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Career Habitus

Theoretical and Empirical Contributions to Make a Black Box Gray

Not only the empirical evidence, but also the available body of theories for the ‘new careers’ is scarce. Really? There is a number of well developed theories that cover different aspects of the ‘traditional career’ stemming from various disciplines. Many of them, however, focus on a comparatively small set of variables, have the organization as their crucial point of reference and do not have or do not aim at a convincing conceptual architecture allowing for a multi-level perspective bridging the micro- and the macro-aspects of careers. Little theory development has been done that accounts for the changes in the forms, actors and contexts of careers that we currently can see. A theoretical advancement of the field especially can be expected if conceptual frameworks are developed that allow for multi-level analysis and conceptually go beyond the organization as explicit or implicit arena for professional careers.

This paper tries to contribute to that effort. It has two major goals: First, it wants to develop career habitus – itself being part of a more comprehensive habitus-based view of careers – as a major building block of a conceptual frame that captures (also) the new careers. Second, it presents some empirical data on the effects different elements responsible for the formation and activation of the career habitus have on individuals’ career aspiration, i.e. their future career preferences concerning entry into specific career fields, as part of this career habitus.

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Key words: career, habitus, career aspiration

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1 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. Really?

Career research has been dealing with careers in general and with professional careers in specific for a long time. Writers from a great number of disciplines, from various perspectives and focusing on different levels of analysis ranging from micro to macro 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 1956b; Super 1957; Glaser 1968; Dalton 1972; Holland 1973; Slocum 1974; Spilerman 1977; Van Maanen 1977; Schein 1980; Arthur et al. 1987; Hall 1987; 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 organizations can be regarded as maybe the core characteristic of industrial and post-industrial society, this was quite adequate. Things have changed, however. Since the 1980's at the latest, the situation has become more confusing. 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 et al. 1999; Ohmae 2001).

This has not left careers untouched. Several influential writers have proclaimed and analyzed a period of transition leading to new forms of careers (e.g., Arthur/Rousseau 1996; Hall 1996a). Even if different in 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-employers, 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 cur-

rently being replaced. Replaced 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 1996b). 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. A number of studies have gathered some empirical evidence about the new career landscape (e.g., Peiperl et al. 2000; Arthur et al. 1999). Overall, however, we know very little about those evolving new forms of careers empirically. Because of the recency of the practical developments, this is no surprise.

Not only the empirical evidence, but also the available body of theories for the 'new careers' is scarce. There are a number of well developed theories that cover different aspects of the 'traditional career' stemming from various disciplines (for example, Osipow 1983; Arthur et al. 1987; Sonnenfeld/Kotter 1982; Munley 1977; White 1970). Many of them, however, focus on a comparatively small set of variables (e.g., Graen/Scandura 1990), have the organization as their crucial point of reference (e.g., Rosenbaum 1984) and do not have or do not aim at a convincing conceptual architecture allowing for a multi-level perspective bridging the micro- and the macro-aspects of careers (e.g., London 1983). Little theory development has been done that accounts for the changes in the forms, actors and contexts of careers that we currently can see. A theoretical advancement of the field especially can be expected if conceptual frameworks are developed that allow for multi-level analysis and conceptually go beyond the organization as explicit or implicit arena for professional careers.

Today's professional careers are more diverse than ever, empirically we know little about them empirically and we do not have adequate theoretical concepts to describe and explain them – a tentative 'yes' seems plausible, but really the field of career research is starting to fill the gaps mentioned. This paper tries to contribute to that effort. It has two major goals:

- First, it wants to develop career habitus – itself being part of a more comprehensive habitus-based view of careers – as a major building block of a conceptual frame that captures (also) the new careers.
- Second, it presents some empirical data on the effects different elements responsible for the formation and activation of the career habitus have on individuals' career aspiration,

i.e. their future career preferences concerning entry into specific career fields, as part of this career habitus.

The paper is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 presents a habitus based perspective of careers and presents career habitus as a crucial element for understanding the formation and continuation of professional careers. Based on this conceptual frame, chapter 3 contains the major hypotheses about the effects factors related to the social context of origin and factors being part of the general habitus have on career aspiration as part of the career habitus have. After presenting the sample and the methods used in chapter 4, chapter 5 contains the presentation of the results. A discussion of the findings, its limitations and consequences for future research conclude the paper (chapter 6)

2 Theory

The close interaction between Bourdieu's three crucial concepts of field, capital and habitus may be summarized in the following equation (Bourdieu 1994b): [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice. Thinking of practice in relation to professional careers, it becomes clear that it may be interpreted only through the definition and the observation of the different terms of the equation. Moreover – and this is not shown in the equation – the main influencing elements on career also have to be defined. Following Bourdieu's work, we focus on the consequences of changes occurring in the domain of professional careers. More precisely, we ask about the conditions, possibilities, and modalities of the adaptation of individuals to rapidly evolving career patterns. Although, through their habitus, individuals are constrained by the rules and norms they internalized, Bourdieu still considers practice as open to ingenuity, creativity and strategy. New forms of careers may cause unexpected problems, creating a new dynamic which, in our view, can be observed through the evolution of what we term “field of career”.

2.1 Career field

Following Pierre Bourdieu's theory, a “social field” is characterized both by a patterned set of practices which suggests competent action in conformity with rules and roles, and as the playground or battlefield in which actors, endowed with a certain field-relevant capital, try to advance their position. Each field is based on a historically generated system of shared meaning. The boundaries of the field have to be investigated by empirical research. According to Bourdieu, the boundaries of the field indicate where its effects end, where the stakes of the game lose their impact. Fields are historically embedded social contexts, i.e. they change over time. Yet even more characteristic for fields is their inertia. Bourdieu stresses this aspect when he refers to the concept of habitus.

Fields are the social contexts within which practices take place. They correspond to a network of positions, to a playground where actors realize individual strategies, play according to the rules of the game (as defined by the specific set of capital most valuable for holding power within the field), and tend to reproduce them.

Before trying to define the nature of the field of career, it is necessary to elaborate on the meaning of the term “career”. We use this notion as a sequence of employment-related positions Arnold 1997b. Thus, the field of career could be defined as the field of professional work considered in a dynamic perspective, or in other words, as the moving field of professional work. Accordingly, the actors within the field of career are individual members of the

labor force. As the definition of the labor force varies according to national and institutional context, we have to define the way in which we refer to “occupational activity” or “occupational work”. Within our theoretical framework, we will consider work as the process of transformation of cultural and social capital into economic capital. It does not mean that other forms of capital do not occur throughout this process. It is understood that social and cultural capital are also redistributed through social status, knowledge, etc. Furthermore, in the process of work not only economic capital is produced, but also social and cultural capital. Nevertheless, the outstanding significance of economic capital remains the determining element of nearly all types of work. “Career” signifies the sequence of positions in the course of this process of transformation. The time dimension given by this process captures the focal relationship between work and time (Arthur et al. 1989). This process potentially generates *career capital*, whose distribution forms the structure of the *field of career*. The selection of the members of this particular field is, unlike other fields, not very rigid since anyone engaged in a professional activity also has a career of some sort. The struggle is therefore more about what specific kind of career the individual will pursue and about reaching a more favorable position within the field than at the moment of entering it (although a high rate of unemployment could dramatically increase the difficulty of entering the field).

Considering professional careers, it would actually be more correct to talk about labor rather than work. As some scholars have argued (Conrad et al. 2000), labor is an “invention” of modernity. The radical change which happened during the 19th century meant that social status became increasingly defined by labor, instead of working activities being defined by social status (for a different theoretical perspective see Luhmann 1995b and Brunner 1980). Furthermore, labor is codified and regulated through a complex legal framework. But the decisive point for the career issue is that labor may be defined as giving a social status, i.e., a relative position of a person on a recognized scale or hierarchy of social worth. The dramatic importance of this change needs to be underlined. It was the pre-condition for the belief that social status was not decided by birth, but that the social ladder could be climbed through education and hard work. The moment of the emergence of this belief is also the moment of the emergence of the modern sense of career.

The field of career has to be considered as a kind of “super-field” which may be divided into a multitude of sub-fields, following the interest and the special focus of the research. Lawyers, Microsoft, or the pharmaceutical industry may be analyzed as fields with specific characteristics and rules of the game. Nevertheless, we argue that one can identify ideal-typical sub-fields within the super-field of career. Considering such sub-fields makes it possible both to

integrate the specific characteristics and the particular logic of functioning of each career pattern into the meta-rules of professional career, and to consider the evolution of each sub-field in relation to the others.

The proposed ideal-typical sub-fields are the result of the interplay of two dimensions: coupling and configuration (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. Orton/Weick 1990; Staehle 1991; Weick 1969, 1976). 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 other. 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; Herkner 1980; Kelley 1967). 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):

- *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 hierarchical position.
- *Free-Floating Professionalism (FFP)* can be defined as the field of specialists. Individuals have tightly coupled relations with one customer at a time. In most cases the customer is an organization, and 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 recognition as an ex-

pert. The key resource is therefore knowledge and reputation (Heckscher/Donellon 1994; Heckscher 1995; Kanter 1989b; 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 (Flecker/Schienstock 1991; Kanter 1989b).
- *Chronic Flexibility* (CF) may appear quite similar to Free-Floating Professionalism, since careers are also characterized by frequent job changes. The fundamental 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. 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 1996; Cadin 2000; Sennett 1998).

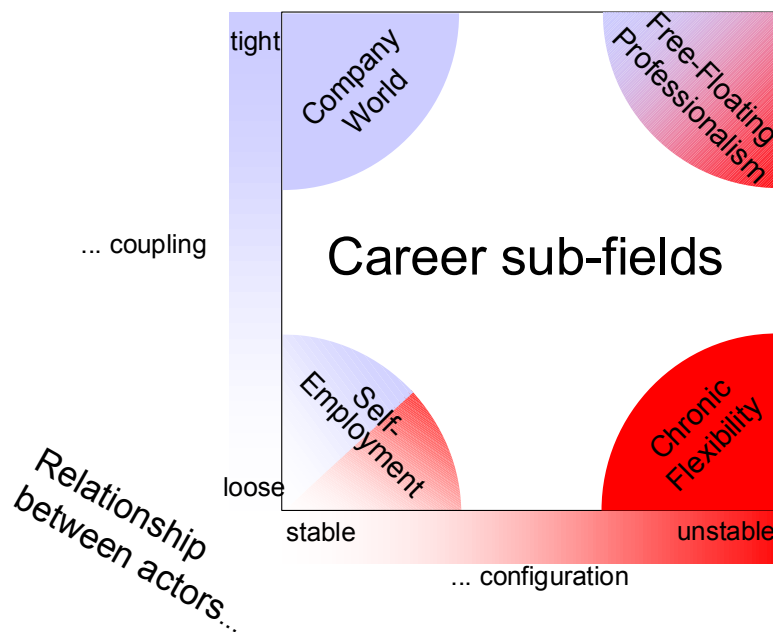


Figure 1: The fields of career

These four sub-fields of career represent four types of career logic, i.e. career pathways, based on different values and with different objectives. This means that each sub-field of career values different sorts of capital (or at least different combinations of capital), and different rules of the game. A specific habitus prepares for a specific (sub-)field more than others do, i.e. it allows better and easier adaptation. Therefore, the problem for individuals is not only to have a career habitus, but also to have the “right” habitus, i.e. a habitus which fits the field.

Considering, for example, the *Self-Employment* field of career, it may seem surprising to bring together psychoanalysts, self-employed cabdrivers, and entrepreneurs. Obviously, they are not competing with each other. Nevertheless all of them conform to rules and values in order to succeed in their career – requiring specific sorts of capitals – similar enough to be brought together in the same field. The importance of each of these four fields within the field of career varies, depending on the time and the location focused.

2.2 Career capital

Like every other field, the field of career values a particular sort of capital. *Career capital* consists of the different modes of support the individual obtains and has at his/her disposal and may invest for his/her further career success. Career capital is a mix of the three generic sorts of capital identified by Bourdieu: economic, social, and cultural capital Bourdieu 1986.

- *Economic capital* is the most efficient form of capital, for it alone can be conveyed in the appearance of general, anonymous, all-purpose convertible money from one generation to the next. It can be more easily and efficiently converted into cultural, social and symbolic capital than vice versa (Postone et al. 1993). Income is a particularly important element of economic capital.
- *Social capital* involves relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance, resources based upon social connections and group or class membership. It might be legitimized and institutionalized by family-, group- or class-membership and works as a multiplier which enhances the effects of economic and cultural capital. Social networks can be regarded as a product of permanent efforts in the form of continuous acts of exchange in order to institutionalize social relationships, whereby economic capital may also be spent (Bourdieu 1983).
- *Cultural, informational, or educational capital* designates education, i.e. durable dispositions of the body (culture, cultivation). To attain these, an internalizing process is necessary which consumes time. Therefore the duration of this process seems to be the most exact indicator (Bourdieu 1983). It appears in three forms: (1) incorporated, i.e. durable dispositions of habitus, (2) objectivized, that is in form of cultural products (books, paintings, machines) and (3) institutionalized, in form of academic titles and degrees, which are relatively independent of the actually incorporated cultural capital. Institutionalized cultural capital may more easily be compared and converted into other forms of capital. In

any case, cultural capital is the accumulated result of educational and cultural effort, undertaken either by the actor or by his/her ancestors.

Furthermore, Bourdieu adds *symbolic* capital as the fourth sort of capital which is perceived and socially recognized as legitimate. The rules valid within particular social fields specify which combination of the basic form of capitals will be authorized as symbolic capital.

The concept of *career capital* is not a new one in recent career research. Interestingly, it has been developed on a framework closely related to Bourdieu's forms of capital. The questions "Knowing-why, knowing-how, and knowing-whom" show the different components of career capital, making a link between the individual and the collective level (Arthur et al. 1999). According to our own theoretical framework, career capital is the particular sort of capital valued within the field of career, obtained through the investment of the different sorts of capital into professional activity and the recognition of the *economic system*, i.e. an ensemble of actors (especially companies) who need individual contributions, e.g. specific skills, which are only to be found within the fields of career (Fig.2). "Investment" should not be understood as a result of a rational choice type of action, but rather resulting from the *habitus* as the unique mixture of 'external determination' and deliberate strategy, or in Bourdieu's words: a strategy without strategic intentions. As a matter of fact, career capital is identical with symbolic capital within the field of career, since it legitimizes the necessary investment. The higher the recognition within the field, the better the chances to gain a dominant position. The particularity of career capital relies on the fact that this recognition is granted both inside and outside the field through *internal* recognition, i.e. recognition by the other actors within the field, and *external* recognition by the economic system, i.e. its belief in a useful utilization for its own needs. Career capital is interpreted in two different ways: it is symbolic capital within the field of career, and human performance for the economic system. The external recognition is processed mostly through economic capital (cf. the notion of work as transformation of social and cultural capital into economic capital). It may be mediated through income, but also through more symbolic forms of reward like particular privileges (big office, official car, etc.). For a scholar, for example, recognition could be a (non-paid) publication in a prestigious journal. These internal and external modes of recognition permit both the formation and (eventually) accumulation of career capital.

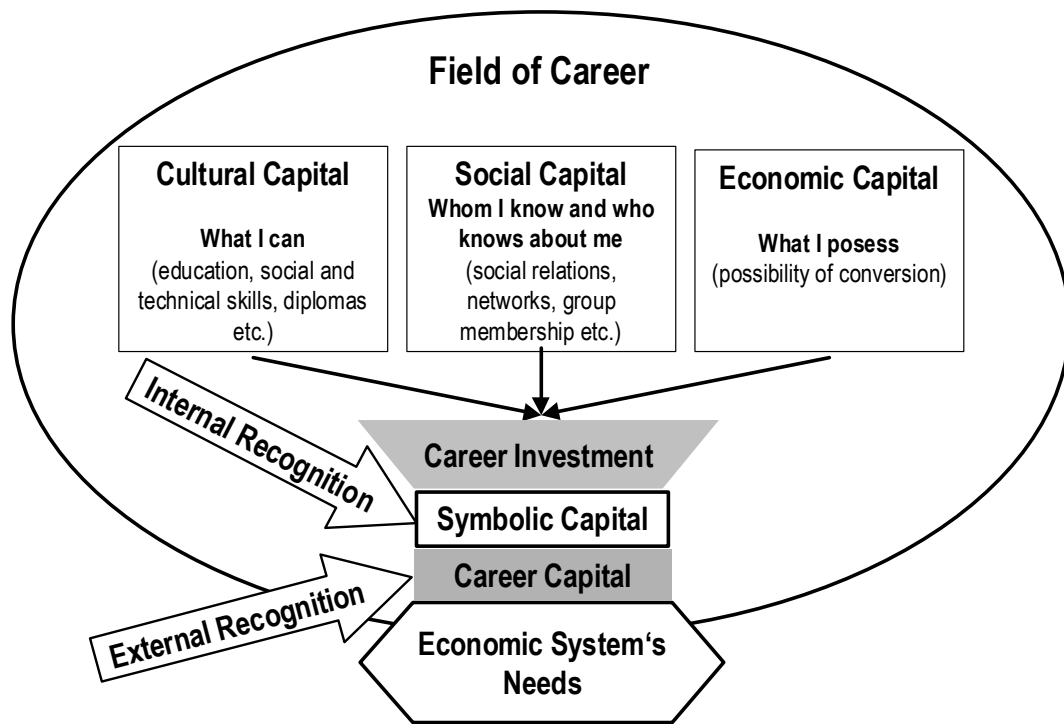


Figure 2: The making of career capital

2.3 Habitus: Towards making the black box gray

Along with the concept of *field*, the concept of *habitus* is Bourdieu's theoretical proposal for the interpretation of the occurrence of regular patterns of conduct over time which are neither the product of some abstract external structures nor of subjective intention. While the field defines the structures of the social setting in which the habitus operates, the habitus refers to an ensemble of schemata of perception, thinking, feeling, evaluating, speaking, and acting that forms all the expressive, verbal, and practical manifestations and utterances of a person (Krais 1993). The habitus is embodied history, the active presence of the whole past (Bourdieu 1990a). This ensemble of schemata is not a set of fixed and finite rules, but refers to a (necessarily limited) generative principle. The relation of the habitus to the different sorts of capital may be summarized as follows: the habitus can be oriented primarily towards the accumulation of symbolic or economic capital, but is basically made up of cultural capitals, or knowledge in the widest sense of the word (Lash 1993).

The habitus as defined by Bourdieu may be seen as a kind of matrix, which retains the product of the past experiences in the body of each individual. This is also expressed through notions like "embodiment", "disposition" or "cognitive structure". It would be legitimate for a basically sociological study not to focus on such notions which after all just have the function to name an interface between the objective structures of the social world and the practice of individuals, and thus to evoke without more precision some mechanism of socialization. This

would insofar be no problem, if the study dealt with groups in a specific context, let's say in an organization. It certainly becomes more problematic if the aim of the research is a multi-level analysis, or if the research involves a change of scale, passing from the group to the individual level, the individual being considered as the complex product of multiple processes of socialization.

Bourdieu avoids a too substantialist definition of the habitus by insisting on its (relative) unpredictability. The habitus is a “transforming machine” (Bourdieu 1990b) which takes individual trajectories into account, and is definitively not a simple mechanic determinism which expresses nothing else than a logic of reproduction (Boudon 1996). Focusing on primary socialization – which is highly tributary of the social position and origin of the parents – and on the individual life trajectory, the formation of the habitus permits to insist on both the diversity of individual habitus and the similarity of groups (or class) habitus.

By studying individuals on particular scenes, within the framework of one domain of practice (work, family etc.), sociologists often show a tendency towards the deduction of general dispositions, “habitus” and therefore general relationship to the world, out of the analysis of behaviors observed only on one of those scenes. Therefore, what could be seen as a major problem of the concept of habitus as used by Bourdieu, is this underlying assumption of unity and permanence of the person. Following this logic, an incautious use of the habitus concept could lead to the idea of a general transferability of all the dispositions in every situation.

The “ecological sense” of managers (Brunner et al. 1992) may be taken as an example to illustrate this point. The authors showed that following the context, in particular family and work, the interviewed managers presented a completely different attitude to ecology: in their private sphere, many of them were very strict with e.g. garbage separation while they had no problems to pollute water and air as company executives. The point here is to insist on what is certainly one of the main characteristics of modern societies: Their increasing social differentiation. Modern societies, compared to traditional ones, are divided into a multitude of systems or fields, functioning with their own logic, rules and languages. The empirical material used by Bourdieu to construct his theoretical work based on his field studies in Algeria in the early 1960s (Bourdieu 1979), i.e. in a mainly traditional and rural society with less social differentiation. As noted by Moi (Moi 1999), this Kabyle society was a “near-doxic” one, i.e. a society in which everybody has a perfect sense of limits. Or as Bourdieu puts it: “What is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying: The tradition is silent, not at least about itself as tradition” Bourdieu 1977. The transfer of concepts forged in such a con-

text to modern societies, where “identity is not unitary or essential, it is fluid and shifting, fed by multiple sources and taking multiple forms” (Kumar 1995), leads to some interrogations.

Recent works, especially in the sociology of education (Lahire 1998, 1999), emphasize discontinuities and “plurality” within an individual’s life. Such studies also tend to give more weight to agency and to the interaction between individuals and their own incorporated past. They show for instance, the existence of important variations in the practice of reading by children and adolescents. Where one would evoke a general disposition for reading through the habitus, the cited studies give evidence for the importance of the context. Indeed, whether the reading activity takes place at school or outside the institution leads to completely different results. Some children show obvious difficulties in reading when reading was referring to school, although their capacities to read and understand a text was “normal” as soon as reading was associated with self made choice and decision as well as pleasure.

If a disposition turns out to be useful in various social situations, its general character increases. If such situations are limited and rare, its character will be only partial. The given example of inequalities in reading activities by children could therefore be explained through different patterns of socialization. Some of them have confronted children with situations where reading is highly valued very soon and frequently, and thus facilitate the general application of this particular disposition.

Dispositions are therefore understood as potentialities which have to be actualized. The idea of a general transferability may make sense in the only case of a perfect analogy between past situations and present ones. But what about the most frequent cases, when individuals are confronted to at least partly new situations? Considering dispositions, i.e. “a way to be, a habitual state and a tendency, a propensity or an inclination” (Bourdieu 1977), as potentialities, the question of their actualization remains unanswered. This is precisely the question which Bourdieu’s work hardly answers. Consequently, critics address this as “black box deficiency”. A possible reply would be to say that each theory necessarily has its own blind spots. After all, this commutative operation (through the habitus, the “depot” of the past experiences is converted into dispositions for the future) may be considered as beyond the domain of sociology, whose scientific targets are the social variations of the phenomenon. A second kind of reaction – the one we chose – would be a tentative of making a black box gray.

A specific habitus associated with a particular field may develop an enchanted relationship to the world, to the field and its particular stake and rules. This kind of relationship is obtained through the transformation of a cultural constraint into “natural” inclination. For example, individuals within the *Company-World* field of career feel “like at home”. The cultural con-

straint is so deeply internalized that there is, as a matter of fact, no more choice, since a particular choice (pursuing a classic organizational career) imposes itself as obvious and natural. The sooner and the more regular and intense socialization has been, i.e. the corporal internalization of habits, the greater the chances are for the development of such a “second nature”. Individual dispositions will be the more non-unified and unstable:

- the more an individual was confronted, simultaneously or successively, with a plurality of heterogeneous or even contradictory social contexts;
- the earlier this kind of experience has been lived.

The “enchantment of the world” permitted by the “right habitus in the right field” should only be seen as a particular case, related to a particular psychic structure. Moreover, the enchanted way for living one’s habits is certainly not the only one. Indeed, socialized individuals may have durably internalized some cultural or intellectual habit but no intention to apply them. They may also apply them by routine, automatism or even by obligation, without any passion nor enchantment. Habits may be internalized but actualized only through constraint or obligation, as well as through passion or desire, or unconscious routine. It will depend on both the ways dispositions and habits have been acquired, on the moment of this acquisition in the personal biography, and on the context of their actualization. Habits which were internalized very soon, within favorable conditions of internalization (e.g. without important gaps between what parents say and what they do), and with positive conditions of application (social rewards), have certainly greater chances to lead to passion or desire.

For example, someone raised as the prospective heir of an entrepreneurial dynasty, who studied in a prestigious business school and who is socially connected with the “entrepreneurial bourgeoisie”, has certainly great chances to incorporate an homogeneous and favorable cultural acquirement for the development of “entrepreneurial dispositions”. Nevertheless, despite such a favorable context, the appropriation of social and cultural dispositions cannot be guaranteed. Like anyone else, the heir is not passive. For the construction of his/her identity, he/she selects within the whole social inheritance and takes only a part of it. Dispositions, even those acquired very early, may be inhibited or deactivated to leave some space for the formation and the activation of schemes internalized at the contact with the different instances of socialization crossed by the individual. That’s one reason why the transmission of “entrepreneurial interest” within entrepreneur families is not deterministic. The individual may or may not select the social inheritance, keeping the contents of the inheritance alive or not. This allows him/her to arbitrate between identification and differentiation in regard to the parental role model (Bourdieu 1999). Even if the social transmission has succeeded, the individual can

nevertheless follow the way of the parents in different manners, for example without any passion for entrepreneurship, distinguishing him/herself from his/her ascendants. We would also suppose that his/her “entrepreneurial spirit” may be dedicated to another sphere than the one of work, e.g. the familial one.

Such uncertainty around “success “ or “failure” in the process of socialization illustrates how much a traditional statistical portrait of individuals (social origin, sex, age, educational level, place of living, etc.) would be insufficient for understanding the forms of internalization and externalization of the socio-psychic schemes favorable to the constitution of the different “career habitus”. Because of the major role of both group and individual history, these indicators remain nevertheless highly necessary for the comprehension of the construction of the various habitus.

Our starting point is the acceptance of the concept of habitus as a durable system of dispositions. The word “system” is a crucial one in this definition, since it allows to insist on the non-deterministic character of the habitus: two brothers may have acquired very similar dispositions and capitals through similar socialization, but the way these dispositions are organized into a system may be very different, constituting very different habitus. Although dispositions are durable, not all of them are actualized in the same time. If they’re not actualized, they still exist as potentials. The actualization of dispositions depends to a large extent on the nature of the situation one is confronted with, i.e. the context. The unequal actualization of dispositions has a direct effect on the evolution of the habitus since – and this is a crucial point – it is always unfinished. The habitus is indeed never constituted once and for all, but evolves through adjustments to the conditions of action (which are themselves evolving).

The (relative) capacity of adaptation of the habitus has been frequently underlined by Bourdieu who defines it as a “generative principle” (Bourdieu, 1990), i.e. not only a “reproductive principle”, although this capacity to generate new practices is constrained by the weight of the past. That’s also why primary socialization holds such an importance, since each new situation has first to be translated through the firstly acquired set of dispositions. Following our assumption, the evolution of the habitus has to be considered as influenced by two processes.

- The first one, and certainly the closest to Bourdieu’s own reflections, lies in the nature of the habitus, that is the capacity to adapt to new situations by using the internalized past experiences in an innovative way. The degree of creativity is positively related to the variety of social contexts an actor has been socialized through. If a social change occurs too rapidly to allow any possibility of adaptation of the habitus to new contexts, it will lead to what Bourdieu and Sayad called the phenomenon of *hysteresis* (Bourdieu/Sayad 1964),

i.e. a distortion between the habitus (and thus agency) and the objective conditions of agency. They showed it through the deep disorientation of Algerian peasants when they had to live in town; even after years of urban life, they couldn't become adapted citizens.

- The second one is linked to our assumption that dispositions are unequally actualized. Defined as a system, the dispositions of the habitus are always more or less connected. These connections are nevertheless not strong enough for a “monolithic” consideration and use of the habitus. Some dispositions may be more present because of their frequent actualization, thus becoming real habits. The frequent actualization of one disposition has an effect on its place and importance within the habitus-system, and contributes to its evolution.

In the construction of durable dispositions which show a high degree of stability we also attribute a major role to primary socialization. This degree of stability is based on the deepness of internalization. Considering, for example, that cooking at home is a female activity, such a gender division of roles may be very deeply internalized if it is commonly accepted and propagated by the family, the social group and institutions like school. The acceptance of this “female role” as something “natural” will certainly be less strong if some contesting voices are to be heard e.g. in the family. Each disposition may show different intensities following the way they have been internalized. The more intensive a disposition, the more durable and stable it will be.

Nevertheless, the intensity of each internalized disposition is not definitive. It will depend on their actualization through the whole life. We consider dispositions as only potentially active, and not automatically transferable in each situation. It means that the more often dispositions are actualized, the greater the chance for them to become real observable habits. The questions of a disappearing of dispositions which have never been actualized is still open.

2.4 Career habitus

Our interpretation of the habitus concept leads us to define it as follows: *A durable but evolving system of potentially actualized dispositions*. Focusing now more precisely on the career habitus, we will also slightly adapt Bourdieu's notion to our own research issue. Indeed, it appears clear through his whole work that the way a specific habitus is defined, e.g. the academic habitus or the bourgeois habitus, refers not only to the presence within a field but also to a rather dominating position within this particular field. Thus, an academic habitus, for example, could be designated only to those scholars who perfectly know and use the rules of the game for their own advancement. Such an “elitist” definition is not appropriate when

considering a “super field” like the field of career. Given the central place of occupational work in our societies, it is evident that for most people it is indispensable to have some remunerated activity. Because most people participate in the field of career, in principle the mere entering into this field is (relatively) easy. To put it differently, parts of dispositions of most of people will necessarily be activated, since they are or will be regularly confronted with the specific context of work.

Following our general definition of career all these people will have a career. Because “having a career” is not taken in its narrow sense, meaning “having a successful/ascending career”, each individual in the field of career develops a career habitus. Therefore career habitus may be defined by the dispositions which tend to be ‘automatically’ actualized within the field of career. Career habitus is a generic term which designates an infinity of different possibilities. If someone hates his/her job and work in general, imagines some new strategies to escape his/her duties every day, and is not at all interested in any idea of advancement, this person would nonetheless develop a specific career habitus. Dispositions will be actualized by this specific context, but they will differ from the ones of an ambitious colleague, e.g., in terms of different amounts and qualities of career capital. The specificity of each career habitus becomes evident when the hierarchies, i.e. the dominating or dominated positions within each (sub-) field are analyzed.

Whether dispositions are actualized or not depends mainly on contextual opportunities. The young industrial heir, for example, has acquired his/her entrepreneurial interest all along his/her socialization and actualized it through the opportunity of leading the family owned company. But this opportunity can only be part of the explanation. It does not explain, for example, why his/her brother who had the same opportunity preferred to become a school teacher (Bourdieu 1999). Obviously not all factors which potentially influence the actualization of dispositions can be investigated in this study (e.g. the relations to the father, the hidden influence of some traumatic event etc.).

Nevertheless, the socio-psychological and psychological variables included in our study bring valuable knowledge about the process of actualization because they allow to paint a (limited) “psychological portrait” of each individual in a work context. The sociological data collected permit the reconstruction of a “class habitus”. “Class” in this sense is not used in the Marxist but in the Bourdieuan tradition and defined through a relative homogeneity in living conditions and in the amount and structure of the capital possessed by individuals. Once this amount and structure of capital can be (albeit roughly) estimated, the psychological variables give some precious information about the way each actor plans to use his/her capital within

the fields of career. With other words, our assumption is that asking about behavior and feelings in a work-related context raises the chances to determine the dispositions which will really be actualized in the particular situations of occupational work. Without such data, we would enhance the danger of considering potential dispositions as automatically actualized, exaggerating thus the deterministic weight of the social class of origin. Because of the importance of the context for potential actualization of the dispositions our focus is on the “career-habitus” rather than on the “general” habitus.

The measures used are based on the four assumptions identified by Müller (1986) and Kraiss (1985) within Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (Müller 1986; Kraiss 1985):

- (1) *Unconsciousness*: Habitus operates at the subconscious level throughout life and is therefore largely resistant to reflection and modification.
- (2) *Stability*: Habitus is primarily formed by constraints and freedoms given by class situation prevailing in childhood socialization, and is largely of an inert disposition. This does not imply that habitus is innate; it can be modified by the influence of a 'career', i.e. by secondary, professional and organizational socialization. “Membership of a profession actually exercises a kind of censorship which exceeds institutional or personal constraints. One does not, cannot ask certain questions” (Bourdieu 1992).
- (3) *Incorporation of social structures*: Habitus may be defined as a cognitive, perceptive and action matrix (Bourdieu 1977), whereby cognitive structures are regarded as internalized social structures; thus socialization is a process of incorporation of social structure.
- (4) *Strategy*: Habitual thinking, acting and perceiving is directed towards objects specific for a particular social field. These objects of interest are regarded as specific combinations of economic, cultural and social capital.

These assumptions help to make the habitus operational as well as they enable us to link socio-psychological constructs traditional within career research with our habitus based perspective of careers. Therefore, we use two different classes of variables in our study. First, career aspiration as a major element of an individual’s career habitus. Career aspiration relates the individual with various career fields. In line with our view of career fields, these are the Company World, Free-Floating Professionalism, Self-employment, and Chronic Flexibility. To be sure, career aspiration is not the only element of the career habitus, but an important one. Second, we use variables that contribute to the formation of the career habitus. On the one hand, these are important variables related to the accumulation of educational, economic and social capital within the family of origin. On the other hand, these are variables that rep-

resent elements of the general habitus or are at the interface between the general habitus and the career habitus. The former consist of personality traits which can be understood as somehow representing the dimension of unconsciousness, in our case emotional stability, conscientiousness, achievement motivation and flexibility. The latter encompass variables concerning social and strategic behavioral dispositions, in our case networking, demonstrating power and status, self-promotion and self-assertion, self-monitoring, leadership motivation, and openness for social contacts. Fig. 3 gives an overview.

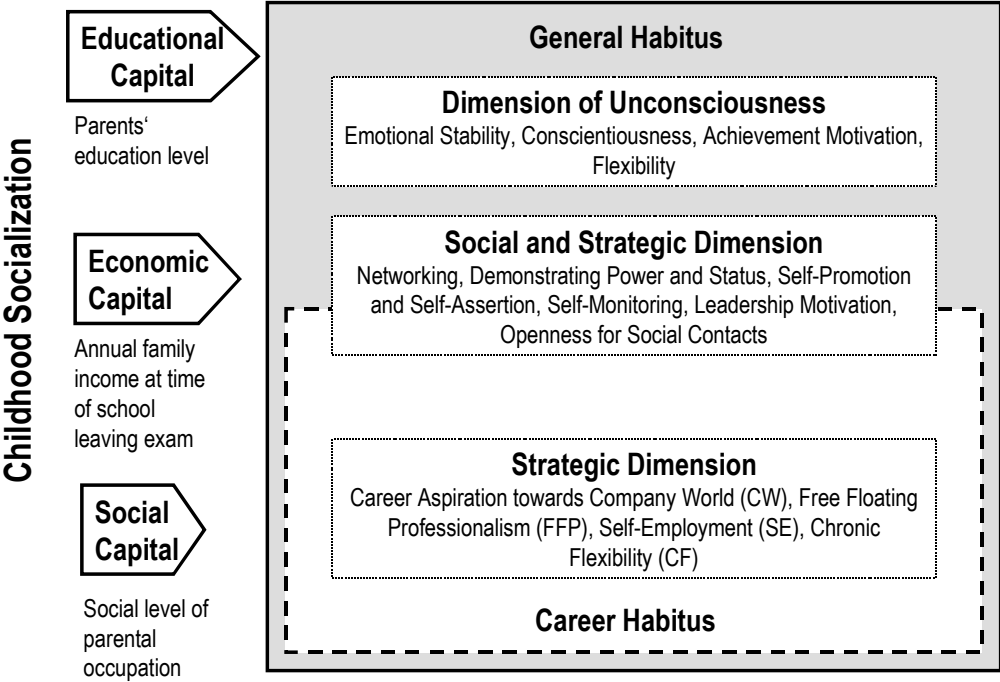


Figure 3: General habitus and career habitus and its variables

Since most of the members of our sample were beginning their job research at the time they filled in the questionnaire, one could argue that these people are *de facto* only approaching the field of career and not yet within it. Although this is true, this does not really matter for the present study because of two reasons. First, a majority of the students already had an occupational activity during his/her university time, and thus are familiar to the work context. Second, they have been particularly confronted to the economic and business spheres all along their study, which appears quite plausible for a university of business administration. We therefore believe that the aspirations expressed by these students are very realistic ones, which have already been confronted with “reality”.

3 Hypotheses

We define career aspirations as a cluster of needs, motives and behavioral intentions which individuals articulate with respect to the individual career fields. Thus career aspirations measure the strength of an actor's intention to be active in a particular career field. Our term "career aspiration" shows similarities with the term "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 the four career fields developed by us.

Furthermore, career aspirations represent a type of mental self selection. Actors anticipate the success prerequisites in each of the fields and select those fields where they assume the largest probability of success, estimating their personal strengths/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: that there is an interaction between personality and behavioral traits and one's vocational choices, so that people tend to move into career fields that are congruent with their personal qualities. Our concept has therewith the character of a so-called "matching-model" (Hall 1987), that focuses on the match or fit between the habitus and the career field. Thus career aspirations represent the strategic dimension of career habitus.

3.1 Hypotheses related to social origin

3.1.1 The volume and structure of capital

Our theoretical framework suggests that the social class of origin influences both career aspirations and career success. The crucial role of organizations providing inclusion in society, i.e. providing social places for persons where they become addressees of social expectations (Luhmann 1995a, 237ff), has not discarded the social origin's impact on careers. According to several investigations on the French *classe dominante* (Bourdieu/Passeron 1977; Bourdieu/Saint-Martin 1978; Bourdieu 1989), the shift from feudal to corporate structures forces

the dominant class to alter its strategies of social reproduction: Simply bequeathing economic capital does not longer guarantee that their offsprings will occupy the top corporate positions. Replacing bequeathing, the acquisition of exclusive educational degrees ensures the desired social selection in favour of children from the dominant class (Bourdieu/Boltanski 1978).

Apart from sociological approaches there is little evidence of research on the effect of childhood socialization and social origin on professional and managerial careers. Although promotion interest seems to be linked to social class (Piore 1975), social structure is mostly considered only under the focus of gender and ethnical composition of hierarchies and demographic similarity (e.g. Meier 1991; Tharenou 1997a, 45ff.; Tharenou 1997b, 23ff).

Although Hall defines career as a “bundle of socialization experiences” (Hall 1987, 302), the processes considered relevant for career success include mainly adult and organizational socialization. In the tradition of Becker and Strauss (Becker/Strauss 1956a) career is rather seen as a process accompanying and specifying adult socialization than as a result of childhood socialization (Arnold 1997a; Hall 1987). Only a few scholars study these effects, and most of them from a gender point of view. Among these there is a focus upon attachment-to- vs. separation-from parents during childhood. Being attached to parents may lead to the development of confidence in pursuing career-related tasks among young woman, which in turn influences career aspirations (O'Brien et al. 2000). Women’s attachment and conflictual independence from both parents are positively related to organizational commitment and negatively related to the tendency to termination (Blustein/Walbridge 1991). For men, attachment to, attitudinal dependence on and conflictual independence from their fathers are predictive of progress in the organizational commitment process. Among many other independent variables influencing women’s and men’s promotion within a large Canadian corporation, Cannings (Cannings 1988) analyses the effects of domestic division of labor between parents, finding a slight but overall positive relationship between traditional division of labor and the manager’s chances of promotion. However, as for most educational factors, this effect is clearly overruled by gender effects.

More closely to our focus of research, Kurtz et al. (Kurtz et al. 1987) examine the role of parental influence and family size in the careers of 243 CEOs. Among various results they show that 88% of the CEOs grew up in a 2-parents-household, and 100% of the CEOs from very rich or very poor families came from 2-parent-households, compared to about 85% coming from middle-class-families. The authors, however, concentrate only upon the presence of parents and the family size and do not compare the social classes of CEOs’ families with non-CEO-managers.

A much stronger focus on childhood-socialization-effects is found within educational sociology. Schmitt et al. (Schmitt et al. 1999), for example, use longitudinal data to examine the effects of parental employment status and school climate on children's academic and social development (but not on professional career) and show that parents' income and education are related to various school outcomes. According to Collins, the changing relationship between education and occupational stratification should be understood in terms of group conflict over scarce resources (Collins 1979). Consequently economic capital is transformed into institutionalized cultural capital, whose exclusivity safeguards top positions in companies (Hartmann 2000). A parallel can be found to Marshall's classic work where the author points out that "the professional classes especially, while generally eager to save some capital for their children, are even more alert for opportunities of investing in them" (Marshall 1920). In the same way, the recent work of Wagner (Wagner 1998) shows the making of what she calls the "new elite of the globalisation", i.e. the adaptation of upper-class expatriates to the rules of the economic internationalization. The close relationship between economic and cultural capital is also underlined by Lauder (Lauder 1991), who demonstrates the increasing importance of economic capital required to meet the escalating costs involved in acquiring the appropriate forms of cultural capital. The most interesting point for our studies is the capacity of adaptation of the dominant class to a changing context through the transformation of the structure of their capital.

This facility of capital conversion is implicitly expressed in H1. In other words, the starting point of the hypothesis is a supposed preference for loosely coupled fields of career, i.e. fields which cannot offer the (relative) security of the well-known organizational career. Thus, individuals affirming an aspiration towards loosely coupled fields of career are supposed to be "less afraid" of trying new experiences in their work life, since their capitals offer them a larger spectrum of possibilities and chances of success. Trying new experiences is less risky when the perceived security provided by the inherited capital equipment is high. For example, Mayer and Carroll found that entry into self-employment upon entering the labor force is positively affected by father's socioeconomic status (Mayer/Carroll 1987).

H1: The volume and structure of capital closely related to the social class of origin as represented by parents' education level, household income, and social level of parents' occupation, is positively related to aspiration towards career fields characterized by loose coupling (Self-Employment and Chronic Flexibility) and inversely related to aspiration towards career fields characterized by tight coupling (Company World and Free-Floating Professionalism).

The success of the transformation process within the structure of capital, according to Bourdieu, is first and foremost based on the transmission of the “cultural capital” already accumulated in the family. As underlined by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984), social and personal skills appear to be open to all through formal programs of learning, but the social context in which the social qualities of taste, manners, ways of knowing and personal compatibility are acquired and translated into cultural capital is widely ignored. The importance of the individual’s “incorporated cultural capital”, i.e. in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body and thus being part of a person’s habitus (Skeggs 1997), is expressed in H1a.

H1a: The relations assumed in H1 for both educational and economic capital are stronger for educational than for economic capital.

3.1.2 The father's educational and occupational level

As most sociologists dealing with social mobility until the 1990s, Bourdieu sees the father’s occupation as the primary element of social origin (e.g. Bourdieu 1984). For the tendency towards self-employment a similar effect is measured (Mayer/Carroll 1987). These findings evidently mirror the gendered structure of society. The effect is supported by the evidence of male dominance in the sphere of professional work and especially within the organizational world (Savage/Witz 1992; Wacjman 1998). Although some indicators might show an erosion, the glass-ceiling remains hard to break for women (Cahoon/Rowney 2001). Many socio-structural circumstances allow men a higher involvement at work (Friedman/Greenhaus 2000) and thus a higher aptitude to serve as role models. Hypothesis H2 expresses these slow changes in gender inequalities at work, the assumption that the father’s profession is still predominant within the family system and thus exerts a strong influence during childhood socialization. This may be especially true in Austria where the highest gender wage gap in the European Community can be found (see. e.g. Anker 1998).

H2: Both for male and female graduates, the father’s educational and occupational level have a stronger influence on career aspiration than the mother’s educational and occupational level do.

3.1.3 Parental employment status

Nevertheless, since the habitus is characterized by the importance of the past – “embodied history” – which allows to integrate both the diversity of individual habitus and the similarity of group habitus (class habitus), we assume some effect of the parents’ location within the fields of career to the career aspiration of their children. This idea has been recently expressed by Brown, who shows that in UK educational selection is increasingly based on the wealth and wishes of parents rather than the individual abilities and efforts of pupils (Brown 1995). Hypothesis H3 expresses the strong influence of primary socialization in the formation of the habitus. H3 supposes a positive relation between parents’ self-employment and the childrens’ aspirations towards loosely coupled career fields. Besides providing a specific opportunity structure, self-employed parents also serve as role models. Children raised in such families are more likely to have an understanding of self-employment and to think of it as a realistic alternative to conventional employment (Young 1971). On the other hand, it is shown that self-employment of parents has no significant influence on the labor-force entry into self-employment, but on later movement into self- or family employment (Carroll/Mosakowski 1987).

H3: Compared to children from families where at least one of the parents was or is self-employed, children of organization-employed parents show a lower level of aspiration towards career fields characterized by loose coupling, but a higher level of aspiration towards career fields characterized by tight coupling.

3.1.4 The gap between perceived social status of grandparents and parents

Following the same logic, the more stable the social family history has been, the greater are the chances of a deep internalization of specific habits and dispositions, in particularly through cultural capital. Lamont for instance shows the strong cultural exclusiveness as well as the relative intolerance of upper-middle class members of the third or higher generation compared with those of the first generation (Lamont 1992). The enduring importance of cultural capital is also demonstrated by Egerton (Egerton 1997). Because most capitals are inheritable, looking back to the parents’ social position may bring some further indications to interpret career choices. At first glance H4 might seem to be quite contradictory to H1. Whereas H1 focuses on the structure and amount of capital, H4 assumes that instability within one’s family history might strongly influence one’s aspiration to go into fields of career supposed to be more unstable. Indeed, instability can be associated to risk, individualism or opportunity, all notions and values which may be inherited and internalized as positively con-

noted. The longer, i.e. over several generations, stability is to be found the more stability will be looked after, so our assumption.

H4: The narrower the gap between perceived social status of grandparents and parents, i.e. the more stable the social family history, the higher the level of aspiration towards career fields characterized by a stable configuration (Company World and Self-Employment) and the lower the level of aspiration towards career fields characterized by an unstable configuration (Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility).

3.2 Hypotheses related to habitus

In the following we define four personality and behavioral traits: 1. adaptability, 2. sociability, 3. power and politics motive pattern and 4. need for achievement and accuracy. These constructs seem to be more or less related to career habitus. Following the definition of these dimensions and with reference to relevant research findings we generate hypotheses for the connection between career aspirations and personality and behavioral traits according to the “Person-Job-Fit-Theory“, respectively to the fit of (career) habitus and career field.

3.2.1 Adaptability

Under the dimension “adaptability” we summarize “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 the 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 situationally appropriate performances, whereas *low self-monitors* do not control their expressive behaviors to appear situationally appropriate. In our sample we have used one scale of the German self-monitoring questionnaire published by Schiefle (Schiefle 1990). In the meanwhile there exist numerous empirical findings in the context of the Company World, where the positive impact of this dimension was proven on different facets of organizational behavior (Baron 1989; Zaccaro et al. 1991; Turnley/Bolino 2001). We assume that in career fields characterized by an unstable configuration (Free-Floating Professionalism, Chronic Flexibility), it is essential to establish contact with a diverse spectrum of individual and collective actors which requires high adaptability performances in the sense of self-monitoring. In this sense Kilduff & Day’s

(Kilduff/Day 1994) findings demonstrate a higher career mobility in and between organizations. Mehra, Kilduff et al. (Mehra et al. 2001) found that high self-monitors are better able to fill relevant positions in networks that are important for them, compared to low self-monitors.

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/Paschen 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 (Salgado 1997) 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. However, there are findings from a study conducted by Judge, Martocchio & Thoresn (Judge et al. 1998) where “openness to experience” was strongly linked to success during job training. We assume that the trait flexibility is linked with an inclination towards unstable configurations (Free-Floating Professionalism, 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 insecure, anxious, depressed, and emotional as opposed to calm, self confident, and cool. 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/McCrae 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, which goes together with the findings from Hough et al. (Hough et al. 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 stable configured fields (Company World, Self-employment). Based on these considerations, we generated hypothesis H5:

H5: The more actors show a tendency towards career fields characterized by an unstable configuration, the more they display attributes of high “adaptability” which is represented by: 1. self-monitoring, 2. flexibility and 3. emotional stability.

3.2.2 Sociability

Under the dimension “Sociability” we summarize “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.

The dimension “networking” we operationalized in the KATA (see section 4.2.3) 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 the dimension “openness for social contacts”, as it was operationalized by Hossiep & Paschen (Hossiep/Paschen 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 et al. 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 (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 (Michael/Yukl 1993)and Orpen (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 (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 of relevance. This is expected to be the case rather in the fields of Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility, i.e. the loosely coupled career fields. Therefore we present hypothesis H6:

H6: The more actors show a tendency towards career fields characterized by loose coupling, the more they display attributes of a high “sociability” which is represented by: 1. networking, 2. openness for social contacts.

3.2.3 Power and politics motive pattern

The dimension “power and politics motive pattern” concerns 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 (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 et al. 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 et al. 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 and in Self-employment, thus in career fields characterized by a stable configuration. From this we derive hypothesis H7:

H7: The more actors show a tendency towards career fields characterized by a stable configuration, 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.

3.2.4 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/Paschen 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/McCrae 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/Ostendorf 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/Mount 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 career fields with an unstable configuration (Free-Floating Professionalism, Chronic Flexibility). Hence our hypothesis H8:

H8 The more actors show a tendency towards career fields characterized by an unstable configuration, the more they display a “need for achievement and accuracy” which is represented by: 1. achievement motivation and 2. conscientiousness.

4 Method

4.1 Data gathering and sample structure

Data were obtained from Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration (WU Wien) graduates and an additional college sample in two large “retrieval waves” in May and September 2001. All WU Wien graduates from between May 2000 and July 2001 first received an information package 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 college students who were just before graduation were also asked to participate in the study. The overall response rate was 26%, which is satisfactory, especially considering the length of our questionnaire.

The sample that provided the data for the following analyses consists of 331 persons (281 from the WU Wien, 50 from polytechnic), of which 166 (50.2%) are male and 153 (46.2%) are female.¹ Mean sample age is 28.1 years, with the female participants being about one year younger than the male participants on average.² Mean duration of study for the whole sample is 13.5 semesters.

4.2 Scales and measurements

4.2.1 Career aspirations

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 avail-

¹ There were twelve cases (3.6%) where gender was not indicated.

² The exact respective mean values are 27.56 years for the female participants and 28.51 years for the male participants

able 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. As it can be assumed that the validity criterion itself only has a low consistency value, the obtained validity value can be assessed as very high.

Instead of the method chosen for this study – constructing a scale for each of the four career fields – an alternative way would have been to develop only two scales measuring the dimensions of coupling and configuration. This method is currently tried out within a survey of former graduates. For the time being, however, the chosen method has proved itself to be quite effective. The four aspiration scales allow us to create an “aspiration profile” for each participant which can be used later on to compare groups with certain aspiration patterns. On the other hand, this method has the disadvantage of increased overall complexity of the interpretation of the available data and of the statistical design necessary to test our hypotheses.

Career Aspiration Questionnaire (KASP) <i>ViCaPP (designed for the project)</i> <i>Norming based on N = 330</i> <i>Number of Items: 33</i>	Career Aspiration – Company World <i>People who score high on this scale ...</i> strive for a position of responsibility and influence and a long-term career within one organization. Sample Item: <i>Feeling part of an organization.</i> $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 326)} = 0.84$
	Career Aspiration – Free-Floating Professionalism <i>People who score high on this scale ...</i> 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: <i>Managing projects without being too tightly connected to an employing company.</i> $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 328)} = 0.68$
	Career Aspiration – Self-Employment <i>People who score high on this scale ...</i> seek “traditional” self-employment, i.e. offering a range of quite standardized products and/or services to a relatively stable clientele. Sample Item: <i>Turning a business idea into a profitable company.</i> $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 326)} = 0.80$
	Career Aspiration – Chronic Flexibility <i>People who score high on this scale ...</i> aspire to a “freelancer” career with different projects for various clients and ever-changing work contents. Sample Item: <i>Always taking on new tasks in various fields of activity.</i> $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 330)} = 0.81$

Table 1: Scales and Measurements - Career Aspirations

4.2.2 Hypothesis H1 to H4

The following table contains the dimensions that refer to social origin and were entered into the analyses of H1 to H4 as independent variables. Volume of capital related to social origin was measured by three input variables, as shown below. Where there were no joint variables for both parents available, the respective value of the father was used. All three input variables were ordinally scaled. The second variable divided the sample into two categories - graduates that came from families where both parents were salaried employees as opposed to graduates from families where at least one of the parents was self-employed. The third and last dimension for the abovementioned hypotheses was operationalized by using the perceived gap between social status of grandparents and parents, which participants were asked to rate on a five-point Likert scale.

Volume of capital related to social class of origin	Parental education level Ordinal variable with seven categories, ranging from basic education to a university or college degree <i>(ascertained separately for mother and father)</i>
	Social level of parental occupation Ordinal variable with seven categories <i>(obtained by grouping the available (nominal) data on parental occupation (for mother and father) into ordinal categories, according to the scheme of a renowned Austrian agency specialized in sociodemographic surveys)</i>
	Annual family income at the time of school-leaving exam Ordinal variable with five categories
Parental employment status	Parents' kind of employment A dichotomous variable that indicated whether both parents were salaried employees or at least one of the parents was self-employed.
Social family history	Perceived gap between grandparents' and parents' social status Sum of the absolute values of perceived differences between grandparents' and parents' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income • social prestige of occupation • education

Table 2: Scales and Measurements – H1 to H4

4.2.3 Hypothesis H5 to H8

The following table contains the scales that refer to personality and/or behavioral traits and were entered into the analyses of H5 to H8 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 employed people) based on various theoretical constructs, such as impression management, influence tactics, networking, career insight efforts etc. and then optimized with regard to internal scale consistency, normal-distribution-fit and scale range. The descriptions of the separate scales are presented in table 3.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

H1 was tested by examining the correlations of the three input variables (see above) with all four aspirations. As the three input variables only have ordinal measurement level, a non-parametric correlation was performed. Alpha level was adjusted for four comparisons. As the hypothesis included an assumption about the direction of the correlations, 1-tailed significance was used.

H1a and H2 were tested by comparing the respective correlations via a Fisher Z-test for two correlation coefficients, with alpha-level adjusted for four comparisons.

H3 was tested by a MANOVA over all four aspirations, with the kind of employment (at least one of the parents self-employed or both parents salaried employees) entered as the categorical variable. SPSS General Linear Models Procedure was used.

H4 was tested by examining the bivariate correlations between perceived gap in social status and the four aspirations, including an alpha-level adjustment for four comparisons.

H5 to H8: All hypotheses are tested in the same way: bivariate product-moment correlation of the scale in question with all four field aspirations. This leads to four correlations in total. The significance of the correlation is tested with alpha-level adjusted for four comparisons. Based on the two dimensions coupling and configuration (as mentioned above), a pair of correlations has to be tested against the other pair. This leads to a set of four comparisons between the correlations (based on Fisher's Z -Transformation). Again, alpha-level adjustment for four comparisons is used. All comparisons have to be significant for a hypothesis to be supported³.

³ Three significant comparisons are not enough to support a hypothesis. This can be seen from a binomial test with $p = 0.5$; $n = 4$; $k = 3$.

5 Results

The following table specifies the number of persons who not only completed the psychometric aspiration scales, but also indicated in which of the four career fields they would like to work.

With regard to the dimensions coupling and configuration, there is an almost equal number of persons expressing the preference for working in fields that are stable and unstable respectively. The same goes to a certain extent for tight and loose coupling. However, a count across the fields shows an accumulation of participants tending towards either Company World (41%), or Chronical Flexibility (35%).

		... configuration				Sum
		stable		unstable		
... coupling	tight	Career Aspiration Company World <i>People who score high on this scale ... strive for a position of responsibility and influence and a long-term career within one organisation.</i>		Career Aspiration Free-Floating Professionalism <i>People who score high on this scale ... want to be under contract to one or a few organisations for special and challenging tasks, staying with the same organisation only for a limited time.</i>		167 / 56.0%
	Frequency 121	Percent 40.6%	Frequency 46	Percent 15.4%		
	loose	Career Aspiration Self-Employment <i>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.</i>		Career Aspiration Chronical Flexibility <i>People who score high on this scale ... aspire to a "freelancer" career with different projects for various clients and ever-changing work contents.</i>		131 / 44.0%
Frequency 27	Percent 9.1%	Frequency 104	Percent 34.9%			
Sum		148	49.7%	150	50.3%	298 / 100%

Table 4: Number of actors aspiring to each one of the four career fields

Below, the results of the analyses of the proposed hypotheses are presented.

5.1 Results related to social origin

5.1.1 The volume and structure of capital

H1: The volume and structure of capital closely related to the social class of origin as represented by parents' education level, household income, and social level of parents' occupation, is positively related to aspiration towards career fields characterized by loose coupling (Self-Employment and Chronic Flexibility) and inversely related to aspiration towards career fields characterized by tight coupling (Company World and Free-Floating Professionalism).

The following tables show the correlation coefficients between all three input variables and the four aspirations. For H1 to be supported, all correlation coefficients have to be significant (at the adjusted alpha-level), with the first two coefficients (white columns) having a negative sign and the last two coefficients (gray columns) having a positive sign.

	Coupling			
	tight	tight	loose	loose
Father's education level with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.169 **	0.088	0.214 **	0.180 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.002	0.059	0.000	0.001
N	315	315	315	315

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns stand for hypothesized positive correlations between field aspirations and the independent variable (in contrast to the white columns).

Table 5: Correlations between field-aspirations and father's education level

	Coupling			
	tight	tight	loose	loose
Household income with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.143 *	0.088	0.221 **	0.162 *
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.006	0.063	0.000	0.003
N	304	304	304	304

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns stand for hypothesized positive correlations between field aspirations and the independent variable (in contrast to the white columns).

Table 6: Correlations between field-aspirations and household income

	Coupling			
	tight	tight	loose	loose
Father's occupation level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.134 *	0.070	0.216 **	0.131 *
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.009	0.109	0.000	0.010
N	312	312	312	312

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns stand for hypothesized positive correlations between field aspirations and the independent variable (in contrast to the white columns).

Table 7: Correlations between field-aspirations and father's occupation level

As can be taken from the tables, H1 was not supported. The sign of the correlation for the second career field (Free-Floating Professionalism) was opposite to the predicted direction for all three input variables. However, contrasting the “traditional” career pattern (Company World) with a “post-organizational” career pattern (consisting of the other three fields), one could present the following post-hoc hypothesis:

H1-posthoc: The volume and structure of capital closely related to the social class of origin as represented by parents' education level, household income, and social level of parents' occupation, is positively related to aspiration towards a “post-organizational” career pattern and inversely related to aspiration towards a “traditional” career pattern.

To test this hypothesis, the correlation for Company World would have to be negative and significant for all three input variables (which is the case), whereas the mean correlation for the other three fields (calculated via a Fisher Z-transformation for all correlations and re-transforming the mean Z-value) would have to be positive and significant (with each significance level accounting for an alpha-level adjustment for two comparisons). The mean correlations for the non-traditional fields are 0.161 **, 0.157 ** and 0.140 * for the three input variables (father's education level, household income, father's occupation level), with respective significance levels $p=0.002$, $p=0.003$, and $p=0.006$. The post-hoc hypothesis would thus be supported.

H1a: The relations assumed in H1 for both educational level and household income are stronger for educational level than for household income.

The following tables again show the correlations between educational level / household income and the four aspirations (they are actually the same tables as above). The result directly linked to the test of this hypothesis is shown in the smaller table below, where all respective

correlations are compared. For H1a to be supported, all signs have to be the right way (the absolute value of the correlation for education level must be larger than the absolute value of the correlation for household income for all four comparisons), and all comparisons have to be significant at the adjusted alpha level.

	Coupling			
	tight	tight	loose	loose
Father's education level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.169 **	0.088	0.214 **	0.180 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.002	0.059	0.000	0.001
N	315	315	315	315

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns stand for hypothesized positive correlations between field aspirations and the independent variable (in contrast to the white columns).

Table 8: Correlations between field-aspirations and father's education level

	Coupling			
	tight	tight	loose	loose
Household income with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.143 *	0.088	0.221 **	0.162 *
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.006	0.063	0.000	0.003
N	304	304	304	304

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns stand for hypothesized positive correlations between field aspirations and the independent variable (in contrast to the white columns).

Table 9: Correlations between field-aspirations and household income

Comparison	p (1-tailed)
r_1 (Ed.level) > r_1 (Income)	0.371
r_2 (Ed.level) > r_2 (Income)	no difference
r_3 (Ed.level) > r_3 (Income)	invalid direction
r_4 (Ed.level) > r_4 (Income)	invalid direction

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
 ** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 10: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between father's education level and household income

The last table clearly shows that H1a was not supported. Even accounting for the fact that the differences in correlation strength are far from reaching any significance level, results are thoroughly inconsistent, with only two differences going in the predicted direction (for Company World and Chronic Flexibility), one difference that is the other way around compared to

what was predicted (Self-Employment), and no difference at all for the remaining field (Free-Floating Professionalism).

5.1.2 The father's educational and occupational level

H2: Both for male and female graduates, the father's educational and occupational level have a stronger influence on career aspiration than the mother's educational and occupational level do.

The following table shows the correlations between the education level of both parents and the strength of the four aspirations for the *male* graduates. For this part of H2 to be supported, the father's education level must have a stronger influence than the mother's education level for all four fields (i.e. the absolute value of the correlation coefficient must be higher in all four cases), furthermore this difference has to be statistically significant.

Male graduates:

Father's education level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.066	0.009	0.095	0.032
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.202	0.454	0.116	0.345
N	161	161	161	161
Mother's education level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	0.042	-0.006	-0.045	-0.030
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.301	0.468	0.287	0.353
N	160	160	160	160

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
 ** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 11: Correlations between field-aspirations and education level of both parents for the male graduates

It is immediately obvious that neither the absolute strength of influence of the education level of either of the two parents nor any difference between those influences yield a trend justifying further investigation for the male graduates.

The next table shows the same correlations for the *female* graduates. Again, to support the "second" part of H2, the absolute values of the correlation coefficients have to be larger for the father's education level than for the mother's education level, and these differences have to be statistically significant (this test is performed in the smaller table below).

Female graduates:

Father's education level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.245 **	0.136	0.288 **	0.293 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.001	0.049	0.000	0.000
N	149	149	149	149

Mother's education level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.066	0.040	0.181 **	0.135
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.211	0.316	0.014	0.051
N	149	149	149	149

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
 ** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 12: Correlations between field-aspirations and education level of both parents for the female graduates

Comparison	<i>p</i> (1-tailed)
$r_{1(F)} > r_{1(M)}$	0.058
$r_{2(F)} > r_{2(M)}$	0.204
$r_{3(F)} > r_{3(M)}$	0.167
$r_{4(F)} > r_{4(M)}$	0.078

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
 ** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 13: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between father's and mother's education level and field aspirations for the female graduates

In contrast to the results obtained for the male graduates, there is a visible trend for the female graduates with respect to the parental education level, going consistently in the predicted direction (there is no field where the mother's education level shows a stronger effect than the father's or one of equal strength). However, this trend "fails" to reach required significance levels.

In an analogous manner, the following table presents the correlations between the occupation level of both parents and the strength of the four aspirations for the *male* graduates. The father's occupation level must have a stronger influence than the mother's occupation level for all four fields (i.e. the absolute value of the correlation coefficient must be higher in all four cases), furthermore this difference has to be statistically significant.

Male graduates:

Father's occupation level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.003	-0.033	0.083	0.007
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.485	0.339	0.149	0.465
N	160	160	160	160

Mother's occupation level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.057	0.063	0.015	0.085
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.237	0.214	0.428	0.143
N	159	159	159	159

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
 ** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 14: Correlations between field-aspirations and occupation level of both parents for the male graduates

It is immediately obvious that neither the absolute strength of influence of the occupation level of either of the two parents nor any difference between those influences yield a trend justifying further investigation for the male graduates.

The next table immediately below shows the same correlations for the *female* graduates, with the Z-test for difference between correlations presented in the smaller table.

Female graduates:

Father's occupation level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.217 *	0.116	0.314	0.214 *
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.004	0.080	0.000	0.004
N	149	149	149	149

Mother's occupation level with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	-0.006	0.008	0.184	0.029
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.473	0.464	0.013	0.365
N	147	147	147	147

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
 ** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 15: Correlations between field-aspirations and occupation level of both parents for the female graduates

Comparison	<i>p</i> (1-tailed)
$r_1 (F)$ VS. $r_1 (M)$	0.034
$r_2 (F)$ VS. $r_2 (M)$	0.145
$r_3 (F)$ VS. $r_3 (M)$	0.119
$r_4 (F)$ VS. $r_4 (M)$	0.055

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
 ** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 16: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between father's and mother's occupation level and field aspirations for the female graduates

In the same manner as for education level, there is a visible trend for the female graduates with respect to the parental occupation level, going consistently in the predicted direction (there is no field where the mother’s occupation level shows a stronger effect than the father’s or one of equal strength). However, just as it was the case for educational level, this trend “fails” to reach required significance levels.

Overall, H2 was not supported – for the male graduates, there was no difference found at all between strength of influence of father’s and mother’s educational and/or occupational level. For the female graduates, although a consistent trend according to our predictions was visible in both instances, it failed to become statistically significant.

5.1.3 Parental employment status

H3: Compared to children from families where at least one of the parents was or is self-employed, children of organization-employed parents show a lower level of aspiration towards career fields characterized by loose coupling, but a higher level of aspiration towards career fields characterized by tight coupling.

The following table shows the aspiration sample means for the two values of the dichotomous variable “kind of parental employment”. The first test criterion for H3 is the sign of the mean differences: Subtracting the value in the second row from that in the first row must therefore yield a negative value for the first two table columns and a positive value for the last two table columns.

	Coupling			
	tight	tight	loose	loose
Mean for:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
1. At least one of the parents self-employed	2.4373	2.6965	2.9679	2.9508
2. Both parents organization-employed	2.5625	2.6259	2.7868	2.7890
Mean difference (1-2)	- 0.1252	0.0706	0.1811	0.1618
Sign according to H3?	yes	no	yes	yes
N1	90	90	90	90
N2	240	240	240	240

gray columns stand for hypothesized positive mean differences (in contrast to the white columns).

Table 17: Aspiration mean differences between graduates of who both parents are salaried employees compared to graduates of who at least one of the parents is self-employed

Without performing any further tests, it is already apparent that H3 was not supported, as the sign for the second career field (Free-Floating Professionalism) is opposite to our prediction. To test for significance of differences, a MANOVA was performed using SPSS General Linear Models procedure, which yielded the following results: using Pillai's trace criterion, the obtained p value was 0.049, so mean differences were statistically significant at the 0.05-level.

Thus, contrasting a "traditional" career pattern with a "post-organizational" career pattern in the same way as we did when proposing the post-hoc version of H1, one could present the following post-hoc hypothesis:

H3-posthoc: Compared to children from families where at least one of the parents was or is self-employed, children of organization-employed parents show a lower level of aspiration towards a "post-organizational" career pattern, but a higher level of aspiration towards a "traditional" career pattern.

As was already the case for the post-hoc version of H1, this post-hoc hypothesis would be supported, too (all signs are according to the prediction now, including the formerly "wrong" sign for Free-Floating Professionalism, and differences are statistically significant).

5.1.4 The gap between perceived social status of grandparents and parents

H4: The narrower the gap between perceived social status of grandparents and parents, i.e. the more stable the social family history, the higher the level of aspiration towards career fields characterized by a stable configuration (Company World and Self-Employment) and the lower the level of aspiration towards career fields characterized by an unstable configuration (Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility).

The following table shows the correlations for all four aspirations. For H4 to be supported, the correlation coefficients in the (gray) columns representing the stable fields have to be negative, and the correlation coefficients in the (white) columns representing the unstable fields have to be positive. All correlations have to be significant at the adjusted alpha level (four comparisons).

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Perceived gap with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Spearman)	0.023	-0.014	-0.064	-0.018
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.355	0.412	0.151	0.384
N	265	265	265	265

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns stand for hypothesized negative correlations between field aspirations and the independent variable (in contrast to the white columns).

Table 18: Correlations between field-aspirations and perceived gap between parents' and grandparents' social status

As can be readily seen from that table, results yielded no connection at all between gap between perceived social status of grandparents and parents on the one hand, and any of the four aspirations on the other hand. Furthermore, three of the four signs are opposite to the predicted direction. H4 was therefore not supported.

5.2 Hypotheses related to habitus

5.2.1 Adaptability

H5: The more actors show a tendency towards career fields characterized by an unstable configuration, the more they display attributes of high “adaptability” which is represented by: 1. self-monitoring, 2. flexibility and 3. emotional stability.

The following tables show the correlations between the respective scales representing “adaptability” and the four aspirations. The actual test of the hypothesis is presented in the smaller tables: whether the differences between correlations have the right sign and reach required significance levels.

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Self-Monitoring with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	-0.266 **	0.217 **	0,225 **	0.326 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	318	318	318	318

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 19: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Self-Monitoring”

Comparison	<i>p</i> (1-tailed)
$r_2 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_2 > r_3$	invalid direction
$r_4 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_4 > r_3$	0.085

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 20: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Self-Monitoring”

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Flexibility with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	-0.358 **	0.456 **	0.216 **	0.487 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	319	319	319	319

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 21: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Flexibility”

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>p (1-tailed)</i>
$r_2 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_2 > r_3$	0.000 **
$r_4 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_4 > r_3$	0.000 **

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 22: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Flexibility”

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Emotional Stability with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	-0.113	0.109	0.105	0.159 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.023	0.026	0.031	0.002
N	318	318	318	318

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 23: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Emotional Stability”

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>p (1-tailed)</i>
$r_2 > r_1$	0.003 **
$r_2 > r_3$	0.480
$r_4 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_4 > r_3$	0.245

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 24: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Emotional Stability”

Whereas Hypothesis H5 is supported for the dimension flexibility, it is only partially supported for the dimensions self-monitoring and emotional stability: The tables show that for both self monitoring and emotional stability there is a significant difference in the predicted direction between actors who have higher aspirations towards the Company World and those with higher aspirations towards Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility. In opposition to our prediction, the graduates with higher aspirations towards the career field Self-Employment, score almost equally high on self-monitoring and on emotional stability as graduates who tend towards Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility. Hence, in opposition to our prediction, the field of Self-Employment, which shows a stable configuration, is more similar to the fields Free-Floating Professionalism and Chronic Flexibility (which both show an unstable configuration), than to the field of Company World.

5.2.2 Sociability

H6: The more actors show a tendency towards career fields characterized by loose coupling, the more they display attributes of a high “sociability” which is represented by: 1. networking and 2. openness for social contacts.

The following tables are built in the same manner as above: first, correlation coefficients are shown, then the results of the test whether the correlation differ significantly according to the hypothesis. Again, this is done for all scales that represent the dimension in question.

	Coupling			
	tight	tight	loose	loose
Networking with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	-0.145	0.089	0.253 **	0.271 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.050	0.056	0.000	0.000
N	318	318	318	318

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 25: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Networking”

Comparison	p (1-tailed)
$r_3 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_3 > r_2$	0.017
$r_4 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_4 > r_2$	0.009 *

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 26: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Networking”

	Coupling			
	tight	tight	loose	loose
Openness for social contacts with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	-0.256 **	0.195 **	0.239 **	0.356 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	319	319	319	319

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 27: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Openness for social contacts”

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>p (1-tailed)</i>
$r_3 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_3 > r_2$	0.281
$r_4 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_4 > r_2$	0.014

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 28: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Openness for social contacts”

Hypothesis H6 was supported for the dimension networking in three out of four comparisons. The fourth comparison points into the predicted direction but remains below the required level of significance. As for the dimension openness for social contacts, the results show that there is a significant difference – according to our prediction – between actors aspiring to the Company World and those who tend towards Self-Employment and Chronic Flexibility. Actors aspiring to the field of Free-Floating Professionalism, however, show no differences to Self-employment and Chronic Flexibility. Overall, these results imply that only the Company World makes a significant difference in contrast to the other fields. Additionally, it seems that the “tight coupling” field Free-Floating Professionalism is more similar to the “loose coupling” field Self-Employment than to the Company World field, contrary to what was suggested in our hypothesis.

5.2.3 Power and politics motive pattern

H7: The more actors show a tendency towards career fields characterized by a stable configuration, 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.

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Leadership motivation with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	-0.130 *	0.076	0.299 **	0.327 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.010	0.088	0.000	0.000
N	319	319	319	319

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 29: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Leadership motivation”

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>p (1-tailed)</i>
$r_1 > r_2$	invalid direction
$r_1 > r_4$	invalid direction
$r_3 > r_2$	0.002 **
$r_3 > r_4$	invalid direction

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 30: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Leadership motivation”

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Self-promotion and Self-assertion with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	-0.141	0.147 *	0.270 **	0.253 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.060	0.005	0.000	0.000
N	318	318	318	318

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 31: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Self-promotion and Self-assertion”

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>p (1-tailed)</i>
$r_1 > r_2$	invalid direction
$r_1 > r_4$	invalid direction
$r_3 > r_2$	0.050
$r_3 > r_4$	0.410

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 32: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Self-promotion and Self-assertion”

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Demonstrating power and status with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	0.065	-0.079	0.119	0.005
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.123	0.072	0.017	0.466
N	318	318	318	318

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 33: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Demonstrating power and status”

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>p (1-tailed)</i>
$r_1 > r_2$	0.035
$r_1 > r_4$	0.451
$r_3 > r_2$	0.006 *
$r_3 > r_4$	0.075

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 34: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Demonstrating power and status”

Hypothesis H7 is therefore not supported by our results. Opposite to our theory-based assumption that actors expressing the wish to work in a field marked by a stable configuration would score higher on the Power and Politics Motive Pattern, 50 % of the comparisons show a tendency in the opposite direction and only two out of twelve comparisons support our initial hypothesis on a significant level.

As for the dimension leadership motivation, three out of four hypothesized differences have a sign that is opposite to our predictions. Leadership motivation goes in line with an aspiration for Self-Employment and Chronic Flexibility and is unrelated with Free-Floating Professionalism.

For the self-promotion and self-assertion scale, two out of four hypothesized differences went into the wrong direction. None of the other two were statistically significant, only their sign was according to our hypothesis.

For the scale demonstrating power and status only one comparison is significant (the difference between Self-Employment and Free-Floating Professionalism). However, the dimension demonstrating power and status may not be of relevance for the students in our sample. By and large these results again indicate that only the Company World contrasts with the other three fields.

5.2.4 Need for Achievement and Accuracy

H8: The more actors show a tendency towards career fields characterized by an unstable configuration, the more they display a “need for achievement and accuracy” which is represented by: 1. achievement motivation and 2. conscientiousness.

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Achievement motivation with:	Aspiration CW r_1	Aspiration FFP r_2	Aspiration SE r_3	Aspiration CF r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	-0.128 *	0.238 **	0.246 **	0.311 **
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.011	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	319	319	319	319

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 35: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Achievement motivation”

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>p (1-tailed)</i>
$r_2 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_2 > r_3$	invalid direction
$r_4 > r_1$	0.000 **
$r_4 > r_3$	0.188

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 36: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Achievement motivation”

	Configuration			
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
Conscientiousness with:	Aspiration CW	Aspiration FFP	Aspiration SE	Aspiration CF
	r_1	r_2	r_3	r_4
Correlation coefficient (Pearson)	0.243 **	-0.212 **	-0.079	-0.143 *
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.011
N	318	318	318	318

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$

** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

gray columns are marking hypothesized field-aspirations with high positive correlations (in contrast to the white-column field-aspirations).

Table 37: Correlations between field-aspirations and “Conscientiousness”

<i>Comparison</i>	<i>p (1-tailed)</i>
$r_2 > r_1$	invalid direction
$r_2 > r_3$	invalid direction
$r_4 > r_1$	invalid direction
$r_4 > r_3$	invalid direction

* $\alpha = 0.05$ $\alpha' = 0.0127$
** $\alpha = 0.01$ $\alpha' = 0.0025$

Table 38: Test of the hypothesized differences between the correlations between field-aspirations and “Conscientiousness”

Thus, hypothesis H8 is not supported by our results either. Nevertheless, for the Achievement Motivation scale, the direction of three of the four comparisons is according to our predictions and two of them also reach required significance levels. Contrary to our hypothesis, actors tending towards Free-Floating Professionalism do not differ from those aspiring to Self-employment on this scale. This causes an “invalid direction” for the comparison of Free-Floating Professionalism with Self-Employment and a too small difference between Chronic Flexibility and Self-Employment. For conscientiousness, the results are in the opposite direction to our predictions. Conscientiousness goes in line only with Company World. It becomes again apparent that only Company World makes a difference in contrast to the other fields.

Altogether the empirical results show that none of the four hypotheses was supported, and except for the flexibility scale, no other scale yielded results that went into the predicted direction and reached required significance levels. Therefore there are large differences between

the theory-based predictions and the empirical results. That raises the question whether the described independent dimensions coupling and configuration are at all able to adequately differentiate between the career fields and the inherent career aspirations. At least the graduates from our sample seem to hold different assumptions about the success requirements within the particular fields.

Whereas in some cases the deviating results are comprehensible and plausible, in some other cases they are not. For example, it seems comprehensible that actors who tend to the field Self-Employment score higher on self monitoring values than actors tending to the career field Free-Floating Professionalism, because high adaptability can also be assumed to be a success prerequisite for entrepreneurs. A similar argument can be developed for achievement motivation, where actors tending to the field Self-Employment indicate second highest values: a linkage between Self-Employment aspiration and achievement motivation appears plausible. Our dimensions coupling and configuration seem thus not to be able to illustrate differences in the implicit success prerequisites.

In other cases the contradiction between theory and empirical results is not so easily comprehensible. For instance, it is difficult to understand why actors that tend towards Chronic Flexibility score highest on leadership motivation while actors tending towards the Company World score lowest on this personality trait. Since it is to be expected that the Company World offers opportunity to play leading roles to a higher extent than it is the case for the field of Chronic Flexibility, these findings are contradicting with the “Person Job Fit Theory”. Also here it seems that our dimensions coupling and configuration are not able to illustrate differences in the anticipated success requirements.

Finally, our dimensions of coupling and configuration do not sufficiently explain why the personality trait Conscientiousness is only positively correlated with the Company World aspiration but negatively with the other career aspirations.

Our results strongly suggest developing a post-hoc hypothesis, which is better suitable to formulate empirically sound propositions concerning the relationships between career aspirations, personality and behavioral traits. Overall, our results show a relatively consistent pattern suggesting that actors rather differentiate between a “traditional career pattern” (Company World) and a “post-organizational career pattern” (Self-Employment, Chronic Flexibility, Free-Floating Professionalism). Furthermore, our results suggest that actors tending towards a “post-organizational career pattern”, display higher values on the dimensions adaptability, sociability, power and politics motive pattern and achievement motivation than actors aspiring to a traditional career pattern. The effect is inverted for the dimension conscientious-

ness: the more actors tend towards the Company World, the higher are their average conscientiousness values. All this suggests the derivation of the following post-hoc hypothesis:

H-posthoc: The more actors show a tendency towards post-organizational career pattern (Self-Employment, Chronic Flexibility, Free-Floating Professionalism), the more they display attributes of high adaptability, sociability, power and politics motive pattern, achievement motivation and low conscientiousness (compared to actors that tend towards a traditional career pattern).

Dimension	Scale	Traditional career pattern (Correlation with scale)	Post-organizational c (Correlation with scale)	Comparison¹ Fishers Z
Adaptability	Self-Monitoring	-0.266	0.257	6.716 **
	Flexibility	-0.358	0.392	9.920 **
	Emotional Stability	-0.113	0.124	2.994 **
Sociability	Networking	-0.145	0.206	4.451 **
	Openness for social contacts	-0.256	0.265	6.700 **
	Demonstrating power and status	0.065	0.015	-0.627
Power and politics motive pattern	Leadership motivation	-0.130	0.237	4.677 **
	Self-promotion and Self-assertion	-0.141	0.224	4.641 **
Need for achievement and accuracy	Achievement motivation	-0.128	0.265	5.035 **
	Conscientiousness	0.243	-0.145	-4.946 **

* $\alpha = 0.05$

** $\alpha = 0.01$

¹ a positive sign indicates a higher correlation of a “post-organizational career pattern” with the scales

Table 39: Test of the posthoc hypothesis for the four dimensions

As shown in table 39 (see also Figure 4), our post-hoc hypothesis is supported for nine out of ten scales: the differences between r_1 (correlations between “traditional career pattern” and the various scales) and the mean of the “post-organizational career pattern” correlations show the hypothesized direction and are statistically highly significant.

The fact that the result fails to become statistically significant for the “demonstrating power and status” scale is hardly surprising. 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. As most graduates from our sample have only little professional experience and do not hold positions of power and status, the use of these resources is only of limited relevance for them.

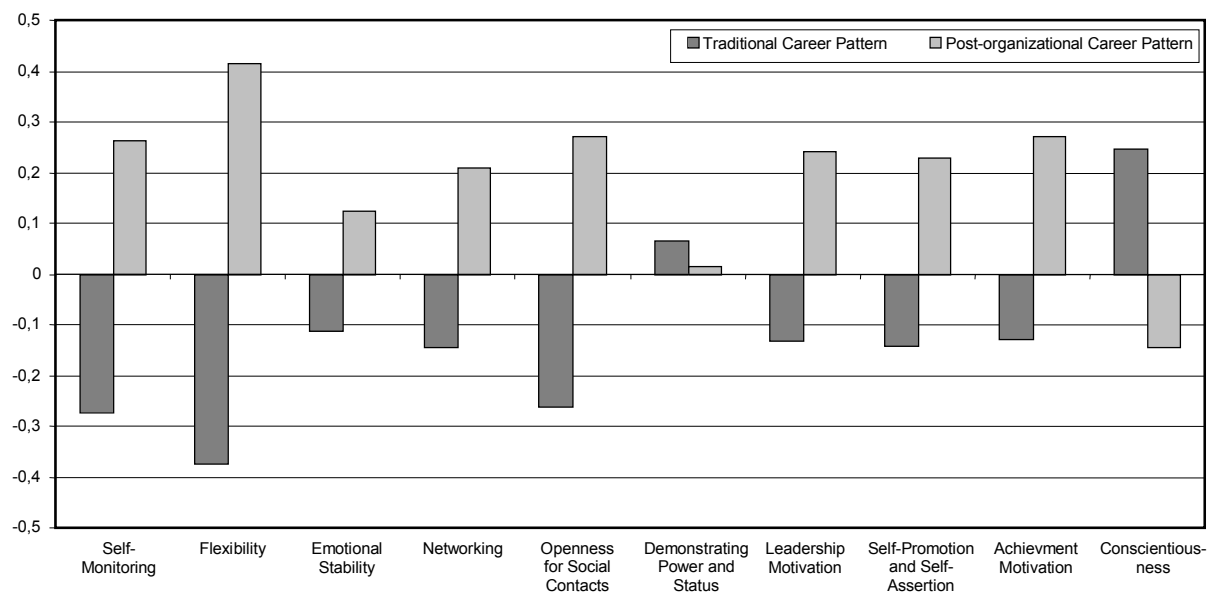


Figure 4: Fisher Z-transformed correlations between scales and the two career patterns

6 Discussion of empirical results

The empirical study is based on the developed conceptual frame of a habitus-based concept of careers. The three cornerstones of this concept – career fields, career capitals and career habitus – constitute the strengths and, at the same time, the weaknesses and limitations of this study.

Applying a framework or typology theoretically deduced is never easy. This paper is no exception in this respect. Although the career field typology – Company World (CW), Free-Floating Professionalism (FFP), Self-Employment (SE) and Chronic Flexibility (CF) – makes theoretical sense, its empirical support is not very strong. It becomes quite clear that the dimensions of coupling and stability deduced theoretically as major characteristics of career fields are not distinct constructs within the graduates' aspirations. However, the data show quite clearly that a distinction between 'traditional', i.e., Company World, and 'post-organizational', i.e. Free-Floating Professionalism, Self-Employment and Chronic Flexibility career fields is reflected quite well in the data.

This is good and bad news at the same time. The bad news: many of our hypotheses formulated originally can only partly be confirmed when insisting on four 'independent' career fields. However, this is by far outweighed by the good news. First, there is enough evidence to regard Free-Floating Professionalism, Self-Employment and Chronic Flexibility as 'nuances' of a post-organizational career field. Second, we have to be aware that we discuss career aspirations, i.e. a part of the career habitus, as a reference. One could argue that the typology of four distinct career fields might be too subtle and pretentious for being reproduced in career aspirations. Therefore, it will be interesting to repeat this study with data not 'only' using espoused career aspirations but 'real' career paths followed by the respondents. At a later stage of this project, such a study will be possible. Third, and maybe most important, the distinction between traditional and post-organizational career fields theoretically and empirically makes sense. If we reformulate some of the hypotheses by concentrating upon the difference between traditional aspirations (Company World) and post-organizational aspirations (Free-Floating Professionalism, Self-Employment, Chronic Flexibility), the picture changes. The reformulated *post-hoc* hypotheses to a large extent are confirmed. These will be discussed in more detail below.

6.1 Career habitus and social origin

There is a significant positive relation between post-organizational career aspirations on the one side and the father's educational level, the household income, and the father's occupational level on the other. Graduates who have a better setting of capital acquired via childhood socialization seem to be rather suited to break new ground and to take more risk in career decisions.

Although the hypothesis about the different importance of fathers' and mothers' educational and occupational level for the developing career aspirations is not fully supported, there is some evidence that the father's educational level influences *female* graduates' career aspirations. The higher the father's educational level, the stronger the daughters' tendency towards Self-Employment and Chronic Flexibility. The lower the father's education, the stronger the intention to enter Company World. It is important to note that it is not only the opportunity structure provided by material wealth (correlated with father's educational level) which drives female graduates towards more risky career fields. Although there is a significant positive correlation between household income and female graduates' aspirations towards Self-Employment and Chronic Flexibility (0.240; 0.175) which cannot be found among male graduates, there is an additional part of the picture: The correlation between Self-Employment/Chronic Flexibility and the father's education is even stronger. In addition, there is no significant correlation between family income and the females' aspirations towards the Company World career field.

This result leads to another interesting interpretation. The original hypothesis about the difference between educational and economic capital – the parents' educational capital is more important than their economic capital in explaining different career aspirations – had been rejected. However, if one introduces gender as differentiating characteristic, one can gain additional insight. For female graduates' aspirations, the father's cultural capital seems of greater influence on preparedness to take career risk than the household income.

These findings demonstrate the importance of taking gender variables into account if one wants to gain a fuller understanding of the career picture. This is no surprise as gender increasingly has become an important issue in the study of organizations and work behavior over the past years. The formation of a division for gender and diversity within the Academy of Management is just one indicator for this.

There is also some support for the assumption that post-organizational career aspirations are positively influenced by parental self-employment. Although we cannot predict yet whether

these aspirations influence labor-force entry decisions or later movements into self-employment, the overall direction of prior results (e.g. Carroll & Mosakowski, 1987) is supported.

According to our theoretical assumptions, the psychological scales used in our study measure aspects of career habitus not yet fully actualized but of substantial importance for its actualization. Thus the relation between these variables and the social origin is of central interest because they indicate which facets of habitus rely on the parents' economic and cultural capital. In our study we detect only a few significant correlations between variables describing the social background and those describing personality related elements of the general and/or the career habitus: (1) household income with (a) networking (0.209), (b) leadership motivation (0.158) and (c) flexibility (0.194), (2) mother's occupation level with networking (0.151), (3) father's education level with networking (0.179) and finally (4) mother's education level with self promotion and self assertion (0.159).

These tentative results suggest that there might be a connection between familial background and certain social and strategic aspects of career habitus. Further research should not only try to integrate these relations by causal modeling, but also to concentrate on further aspects of habitus, especially on cultural and educational behavior.

6.2 Career habitus and general habitus variables

Our findings show quite clearly a polarisation between two groups of individuals having a preference for 'traditional career patterns' (41 per cent of the sample) and 'post-organizational career patterns' (59 per cent), respectively, in their career habitus. 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 highly value stability, predictability and long-term commitment to organizations over flexibility, autonomy and independence. In addition, the more they prefer the traditional career field 'Company World', the less they show flexibility, self-monitoring, openness for social contacts, networking behavior, self promotion and self-assertion, leadership motivation, achievement motivation, emotional stability and the higher they score on conscientiousness (order shows decreasing strength of relationship). 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 habitus.

Second, and more provocative and controversial, one could argue that organizations recruiting individuals preferring a Company World career do not get the ‘best’ persons. ‘Best’ in this sense means that those individuals score lower on a number of ‘desirable’ behavioral and personality attributes than persons with a post-organizational career habitus. The more individuals prefer a long-term commitment to the Company World career field, the less they have a matching success potential because of the personality related factors of the career habitus. 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. An adverse self-selection effect?

Third, one explanation for the observed types of career aspirations forming part of the career habitus from a psychological perspective could use psychological compensation as a primary mechanism. Individuals who are less active in their communicative and social behavior, show 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.

Compensation mechanisms can be a possible reason for the development of post-organizational career aspirations as integral part of the career habitus, too. It just works the other way around. The more positively actors see themselves, the more they devalue and downgrade traditional career contexts. Thus, they differentiate themselves from other persons seeking the ‘secure harbor’ of the Company World as career goal. In turn, this enhances their self value. A very positive self image also requires little conscientiousness – one is a superman/superwoman in so many aspects that still another virtue does not seem to be necessary. Overall, subtle processes of self-value regulation seem to be at work. Intensive qualitative in-depth single case studies might shed more light on these mechanisms.

Fourth, the development of career aspirations and the overall career habitus over time seems to be interesting. For example, it would be interesting to study whether these results are typical for a specific time span immediately after finishing one’s formal education at the university or whether these characteristics of the career habitus are stable in the long run. There are arguments for both sides. From the theory’s point of view, ‘true’ elements of the career habitus will not change within a very short time span. On the other hand, the high proportion of

individuals opting for Chronic Flexibility (35 per cent) might be a result of the specific situation at the end of one's studies. Ideally, all options should be kept open at that time, one has 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 inner stability.

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

6.3 Limitations

As every piece of research this study has a number of limitations, too. Three issues are especially important.

First, the respondents of the study are in a phase of transition between full-time/part-time study and work. Although most of them have personal experience with paid work, they usually do not have a long professional career history. Therefore, their ability to report 'true' and 'authentic' own experience is somewhat limited. Nevertheless, being educated in a business related university/polytechnic environment and having own work experience through paid jobs or internships gives them sufficient credibility.

Second, the theoretical framework is not fully developed. Using one of the grand social theories has its pitfalls. Adapting the theoretical framework of Bourdieu to the area of careers is easy and difficult at the same time. Easy, because the categories and concepts of Bourdieu fit the career issue very well. In addition, they are broad and flexible enough to be applied to different phenomena. Difficult, because applying such a grand multi-level theory to a concrete area and use it for empirical studies requires a lot of bridge-building and own theory development. A part of it has been done over the last years. However, a number of issues remains widely unsolved. The genesis of the career habitus, its link with the general habitus and the social origin, the interplay between those elements, the relationship between various elements within the career habitus and the importance of the career habitus and its elements for actual career behavior and success are just the most important things to be mentioned.

Third, the statistical methods for data analysis used in this study are adequate for the current state of theoretical development of the framework. However, as the framework will become more refined and include various dynamic interdependencies, the methods applied in this paper will not be sufficient. More complex statistical models will be required in order to reflect increasing theoretical complexity.

7 Concluding remarks

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 – sure enough, this paper, although lengthy, cannot really solve these deficits. However, our hope is that it contributes to progress in career research. Progress in terms of career theory, as it hopefully provides the basis for further developments, clarifying the issues that are not yet clear and refining those points already made. Progress, too, in terms of empirical knowledge about today's developments related to the new careers. These are desperately needed – more work, as always, is waiting for those who see it.

8 References

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