empirical evidence about the new career landscape (e.g., Peiperl, Arthur, Goffee, & Morris, 2000; Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999).

Within these new developments at the macroeconomic and organizational level our research pursues to answer the following two questions:

(1) Is the growing importance of non-traditional career patterns reflected in the career aspirations of business school graduates ?

(2) In which way are these career aspirations related with personality factors and behavioral characteristics of business school graduates?

In the first part of this paper we analyze business school graduates' views of different career fields and their respective attitudes towards them. Based on our findings we derive and analyze hypotheses concerning the relationship between career aspirations, personality and behavioral characteristics in the second part.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND FIELDS OF CAREER

We define career aspirations as a cluster of needs, motives and behavioral intentions which individuals articulate with respect to different career fields. Based on Bourdieu's theory of social fields (Bourdieu, 1994b) we see career fields as social arenas in which careers take place. Within this perspective careers can also be regarded as a struggle for a sequence of positions in one or several social fields. Thus career aspirations measure the strength of an actor's intention to be active in a particular career field. Our notion of career aspiration shows similarities with the notion of 'career anchors' from Schein (Schein, 1977; Schein, 1994), who differentiates between managerial competence, technical functional competence, security, creativity, and autonomy/independence. However, our understanding of career aspiration is narrower, with the target of measuring the intention of actors to become active in different career fields developed by us.

Furthermore, career aspirations represent a type of mental self selection. Actors anticipate the prerequisites for success in each of the fields and select those fields where they assume the largest probability of success, estimating their personal strengths and weaknesses. This assumption is supported by the so-called "Person-Job-Fit-Theory", relying on the hypothesis of a "congruence between person and working environment" (Weinert, 1998), according to which there is an agreement between the expectations, needs and values of the individual actor on the one hand and the circumstances, opportunities and chances, with which certain carrier fields can fulfill these aspirations on the other hand. Holland builds his theory of "vocational choice" (Holland, 1973, 1985) on a similar premise: There is an interaction between personality and behavioral characteristics and one's vocational choices, so that people tend to move into career fields that are congruent with their personal qualities. Thus our concept works as a so-called "matching-model" (Hall, 1987b) that focuses on the match or fit between the personality traits and the career field.

Based on Bourdieu's capital, habitus and field concept, Mayrhofer et al. (Mayrhofer et al., 2000) suggest four different fields of careers resulting from an interplay of the two dimensions: coupling and configuration between actors (Fig.1). The *coupling dimension* focuses on the closeness of relationship and the degree of mutual influence between the focal actor and the other actor(s) in the configuration (e.g. Weick, 1969, 1976; Orton & Weick, 1990; Staehle, 1991). Tight coupling indicates that the actors are closely intertwined in their decisions. On the other hand, loose coupling indicates a type of relationship where the decisions of one actor have very little consequence for the decisions of the others. Thus, in a tightly coupled relationship the decisions of one partner reduce the other's degrees of freedom much more than in a loosely coupled relationship. The *configuration dimension* focuses on changes over time in the configuration of relationships between the focal actor and other relevant actors (for the importance of stability in the process of attribution see e.g. Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Herkner, 1980). A stable configuration would mean that there is a low rate of change in the actor configuration. Conversely, an unstable configuration implies that there is a frequent change in the configuration. This dimension says more about the rate of change in the configuration than about the number of actors relevant for the focal actor. Combining these two dimensions into a matrix results in a simple typology with the following 'ideal-typical' extremities (see Mayrhofer et al., 2000):

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Figure 1: The fields of career

- *Company World* (CW) is the field of the traditional organizational career. It refers to the structure of jobs in an organization in which there are few points of entry, other than at the bottom, usually direct from school or college, and where promotion is up a well defined career ladder. Such movements are generally linked to seniority, which is also the case for salary. Employees enjoy high job security and tend to stay with the organization for a long time. In return, the organization gains the loyalty of its staff (Bendix, 1956; Heckscher, 1995; Hendry, 2000). The key resource is the hierarchical position.

- *Free-Floating Professionalism* (FFP) can be defined as the field of professional specialists. Individuals have tightly coupled relations with one customer at a time. In most cases the customer is an organization, but the relationship is of limited duration. Within this field, the actors stay in their particular domain of expertise, which may of course be increased and diversified through the experience and the knowledge gained in the different jobs and/or projects. The main goal is the increase of independence, especially through the recognition as an expert. The key resource is therefore knowledge and reputation (Kanter, 1989b; Heckscher & Donellon, 1994; Heckscher, 1995; Peiperl & Yehuda, 1997).

- *Self-Employment* (SE) is the field of career with individuals working outside organizations. Typically, these are either self-employed professionals or entrepreneurs. Autonomy and independence are highly valued (Kanter, 1989b; Flecker & Schienstock, 1991).

- *Chronic Flexibility* (CF) may appear quite similar to Free-Floating Professionalism at first glance, since careers are also characterized by frequent job changes. One difference lies in the disappearance of the boundaries of a domain of expertise. This means that changing from one job to another may imply not only a change from one organization to another, but also from one industry to another, from an organization to self-employment, and so on. Another difference to FFP is the actors in CF deal with many contractors simultaneously. This field of career is characterized by a potentially high level of diversity and radical professional transitions. The key resource may be defined as the capacity and the rapidity of conquering a new domain (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996a; Sennett, 1998; Cadin, Bailly-Bender, & Saint-Giniez, 2000).

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Figure 2: Development of Career Fields

Overall changes that can be observed in the last decade suggest a development from tightly coupled and stable configurations to loosely coupled and unstable configurations as can be seen in Figure 2. The increased significance of part-time-jobs, fixed-time-contracts, short-time circles of workforce reduction and increase in the same branch at nearly the same time, concepts of life-long learning and employability provide some evidence for this assumption.

Based on these considerations, we generate hypothesis H1:

H1	Within their career aspirations, business-school graduates clearly distinguish between four distinct fields of career characterized by different degrees of tight/loose coupling and stable/unstable configuration.

METHODS

Data Gathering and Sample Structure

Data were obtained from Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration (WU Wien) graduates and an additional polytechnic sample. All WU Wien graduates between 1999 and 2002 received an information package first which introduced ViCaPP (Vienna Career Panel Project), explained its goals and benefits, and invited them to participate in the study. About one week later, they received the questionnaire and a data form with post-paid reply envelopes. In return for the efforts to fill out the questionnaire, each participant was given a personal web-based feedback on the collected variables, access to which is only possible by a password generated by the participants themselves according to a coding pattern indicated on the questionnaire. This method enables us to provide all our sample members with a personal feedback despite anonymity of the study. Additionally, a small sample of polytechnic students who were just before graduation were also asked to participate in the study. The overall response rate was 25 %, which is satisfactory considering the length of our questionnaire.

The sample that provided the data for the following analyses consists of 605 persons of which 54 % are male and 46 % are female. Mean sample age is 28.1 years, with the female

Career Aspirations   Submission Number: 10922

participants being about one year younger than the male participants on average. Mean duration of study for the whole sample is 13.5 semesters.

Scales and Measurements for Career Aspiration

The four career aspiration scales were developed within the framework of ViCaPP, consisting of 33 items contained in the ViCaPP questionnaire. Participants were asked to rate the items on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "very desirable" to "not at all desirable". Initially, an item pool with 51 items was compiled, with 12 to 15 items belonging to each one of the four career fields according to our theoretical framework. Apart from the usual criteria like item discrimination, item intercorrelation, and item facility, a validity criterion was available as well. This validity criterion was represented by a separate part of the questionnaire, where participants were asked to indicate their preference for one of the four career fields (based on short descriptions of each field). Item selection aimed at optimizing internal scale consistency and scale validity. All four scales meet commonly accepted standards regarding these two criteria. Three of the four scales have consistency values > 0.80 (see Table 1). As for validity, the contingency coefficient between indicated preferences for one of the fields and the scales is 0.61. Because the validity criterion itself only has a low consistency value, the obtained validity value can be assessed as quite high.

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Table 1: Scales and Measurements - Career Aspirations

In order to assign the participants to one of the four career fields, their values on the four aspiration scales were first converted to percentile ranks and then to z-scores by means of area transformation. The scale on which each graduate attained the highest z-score then determined the field he or she most aspired to.

RESULTS

Table 2 specifies the number of graduates most tending to work within one of the four career fields. With regard to the dimensions coupling and configuration, there is an almost equal number of persons expressing preference for working in fields that are tightly and loosely coupled (table 2). However, a count across the fields shows an accumulation of participants tending towards either Company-World (43 %), or Chronic-Flexibility (28 %).

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Table 2: Number of actors aspiring to one of the four career fields

As it can be seen from table 1 the reliability of the aspiration scales are sufficiently high, but Table 3 shows that the scales are highly intercorrelated. We found highly positive correlations (above 0,7) between the aspirations for Free-Floating-Professionalism, Self-Employment, and Chronic-Flexibility. The other way round all of them are highly negatively correlated with the Company-World-Aspiration scale. These results suggested that the participants didn't clearly distinguish between the four fields as contained in our theory and hypothesized. Instead, Company World was obviously contrasted with something that could be described as a „Post-Organizational" career. A factor analysis leads to the same conclusion (cf. Figure 3). Based on this observation, a new scale was developed that measured the inclination towards Company World in contrast to a „Post-Organizational" career. This new scale uses 34 items and leads to a reliability of α (Organizational vs. Post-Organizational-Aspiration) $= 0.86$.

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Table 3: Intecorrelation between the four Career-Aspiration Scales

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Figure 3: Empirical findings of only one Career Aspiration Factor

Altogether the empirical results show that Hypotheses H1 is not supported. Contrary to our hypotheses, actors differentiate only between two ends of one career aspiration continuum. At the one end the traditional Company-World and at the other end more or less new forms of post-organizational employment (Self-Employment, Chronic-Flexibility, Freed-Floating-Professionalism) are located.

PERSONALITY, BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS, AND CAREER ASPIRATION

After analysing the career aspirations and the preferences for different types of career fields or different ends of the career aspiration continuum, respectively, we will explore the link between these aspirational directions and individual characteristics. We define four personality and behavioral characteristics: 1. adaptability, 2. sociability, 3. power and politics

motive pattern and 4. need for achievement and accuracy. Following the definition of these dimensions and with reference to relevant research findings we generate hypotheses for the relationship between an organizational-/post-organizational career aspiration, personality and behavioral characteristics according to the "Person-Job-Fit-Theory".

Adaptability

The dimension "adaptability" consists of "self monitoring", "flexibility" and "emotional stability" as those behavior and personality traits that refer to the ability of a person to modify his or her behavior in different social contexts as requested.

The construct "self monitoring" as developed by Snyder (Snyder, 1987) refers to the ability of an actor to adapt his/her own behavior to external situational factors as an "active construction of public selves to achieve social ends" (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000, 546). Thus, the behavior of the *high self-monitors* is highly responsive to social and interpersonal cues of performances situational appropriate, whereas *low self-monitors* do not control their expressive behavior to appear situational appropriate. In the meanwhile numerous empirical findings exist which prove the positive impact of this dimension on different facets of organizational behavior (Baron, 1989; Zaccaro, Foti, & Kenny, 1991; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). We assume that within post-organizational career fields it is essential to establish contact with a diverse spectrum of individual and collective actors. This requires high adaptability performance in the sense of self-monitoring. In this sense Kilduff & Day's findings demonstrate a higher career mobility in and between organizations (Kilduff & Day, 1994). Mehra, Kilduff et al. found that high self-monitors are better able to fill relevant positions in networks that are important for them, compared to low self-monitors (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001).

The dimension "flexibility" as defined by Hossiep & Paschen (Hossiep & Paschen, 1998) overlaps with the dimension "openness to experience" in the Big Five Model (Costa & McCrae, 1989, 1992), which refers to a high adaptation ability of individuals to all possible areas of life. "Flexibility" as Hossiep & Paschen define it is limited to vocational activities. People who score high on this scale "display a high preparedness and ability to adjust to changing work-related conditions and situations" (Hossiep et al., 1998, 23). Since at present there exist no relevant empirical findings for the dimension "flexibility", we are limited to results from the Big Five Model. Salgado was not able to determine a positive correlation between "openness to experience" and indicators of job performance in his meta-analysis for

any of the examined occupational groups (Salgado, 1997). However, there are findings from a study conducted by Judge, Martocchio & Thoresn (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresn, 1998) where "openness to experience" was strongly linked to success during job training. We assume that the trait flexibility is especially linked with an inclination towards Self-Employment, Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility, since this trait is seen as a basic condition for success in such career fields.

Within the Big Five Model "emotional stability" measures the degree to which an individual is calm, self confident and cool, and emotional as opposed to insecure, anxious, and depressed. People who score high on this scale are not easily upset and tend to be free from persistent negative feelings. They rather hold realistic ideas and are good at controlling their impulses and desires (Costa et al., 1992). In our sample we have used the German operationalization from the NEO-FFI (Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1993). The meta-analysis submitted by Salgado (Salgado, 1997) shows emotional stability to be a valid predictor across job criteria and occupational groups, corroborates the findings of Hough et al. (Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp, & McCloy, 1990). However, Barrick & Mount (Barrick & Mount, 1991) found deviating results in their meta-analysis. The non-validity of the emotional stability shown was tracked down on a selection process into the applicant pool, where the subjects low in "emotional stability" were already excluded from the laboratory force. We assume that individuals with lower values of "emotional stability" rather tend to career fields where a compensation of missing internal structural stability seems to be guaranteed and therefore prefer a career within the traditional Company World.

Based on these considerations, we generated hypothesis H2:

H2: The more actors exhibit an Organizational-Career-Aspiration, the less they display attributes of "adaptability" which is represented by 1. self-monitoring, 2. flexibility and 3. emotional stability (compared to those tending to a Post-Organizational-Career-Aspiration).

Sociability

The dimension "Sociability" contains "networking" and "openness for social contacts" as behavioral and personality traits, which facilitate it for an individual to establish contact with many individual and institutional actors and to structure or maintain relationships with social fields that were only weakly linked so far.

"Networking" as operationalized in the KATA (see the scales and measurement section below) is defined as a behavior where persons seek numerous and various business contacts that may also 'spill over' into private life. The dimension measures social behavior, stressing the establishing, the maintenance and the use of vocational and private contacts. In contrast to that, "openness for social contacts" as it was operationalized by Hossiep & Paschen (Hossiep et al., 1998), overlaps with the construct "extraversion" in the Big Five Model, and is seen as a personality trait. This dimension concerns the degree to which individuals are gregarious, assertive, and sociable as opposed to reserved, timid, and quiet. Group and organization studies show that especially social actors who link a multiplicity of socially unconnected actors and cliques have both information and control advantages (Burt, Jannotta, & Mahoney, 1998). A central reason for that is seen in the reduced information redundancy, which is connected with the "social bridging" of so-called structural holes (Burt, 1997). Burt (1992), for instance, reported for managers of high-tech enterprises that non-redundant relations with a cluster of influential or important persons and cliques had a positive impact on early promotion. Similarly the findings of Michael & Yukl, (1993)and Orpen (1996) showed that both internal and external networking positively influenced the hierarchical progression and/or the salary level from middle to top management. Ostgaard & Birley (1996) also demonstrated the relevance of networking for various performance and development indicators in entrepreneurial organizations.

We assume that persons who score high on "sociability" prefer career fields where a strong bridging function between structural holes is relevant. This is expected to be the case rather in the fields of Self-Employment, Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility. Therefore we present hypothesis H3:

H3:	The more actors exhibit an Organizational-Career-Aspiration, the less they display attributes of "sociability" which is represented by 1. networking and 2. openness for social contacts (compared to those tending to a Post-Organizational-Career-Aspiration).

Power and Politics Motive Pattern

To the dimension "power and politics motive pattern" contribute the behavioral and personality traits "leadership motivation", "self promotion/self assertion" and "demonstrating power and status", which help an actor to build or maintain status, dominance, power and a positive self-image.

Hossiep & Paschen's (1998) "leadership motivation" scale overlaps with the concept of the power motivation according to McClelland (1987). People who score high on this scale are motivated to actively influence and shape social processes. They perceive themselves as having natural authority and/or serving others as a reference person. Studies with regard to power motivation show that this pattern plays an important role in a person's desire to take on leadership positions (House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991) and that people who score high on this scale tend to be promoted more often than those who do not (Howard & Bray, 1990; Jacobs & McClelland, 1994). The dimension "self promotion/self assertion" was operationalized in the KATA and concerns a behavior where actors emphasize their abilities, qualifications and achievements and - if necessary - overcome resistance against their plans with sheer pressure. People who score high on the KATA scale "demonstrating power and status" use their position power, symbols of status and influence, and even bluff to gain respect and compliance from people in their occupational environment. Studies on the use of political tactics to advance one's career show that tactics based on self promotion are negatively related, while for instance, "ingratiation" is positively correlated with achieving this goal (Judge & Bretz, 1994). In another study the so called "organizational strategy" was the major influence factor on promotion to middle management. This strategy included the use of power and status to affect who was selected for graduation (Ferris, Buckley, & Allen, 1992).

We assume that actors high on the "power and politics motive pattern" prefer career fields where the chances and success prerequisites for the application of such behavior patterns are good or favorable. This seems to be the case in particular in the Company World. From this we derive hypothesis H4:

> H4: The more actors exhibit an Organizational-Career-Aspiration, the more they display a "power and politics motive pattern" which is represented by 1. leadership motivation, 2. self promotion/self assertion, 3. demonstrating power and status (compared to those tending to a Post-Organizational-Career-Aspiration).

Need for Achievement and Accuracy

The dimension "need for achievement and accuracy" refers to the personality traits "achievement motivation" and "conscientiousness" and describes the readiness of an actor to meet high vocational standards and to fulfill tasks with attention and precision.

The scale "achievement motivation" developed by Hossiep & Paschen (Hossiep et al., 1998) is based on McClelland's "achievement motivation" (McClelland, 1987). In our context, achievement motivation is the willingness to tackle high performance standards as well as to continually benchmark and if necessary improve one's own performance. Findings show that a high score represents a strong impulse for above-average vocational efforts (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982). Conscientiousness as one of the big five dimensions (Costa et al., 1989) measures the extent to which individuals are hardworking, organized, dependable, and persevering. In our sample we have used the German operationalization from the NEO-FFI (Borkenau et al., 1993). Most meta-analyses on the relation between conscientiousness and job performance show that it is the variable with the largest positive influence effect (Barrick et al., 1991 Salgado, 1997). Conscientiousness was associated with high degrees of performance across all occupational groups and all measures of performance. We assume that individuals with high "need for achievement and accuracy" values prefer career fields where primarily technical professionalism is necessary and power and political tactics are of secondary importance. This applies to the three career fields Self-Employment, Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility. Hence our hypothesis H5:

H5	The more actors exhibit an Organizational-Career-Aspiration, the less their "need for achievement and accuracy" which is represented by 1. achievement motivation and 2. conscientiousness (compared to those tending to an Post-Organizational-Career-Aspiration).

SCALES AND MEASUREMENT

Table 4 contains the scales that refer to personality traits and/or behavioral characteristics and were entered into the analyses as independent variables. The left column shows where the respective scale has been taken from and gives additional information about the source, literature, norms, and number of items. The right, larger column gives the name of the scale, a short description of the content and the internal consistency. The Career Tactics questionnaire (KATA) was developed especially for ViCaPP to measure purposeful behavior within the job context. The scales were extracted by means of factor analysis from a pool of 236 items (distributed among 201 working people) based on various theoretical constructs, such as impression management, influence tactics, networking, career insight efforts etc. Then they

were optimized with regard to internal scale consistency, normal-distribution-fit and scale range. The descriptions of the separate scales are presented in Table 4 below:

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Table 4: Scales and Measurements for Personality Traits and Behavioral Characteristics

RESULTS

In a first step we used bivariate Pearson correlations to prove our hypotheses. The results of this analyses can be seen in

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Table 5: Correlations between Organizational-Career-Aspiration, Personality Traits and Behavioral Characteristics

As can be taken from Table 5 only the behavior of "Demonstrating Power and Status" within the dimension sociability has no effect on the Organizational-Career-Aspiration. All other correlations are highly significant at a level of 0.01. With only one exception all of them are correlated negatively. Thus persons who score high on the presented scales tend more toward a Post-Organizational Career. Only high scores at the NEO-FFI scale Conscientiousness go together with an Organizational Career Aspiration. Most important for a Post-Organizational Career is job-related flexibility. All in all our hypotheses are supported except for the dimension Demonstration Power and Status in H4.

A stepwise linear regression model (see Table 6 below) with the significant variables shows a solution with six of the ten scales and results in a R-square of 0.23. Apart from this explanation of variance the five scales in the model make a significant difference for Organizational- and Post-Organizational Aspirations. The six scales are: 1. Flexibility, 2. Conscientiousness, 3. Self-Monitoring, 4. Leadership-Motivation, 5. Self-Promotion, 6. Openness for Social Contacts.

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Table 6: Stepwise Linear Regression

In contrast to the bivariate correlation Leadership-Motivation shows a positive regression weight. This effect can be explained by a high positive intercorrelation between Leadership-Motivation and Self-Monitoring ($r = 0.50$). Graduates scoring high at the Self-Monitoring scale are also high at Leadership-Motivation. But the part of variance in Leadership-Motivation that can not be explained by Self-Monitoring (which can maybe named as social desirability) is positively related to Organizational Aspirations.

DISCUSSION

Our findings show quite clearly a polarization between two groups of individuals, with one having a preference for 'traditional career patterns' (41 percent of the sample) and the other for 'post-organizational career patterns' (59 percent). Those with a preference for traditional career patterns clearly try to avoid 'old' and 'new' forms of self-employment and do not want to be part of any kind of contingent workforce. They value stability, predictability and long-term commitment to organizations higher than flexibility, autonomy and independence. In addition, the more they prefer the traditional career field Company-World, the less they show Flexibility, Self-Monitoring, Self-Promotion and Leadership-Motivation and the higher they score on Conscientiousness. For individuals preferring a post-organizational career pattern, inverse relationships apply. These results have a number of implications.

- First, and most general, organizations recruiting graduates from business schools might be forced to rethink some of their recruitment strategies and career related incentive systems in the light of the 'dichotomous' types of career fields and their related personal qualities.

- Second, and more provocative and controversial, one could argue that organizations recruiting individuals preferring a Company-World career do not get the 'best', which means in this sense that those individuals score lower on a number of 'desirable' behavioral and personality attributes than persons with Post-Organizational Career Aspirations. The more individuals prefer a long-term commitment to the Company-World career field, the less they have a matching success potential. If organizations want to get the 'best', they have to search for individuals that originally do not want to join this career field. These individuals score higher in terms of adaptability, power and politics motive pattern, sociability, and need for achievement.

- Third, one explanation for the observed types of Career Aspirations could be based on psychological compensation as a primary mechanism. Individuals less active in their communicative and social behavior and showing lower emotional stability and less dominance/assertiveness look for a close link to organizations. By choosing tight coupling and stable configuration they want to compensate comparatively low 'internal' security and low 'external' openness for social contacts and ability to influence others. Regarding conscientiousness, similar arguments seem plausible. The lower 'internal' security and 'external' openness for social contacts and ability to influence others, the more these deficits are compensated by high conscientiousness.

- Fourth, the development of Career Aspirations over time seems to be interesting. For example, it would be challenging to study whether these results are typical for a specific time span immediately after graduating from university or whether these characteristics are stable in the long run. There are arguments for both sides. From the theory's point of view, some elements of the career aspirations will not change within a very short time span. On the other hand, the high proportion of individuals opting for Chronic-Flexibility (27 per cent) might be a result of the specific situation after graduating from university. Ideally, all options should be kept open at that time, the graduates have not yet decided upon a future career path. Likewise, personality traits or behavioral dispositions might change over time. Working in the more stable context of Company-World, for example, could lead to increased internal stability.

In summary, the results might be interpreted as an indicator of an eroding attractiveness of 'traditional' careers especially for those people that – according to current research – have the highest potential.

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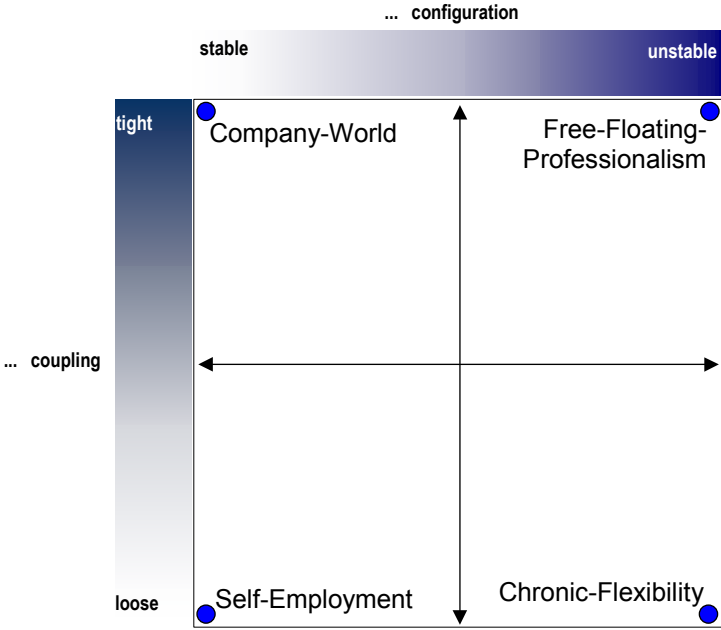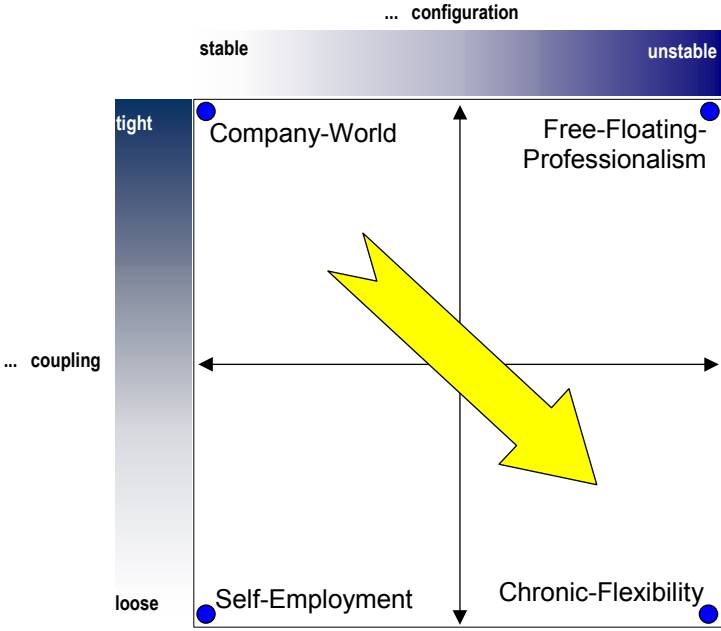
Figure 1: The fields of career

Figure 2: Development of Career Fields

Career Aspiration Questionnaire (KASP) *ViCaPP* (designed for the project) *Norming based on N = 330*	**Career Aspiration – Company World** *People who score high on this scale ...* strive for a position of responsibility and influence and a long-term career within one organization. **Sample Item:** *Feeling part of an organization.* $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 326)} = 0.86$
	Career Aspiration – Free-Floating Professionalism *People who score high on this scale ...* want to be under contract to one or a few organizations for special and challenging tasks, staying with the same organization only for a limited time. **Sample Item:** *Managing projects without being too tightly connected to an employing company.* $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 328)} = 0.71$
	Career Aspiration – Self-Employment *People who score high on this scale ...* seek "traditional" self-employment, i.e. offering a range of quite standardized products and/or services to a relatively stable clientele. **Sample Item:** *Turning a business idea into a profitable company.* $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 326)} = 0.81$
Number of Items: 33	**Career Aspiration – Chronic Flexibility** *People who score high on this scale ...* aspire to a "freelancer" career with different projects for various clients and ever-changing work contents. **Sample Item:** *Always taking on new tasks in various fields of activity.* $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 330)} = 0.82$

Table 1: Scales and Measurements - Career Aspirations

... configuration

	stable		unstable

	tight		
... coupling	Career Aspiration **Company-World** *People who score high on this scale ...* strive for a position of responsibility and influence and a long-term career within one organization.	Career Aspiration **Free-Floating-Professionalism** *People who score high on this scale ...* want to be under contract to one or a few organizations for special and challenging tasks, staying with the same organization only for a limited time.	**Sum**

Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
266	42.2%	46	7.3%	312 / 49.5%

Career Aspiration **Self-Employment** *People who score high on this scale ...* seek "traditional" self-employment, i.e. offering a range of quite standardized products and/or services to a relatively stable clientele.	Career Aspiration **Chronic-Flexibility** *People who score high on this scale ...* aspire to a "freelance" career with different projects for various clients and ever-changing work contents.	

Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
125	19.8%	168	26.7%	293 / 46.5%

Sum	391	62.0%	214	34.0%	605 / 96.0%

loose

No assignment:

Frequency	Percent
25	4.0%

Table 2: Number of actors aspiring to one of the four career fields

	Free-Floating-Professionalism	Self-Employment	Chronic Flexibility
Company World	-.822**	-.743**	-.871**
Free-Floating-Professionalism		.482**	.762**
Self-Employment			.751**

** 2-tailed significance at 0,01

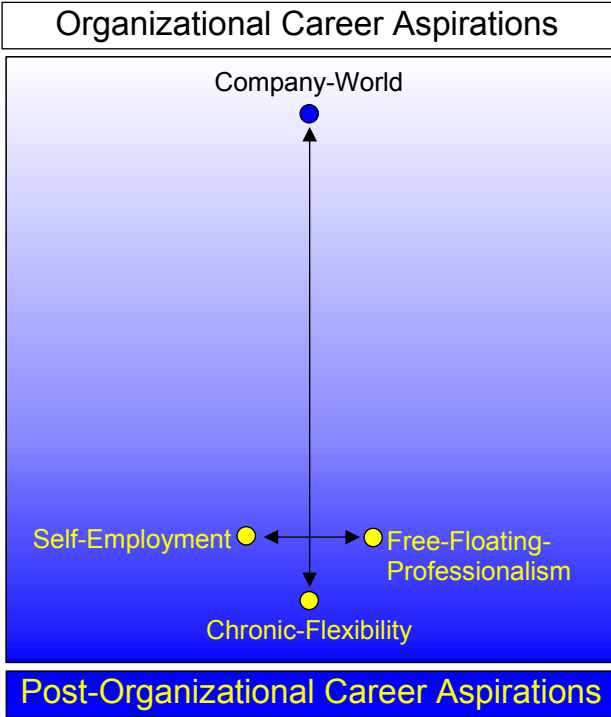*Table 3:* Intecorrelation between the four Career-Aspiration Scales

Figure 3: Empirical findings of only one Career Aspiration Factor

Career Tactics Questionnaire (KATA) *ViCaPP (designed for the project)* *Norming based on N = 539*	**Networking** *People who score high on this scale ...* seek numerous and various business contacts that may also "spill over" into private life. **Sample Item:** *After work I often go for a drink with professionally relevant people.* α $_{(ViCaPP - N = 966)}$ = 0.79
	Demonstrating Power and Status *People who score high on this scale ...* use their position power, symbols of status and influence, and even bluff to gain respect and compliance from people in their occupational environment. **Sample Item:** *I make use of the power and status that go with my job.* α $_{(ViCaPP - N = 958)}$ = 0.68
Number of Items: 40	**Self-Promotion and Self-Assertion** *People who score high on this scale ...* strongly emphasize their abilities, qualifications and achievements and – if necessary – overcome resistance against their plans with sheer pressure. **Sample Item:** *I grab opportunities to emphasize my professional merits.* α $_{(ViCaPP - N = 967)}$ = 0.77
NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) *Costa & McCrae; 1989, 1992;* *German: Borkenau & Ostendorf; 1993*	**Emotional Stability (Neuroticism)** *People who score high on this scale ...* are not easily upset and tend to be free from persistent negative feelings. They rather hold realistic ideas and are good at controlling their impulses and desires. **Sample Item:** *I am not easily worried.* α $_{(Literature)}$ =0.85 α $_{(ViCaPP - N = 782)}$ = 0.85
Norming based on N = 2112 *Number of Items: 24*	**Conscientiousness** *People who score high on this scale ...* describe themselves as being systematic, ambitious, strong-willed, self-disciplined, dependable, punctual, neat and well organized. **Sample Item:** *I keep my things clean and proper.* α $_{(Literature)}$ =0.85 α $_{(ViCaPP - N = 788)}$ = 0.81
Self-Monitoring (SÜW) *Snyder; 1974;* *German: Schiefele; 1990* *Number of Items: 11*	**Self-Monitoring** *People who score high on this scale ...* display behavior intended to shape the image others have of them positively. **Sample Item:** *I can speak offhand about topics I rarely know anything about.* α $_{(Literature)}$ =0.77 α $_{(ViCaPP - N = 785)}$ = 0.81

Bochumer Inventory of Job-Related Personality Description (BIP) *Hossiep & Paschen; 2001 Norming based on N = 5354*	**Achievement Motivation**
	People who score high on this scale ...
	display willingness to tackle high performance standards. They seek to continually benchmark and if necessary improve their own performance.
	Sample Item: *Even after excellent achievements I still try to get better.*
	$\alpha_{(Literature)}$=0.81 $\qquad\qquad$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 788)}$ = 0.80
	Leadership Motivation
	People who score high on this scale ...
	are motivated to actively influence and shape social processes. They perceive themselves as having natural authority and/or serving others as a reference person.
	Sample Item: *Being able to influence others satisfies me.*
	$\alpha_{(Literature)}$=0.88 $\qquad\qquad$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP – N = 777)}$ = 0.85
	Flexibility
	People who score high on this scale ...
	display a high preparedness and ability to adjust to changing work-related conditions and situations.
	Sample Item: *I can adjust to profound changes in my work contents without any difficulties.*
	$\alpha_{(Literature)}$=0.87 $\qquad\qquad$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP – N = 784)}$ = 0.88
	Openness for Social Contacts
	People who score high on this scale ...
	are at ease with building and maintaining social relationships within the work context.
	Sample Item: *When I come across people I don't know, I always find a conversation topic without any difficulties.*
Number of Items: 59	$\alpha_{(Literature)}$=0.90 $\qquad\qquad$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 779)}$ = 0.87

Table 4: Scales and Measurements for Personality Traits and Behavioral Characteristics

N = 561		Correlation with Organizational Career Aspiration	
H1: Adaptability	Self-Monitoring	-0.265	**
	Flexibility	-0.415	**
	Emotional Stability (Neuroticism)	-0.166	**
H2: Sociability	Networking	-0.205	**
	Openness for Social Contacts	-0.225	**
H3: Power and politics motive pattern	Leadership Motivation	-0.169	**
	Self-Promotion and Self-Assertion	-0.265	**
	Demonstrating Power and Status	0.038	
H4: Need for achievement	Achievement Motivation	-0.190	**
	Conscientiousness	0.148	**

** 2-tailed significance at 0,01

Table 5: Correlations between Organizational-Career-Aspiration, Personality Traits and Behavioral Characteristics

Dependent: Organizational Career Aspiration	Coefficent	Significance
constant	2.289	**
1. Flexibility	-.155	**
2. Conscientiousness	.059	**
3. Self-Monitoring	-.052	**
4. Leadership-Motivation	.077	**
5. Self-Promotion and Self-Assertion	-.047	**
6. Openness for Social Contacts	-.034	*
** significance at 0.01, * significance at 0.05		

Table 6: Stepwise Linear Regression Model