

Career Habitus Revisited

Complicated and Incomprehensible Answers to Questions Nobody Asked?

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1 Introduction

Contextual and individual factors both have an established place in describing and explaining individual behaviour in organisations. They constitute core themes in theorising about organisations. Often framed as ‘agency vs. structure’, their mutual relationship as well as their relative importance is widely debated (for an overview see, e.g., Staehle, 1999: 151ff.). Theorising about careers usually takes these two sides of explaining individual behaviour into account at least in principle. Located at the „intersection of societal history and individual biography“ (Grandjean, 1981: 1057), careers link micro- and macro-frames of references (Schein, 1978) and traditionally have been regarded as indissoluble (Hughes, 1937; Barley, 1989; Gunz, 1989). Nevertheless, there is an emphasis on individual-level viewpoints favouring an agency perspective. The same is true for empirical career research. A majority of studies use theoretical frameworks and empirical designs that implicitly or explicitly favour an agency perspective. Studies explicitly taking a clear contextual perspective are less frequent. With the exception of organisational factors regularly taking a prominent place in career studies, there is a dearth of studies conceptually and empirically linking elements of a wider spectrum of contextual factors.

The relative lack of context focused studies is hardly surprising given the wide range of contextual factors and their different levels. For example, arranging various contextual factors in a layer model with the individual in the centre, Steyrer et al. (2005) differentiate between four career-relevant contextual layers. The context of origin contains factors such as social class and strata, socio-economic and societal status of one’s parents, professional socialisation, personal work history or current life context (e.g., Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996). The context of work includes elements such as structure and dynamics of the external labour market (e.g., Doeringer & Piore, 1971; Tolbert, 1982), (new) forms of working and organising including newly emerging forms emphasising flexibility, loss of organisational boundaries and transactional relationships (e.g., Dore, 2004), and work-related social networks (e.g., Burt, 1992; Orpen, 1996; Higgins, 2001). Within the societal and cultural context, factors such as a growing importance of the gender difference and a changing role of women in the work process (for an overview see, e.g., Hermann, 2003), the role of ethnical composition, or demographic developments such as an ageing work force in some parts of Europe can be mentioned (e.g., Eckardstein, 2004). All these contexts are embedded into the global context which is characterised by major drivers such as increasing competition, globalisation, virtualisation or the changing role of the state (e.g. Lodge, 1995)

Such a relative lack of conceptual frameworks systematically linking various contextual factors with individual behaviour goes beyond career research. Mature theoretical perspectives of this kind are also rare in organisation theory. One theoretical framework arguably linking various conceptual levels, focusing on the interplay of structure and agency and potentially usable in career research has been developed by the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. It provides three conceptual cornerstones: field, habitus and capital. Habitus plays a crucial role in this framework as it links the individual and the contextual level and the individuals’ past with their present. It is regarded as an ensemble of various intra-personal schemes pre-formatting all expressive, verbal, and practical manifestations and utterances of an actor (Krais, 1985). The habitus unfolds in social fields where players with a specific set of cultural, social and economic capital – which is transformed into symbolic capital in interaction with the field – try to advance their positions. The context of origin in general and the parental home as well as the lifestyle in one’s early years in particular are relevant for both

the development of the habitus and the forms of capital that individuals have at their disposal. Whether you are born into a family of upper-class and successful white entrepreneurs or into an ethnic minority family with both parents working in ‘McJobs’ definitely affects the way individuals see the world, their educational perspectives, their social networks and the money they own. Among others, this is relevant for various aspects of a work-related career such as the choice of a certain career track, or career success.

This paper focuses on the concept of career habitus and the answers it provides given the potential areas of conflict between structure and agency and actors’ intentions and unconsciousness. Primarily it concentrates on habitus’ evolving potential: Habitus both emphasizes historicity, embeddedness in former social structures and resources, and, at the same time, dynamics of individual development within permanently changing social structures. It uses the field and habitus perspective on careers which develops the concepts of career habitus, career fields and career capital, thus conceptualising both the structural context of careers and the actors’ roles and strategies in line with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of capital, habitus and field (Mayrhofer et al., 2004a; Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer, & Meyer, 2003).

The main target of the paper is a theoretical one: To further elaborate the concept of career habitus, especially under the perspective of its inertia and evolution, and to discuss its usefulness for some aspects of analysing and interpreting careers. However, to illustrate our theoretical framework and its potential usefulness, we provide a few empirical glimpses on habitus-related survey-data gathered in the Vienna Career Panel Project (ViCaPP; see www.vicapp.at; Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2005). These empirical glimpses contain two areas. First, determinants of habitus and its potential for evolution will be illustrated. By looking at the family and environment of origin the inertia of habitus is emphasised. Focusing on the acquisition and incorporation of cultural career capital and its expression through a specific lifestyle (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) stresses the evolving potential of habitus. Second, the link of habitus with career success will be discussed. Specifically, objective career success measures such as income and hierarchical position and subjective career success, measured through personal satisfaction with one’s career and career success as perceived by others, are used.

2 A Field and Habitus Based Approach

The field and habitus perspective of careers (for a more detailed discussion see Mayrhofer et al., 2004a; Iellatchitch et al., 2003) conceptualises both the structural context of careers and the actors’ roles and strategies in line with Pierre Bourdieu’s major theoretical elements of field, habitus and capital.

2.1 Career fields

According to Bourdieu, a social field is a patterned set of practices which suggests competent action in conformity with rules and roles as well as a playground or battlefield in which actors, endowed with a certain field-relevant capital, try to advance their position. As such, they constitute a network of positions, a playground where actors try to follow individual strategies. If you act according to the rules of the game as defined by the specific set of capital most valuable for holding power within the field, you will contribute to the reproduction of the fields (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986).

Career fields are the social context within which individual members of the work force make their moves. They are equipped with a specific portfolio of field-relevant capital and try to maintain or improve their place in the given and unfolding network of work related positions.

This is done through a patterned set of practices which are potentiated and constrained by the rules of the field and, in turn, contribute to the shaping of these rules. Career fields have a dynamic quality. This reflects the focal relationship between work and time (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989). Careers themselves are not a field, but unfold within a field and are the sequence of positions resulting from work-related efforts.

Using coupling and configuration as two basic dimensions for differentiating sub-fields of careers, one can differentiate between four 'ideal-type' sub-fields of career: company world, free-floating professionalism, self-employment and chronic flexibility (for a more detailed view on career fields see Mayrhofer et al., 2000; Iellatchitch et al., 2003). Each of these fields is characterised, among others, by specific rules about promotion, the value of career capitals etc.

2.2 Career capital

Bourdieu differentiates between three basic types of capital: economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Postone, LiPuma, & Calhoun, 1993).

- Economic capital appears, above all, in the form of general, anonymous, all-purpose convertible money, which is bequeathed from one generation to the next. It can be more easily and efficiently converted into cultural, social and symbolic capital than *vice versa*.
- Social capital involves relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance, resources based upon social connections, and group or class membership.
- Cultural or informational capital appears in three forms: (1) incorporated, i.e. durable dispositions of habitus, (2) objectivised through cultural products like books, paintings, machines etc. and (3) institutionalised through academic titles and degrees, which are relatively independent of the actually incorporated cultural capital.

As a fourth type of capital, symbolic capital is closely related to the respective fields. The rules of a particular social field specify which combination of the basic forms of capital will be authorised as symbolic capital, thus becoming socially recognised as legitimate.

Career capital is the particular sort of capital valued within the fields of career. Every individual within a specific career field has got a unique portfolio of career capital. The genetic disposition when entering life, the social context one is born into and the interplay between these two provide a starting point for the development of capital in general. Through personal, educational and professional development processes, an increasing portfolio of career-field-relevant career capital evolves. From a different theoretical perspective, "knowing-why, knowing-how, and knowing-whom" have been identified as components of career capital linking the individual and the collective level (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999).

2.3 Career habitus

For Bourdieu, habitus is an ensemble of patterns of perception, thinking, feeling, evaluating, speaking, and acting that pre-formats all expressive, verbal, and practical manifestations and utterances of an actor (Krais, 1985). It has a corporal dimension, being the embodied history, the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product (Bourdieu, 1990b). Through habitus, regular action patterns over time can be explained which are neither the product of external structures nor of mere subjective intention. The habitus is continually adjusted to the current context. Although the primary socialisation is of great importance, the development of habitus cannot be restricted to that period. Habitus is constantly reinforced or modified by further experience, i.e. by positive and negative sanctions during a whole life.

Career habitus consists of those schemes mentioned above that are actualised by the encounter with specific career fields. It is both a product of a social field's structure (*opus operatum*) and a main force of (re-)structuring these fields (*modus operandi*; Bourdieu, 1992a: 281). As such, career habitus establishes a link between contextual factors and the individual. While the general habitus can be regarded as a durable but evolving system of dispositions potentially actualised, the career habitus is more confined. It is a habitus 'fitting' to a particular career field. It is specifically related to a career field and may be defined by the dispositions which tend to be actualised 'automatically' within this field. A particular career habitus ensures that an actor acts, perceives, and thinks according to the rules of the field. His movements within the field of career appear as 'natural'. He acts „intentionally without intention“ (Bourdieu, 1990a: 12; Bourdieu, 1987). The idea of progression and a desire for growth is central in career habitus. This dynamic quality may take different forms depending on the field's rules: climbing the hierarchical ladder, increasing reputation, developing a higher level of expertise etc.

Habitus and field are linked in a circular relationship. Involvement in a field shapes the habitus which, in turn, shapes the actions that reproduce the field (Crossley, 2001). In order to understand and explain the action of players in the field, one needs information about their dispositions and competence – their habitus – and about the state of play in the game as well as the players' individual location in the field. The actors' logic is shaped both by their habitus and by the requirements and logic of the game as it unfolds. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same is true for career habitus and career field. By their career habitus and the way in which it shapes the perceptions, motivation, and actions, individuals in career fields lean towards recognising and playing the rules of the career field in the first place.

3 Career Habitus: Identity in Difference

3.1 Dimensions of Career Habitus

Our interpretation of the habitus concept leads us to define it as follows: *A durable but evolving system of potentially actualized dispositions*. The way a specific habitus is defined in Bourdieu's work, e.g. the “academic habitus”, refers not only to the presence within a particular field but also to a rather dominating position within it, inferring that this habitus fits best with the rules of the field. Thus, the academic habitus designates those scholars who perfectly know and use the rules of the game for their own advancement, who have deeply internalized the “sense of the game” as well as the *illusio*, i.e. the belief in the particular game of the field. A dominant habitus corresponds to the structures of the field at a particular time. The possible evolutions of the field and the change of its rules may lead different habitus to dominant positions. This means that different forms of academic habitus co-exist in the academic field. Depending on the structures of the field, specific forms of habitus will be more or less privileged to access dominant positions. This is also the case if considering the fields of career and the career habitus.

A major specificity of career habitus is how widespread it is. Indeed, following our general definition of career, all people being – or looking for being – on the labor market actually are in a career field. Because of that, and given the still central place of work in our societies for defining social identities, each individual in the field will have a career habitus, defined as a *durable but evolving system of potentially actualized dispositions oriented to moving within the field of career*. Career habitus is a generic term, which designates 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 a 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, i.e. the different modes of support the individual obtains and has at his/her disposal and may invest for his/her further career success (Iellatchitch et al., 2003).

Career habitus has four characteristics (Krais, 1985; Müller, 1986): It is mainly unconscious for the bearer, it is stable over time, it is the incorporation of social structures and it implies and enables strategic action within a career field:

(1) *Unconsciousness* refers to the *dimension of psyche* and means that habitus operates at the subconscious level throughout life and is therefore largely resistant to reflection and modification.

(2) *Stability* refers to the *dimension of time* and thus to historicity and inertia: 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, 1992b: 27) Consequently, career habitus stands for an individual's engraved social history, for his/her embodies experiences within career fields.

(3) In the *social dimension*, habitus can be understood as the *incorporation of social structures*: As a cognitive, perceptive and action matrix (Bourdieu, 1977), cognitive structures are regarded as internalized social structures. Thus socialization is a process of incorporation of social structure.

(4) In the *strategic dimension* career habitus introduces a new understanding of career strategy and tactics. 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. The notion of "strategy" as used by Bourdieu in a provocative way is somehow misleading. As a matter of fact, strategy is to be found in the very nature of the habitus when he defines it as a "strategy generating principle" that expresses itself in practices "without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu, 1990b: 53). This particular definition of strategy may be illustrated through the example of a (good) tennis player. During the match the player has to react, to adapt to each ball send back by the other player. Even if the rules of the game are clearly defined, they also give a frame for creative agency rather than to mechanical obedience to the rules (Bourdieu, 1992b). Without really thinking about it, the player does what he/she has to do within this frame. Looking back to a field of career, the fitting career habitus will also act successfully without really thinking about it, since guided by a deeply internalized sense of the game. "Strategy is a non-reflexive action generated by the habitus in pursuit of *illusio* in specific field-games" (Lau, 2004: 378). In this way, the common use of "strategy", which may be found in rational choice theory and originating from the military field (Knights & Morgan, 1990), i.e. a long-termed action plan for achieving a goal, is rather a matter of interpretation from an observer. Obviously Bourdieu's notion of strategy appears more suitable to analyze the practices of those possessing capital and/or power than to the socially dominated (Lau, 2004). Arguably, strategy becomes increasingly reflexive when the *illusio*, the belief in the game, has been (partly) broken. A fit between habitus and field generates a strategy based on a social constrained evaluation between resources and possibilities which tend to reproduce the field, since its functioning remains unquestioned and un-criticized. If the habitus evolves and

becomes more self-reflexive, both resources and possibilities will be re-evaluated, opening the way to new career choices and thus career strategy.

3.2 The Evolving Potential of Habitus

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 primarily to be translated through the firstly acquired set of dispositions. The potential evolution of the habitus has to be considered as influenced by two processes.

First and certainly closest to Bourdieu’s own reflections habitus is capable 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 abrupt social change does not allow adaptation of the habitus to the new context, it will lead to a phenomenon called *hysteresis* (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964), i.e. a distortion between the habitus (and thus agency) and the objective conditions of agency. Bourdieu and Sayad illustrate *hysteresis* by the deep disorientation of Algerian peasants when they had to live in town; even after years of urban life, they could not adapt to their new life context.

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 affects 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 in-group and institutions like schools. The acceptance of this “female role” as something “natural” will certainly be less strong if contesting voices are to be heard e.g. in the family, favouring a critical questioning of a dominant ideology. 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 question of a disappearing of dispositions, which have never been actualized, is still open.

The *hysteresis* effect analyzed by Bourdieu deals with problems of adaptation to new contexts. Abrupt social changes and crises may lead to such situations (Bourdieu, 1997). In recent contributions crises are seen in a more constructive way (Crossley, 2003). Several sociological studies show the lasting effect of participation in social movements during the 60s on people who were mostly students at these times. The effects on political attitudes and engagement are still to be found twenty or forty years after the events by a large amount of people directly committed. Following Crossley’s arguments, crises like mass protests, e.g. those which followed the US “Freedom Summer” organized by civil rights movements in

1964, have a high potential for shaping the habitus in a new way. As a matter of course a crisis does not create a “new habitus” and should by no way be interpreted as a kind of social rebirth. Nevertheless, some dispositions - the simple fact to participate to such an event show the existence of certain dispositions - are obviously radicalized through e.g. a brutal repression, which affects the habitus deeply. “Political self-interrogation becomes automatic and taken for granted” (Crossley, 2003: 55), or, what was only a less actualized disposition becomes part of the deepest “strata” of the habitus through its radicalization. It also favors the development of the reflexive dispositions of the habitus, through the contest against ideological, political, and social structures. This reflexive dimension is an important potential for change within fields. Considering the fields of career, e.g. “traditional” criteria for career success or hierarchical structures within organizations may be contested, contributing to shift the field by inventing new career orientations.

The presenteeism symptom (Simpson, 1998) may be taken as concrete example of such a potential change process. This study shows how restructuring is associated with this tendency to stay at work beyond the time needed for effective performance of the job, as fear of redundancy and uncertainty over promotion opportunities lead to a need to demonstrate visible commitment. Presenteeism is strongly gendered and associated with competitive masculine culture. Direct effects of such long working hours are stress, negative effects on hobbies and social activities, health problems and reduced productivity. What at a first glance looks like strong commitment towards the company is actually damageable for both employees and company. Those (especially women) refusing this way of competition will be the losers in regard to careers and advancement. Nevertheless, they may also contribute to reveal the dysfunctionality of presenteeism, which could lead to an evolution of the rules of the game, e.g. a competition rather based on real outputs than on time spend at one’s office. To be sure, change remains a potential and dysfunctional outcomes may also last. The point is here to underline both the dynamics of fields and the potential subversive role of actors whose *illusio* for the game has become fissured.

The “radical habitus” (Crossley, 2003) shows a positive evolution of habitus: Some crisis actualized particular dispositions in a way that they become part of the deepest strata of the habitus, presenting therefore strong and lasting effects. The “crisis” mentioned has become part of the collective memory of a whole generation. Regularly commemoration and remembrance by different medias give weight to their existence as “major and historical crisis”, thus reinforcing the actualization and the lasting effect of “having been part of it”. Within the career field there are many less spectacular crises (Kotthoff, 1998): Young managers enter a company with a high belief in their own advancement possibilities. They are deeply involved in the career competition within their organization. If their career expectations are deceived, their commitment to the company will decrease rapidly. Some disappointed managers develop a passive attitude and a minimal involvement to their work. In other words, the deception actualizes some dispositions a brilliant career would certainly never have let come to the surface. Although a “minor crisis” compared with historical collective events, its effect may nevertheless be lasting, affecting an individual’s career strategy and habitus. Leaving a company after realizing the mismatch between his/her expectations and his/her concrete careers opportunities helps to conserve his/her “managerial” habitus intact, especially if his/her expectations may be rapidly fulfilled within another company. Reacting with resignation, on the other hand, will negatively affect the opportunity structure for further advancement. The influence of early success for later advancement has already been studied in the tournament model (Rosenbaum, 1979). Whereas this concept observes from the view of selectors looking at signs for the future success of candidates to a managerial position, the habitus theory brings a view from “inside” by looking on the way an actor builds his/her career strategy.

4 Contributions and Limitations of the Field and Habitus Based Approach to Career Research

Given the theoretical framework presented above, the social context and its elements show their effects on careers substantially through the development of habitus in general and career habitus, i.e., the parts of the habitus actualised in relation to career field, in particular. The field and habitus-based approach explains, among others, the interplay between

- social structure and individual agency,
- deliberate action and strategy on the one side and mostly unconscious perception and behaviour on the other side, and finally
- between stability and inertia of predispositions and the development of individual within dynamic career fields.

Unlike usual concepts used to conceptualize career-related individual traits and behaviour (e.g. personality, career aspirations and motivation, commitment, career tactics), career habitus can never get under complete empirical control. The concept is too dazzling; its boundaries are too frayed. Especially with traditional quantitative methods only specific aspects of habitus can be measured. Thus, we will further concentrate on social origin and on adolescent and adult life styles to provide some empirical evidence of the evolving potential of career habitus and its relationship with career outcome.

4.1 Social origin and career habitus

Parents' educational level and occupation are an important element of the social context contributing to the formation of habitus and influencing careers. Both education and occupation influence, *inter alia*, the accumulation of cultural and, finally, symbolic capital. This is achieved in several ways. In terms of cultural capital, children from parents with a higher educational level on average attain higher education themselves. A similar result can be found for prestigious occupations. For example, looking at the social origin of university graduates, a number of studies show that children from clerical employees, civil servants or self-employed persons constitute a greater proportion of the student population than children from blue collar workers (e.g. Egerton, 1997; Egerton & Halsey, 1993; Geißler, 2002; Metcalf, 1997; Savage & Egerton, 1997). Beyond the formal acquisition of cultural capital, distinctive behavioural patterns during leisure time are a second source of accumulation of cultural capital. Reading various sorts of literature, consuming different types of electronic media, practising certain sports, going to the opera, theatre or the movies etc. are powerful informal and largely self-determined ways of not only entertaining, but also educating oneself. One would expect that individuals follow certain patterns in their leisure behaviour. Specific combinations of leisure time patterns and, at the same time, patterns of cultural capital acquisition will be more popular with some people etc., e.g., not everyone will go to the opera. Thus, specific lifestyle patterns of informal culture capital acquisition should emerge. Depending on the amount and the prestige of the cultural capital acquired through such patterns, effects on career outcomes should be different.

Findings about the influence of rural vs. urban background are less clear. There are some indications that the search for 'more prestigious' cultural capital is one reason for moving into urban areas. As observed by Flanagan (1993), modern cities are difficult to define, because of their diversity, their enormous complexity, and their dynamic form that is constantly in a process of transformation. Nevertheless and generally speaking, cities may be defined as "a spatial concentration of people and resources" (Friedrichs, 1995: 7). Resources are economic

ones, mainly associated with the idea of employment opportunities. That's why the main impacts on rural exodus are economic. Cities have been the nucleus of the modern European civilisation (Benevolo & Ipsen, 1995), and their was linked with economic progress, the formation of different kinds of associations, the fading of feudal power and the birth of new schools of thought (Weber, 1958). "City air makes you free" was a quite common phrase during the European Middle-Age. Such a feeling was particularly favourable for the development of cultural resources like the fine arts, publishing, or architecture. Universities in particular were traditionally located in cities. For talented young people from the country, studying therefore meant moving to the city as experienced by Bourdieu himself who recently wrote about this traumatic episode of his childhood (Bourdieu, 2004). Likewise, a more urban region should be a better environment for the informal acquisition of cultural capital that turns out to be useful in career fields typically entered by business school graduates.

Cultural capital turns into symbolic capital once it is used for career-related reasons in a specific career field. Combining the lines of reasoning from above and linking them to career habitus and symbolic capital, the following hypothesis can be derived. Thus we assume that an individual's social origin, e.g. characterised by the parents' educational level and occupations and also by the degree of urbanity leads to specific forms of incorporation of cultural capital into the career habitus and corresponding lifestyles, both providing a high amount of symbolic capital.

4.2 Career habitus and career success

The accumulation of cultural capital has two basic dimensions describing different aspects of the process of acquisition and outcome.

First, the formal as well as the informal cultural capital accumulated can be evaluated in terms of its potential value in the career field. In other words: Not all cultural capital acquired can be converted to symbolic capital, the 'legitimate currency' in specific career fields. In addition, sometimes the 'exchange rate' is not very favourable. An MBA degree is an example for institutionalised cultural capital. However, the amount of symbolic capital that can be generated in a specific career field also depends on the reputation of the respective business school. While a diploma from some prestigious schools may be an entry ticket to specific organisations, a formally comparable diploma from another, lower ranking school may not grant the same career move. In a similar way, this is true for informal cultural capital. Cultural capital acquired through reading the 'Financial Times' and the 'Economist' has a favourable exchange rate when converted into symbolic capital in the career fields of business school graduates. This might be less the case when reading the 'From all around the world'-section of a low-end tabloid. In a nutshell, acquired cultural capital can be differentiated according to its potential to generate field specific symbolic capital.

Second, the value of accumulated cultural capital may be either restricted to certain career fields, but it can also produce beneficial effects in a lot of different fields. This leads to the dimension of integration. A high degree of integration can be found if the acquired capital is closely related to the respective career field. For example, the completion of a study in theology undoubtedly constitutes an increase of cultural capital. The knowledge and skills linked with this course and the diploma received result in an increase in cultural and symbolic capital. However, compared to an MBA, the convertibility into symbolic capital valued in the managerial career field 'usually' open to MBA graduates – be it in a classical company world setting or in other sub-fields of career – is probably restricted. Since this type of capital is more distant from the field it is employed in, it seems plausible that less symbolic capital can be gained from such a capital acquisition.

To be sure, the relation between acquired capitals and symbolic capital is not an absolute but a relative one. What is of little value in one career field can be of high value in another. To continue the example: While a diploma in theology is of less value when pursuing a managerial career, it can get much more valuable when pursuing a counsellor's or church career.

Synthesising the two dimensions of cultural capital acquisition and outcome leads to the following typology (see Table 1).

	1	2	3	4
Amount of symbolic capital	High	High	Low	Low
Relationship to career field	Integration	Difference	Integration	Difference

Table 1: Symbolic capital and its closeness to the career field

A high amount of symbolic capital, combined with an integrated way of acquiring this capital, i.e., a highly integrated way of capital acquisition close to the field, seems to be most promising for career success. It needs little further explanation that forms of capital with a higher degree of reputation potentially provide more benefits in the career field. Likewise, capital that is closer to the career field, i.e., acquired in a more integrated way, should result in more positive effects, too: There are little costs of transfer, and specificity is higher. Vice versa, if capital has little prestige and is highly differentiated from the career field, the least positive effect is to be expected. The two mixed constellations fall between these two kinds of arrangements. Since it seems plausible that the amount of symbolic capital – in other words: the amount of prestige – is more important than the relationship to the career field, constellation 2 is more likely to positively influence career success than constellation 3. With respect to the incorporation of cultural capital and lifestyle, we assume that a career habitus highly integrated with the career field and having a high amount of symbolic capital at its disposal leads to more career success than other forms of career habitus.

5 Evolution of Habitus: Some Empirical Traces

Data for the empirical glimpses were obtained from the Vienna Career Panel Project (ViCaPP) following the career patterns of business school graduates and analysing influencing factors 'real time' from 2000 on (see www.vicapp.at). ViCaPP consists of three cohorts of business school graduates from a large Austrian university (WU) as well as from a well-known Austrian polytechnic: an 'early', 'mid', and 'late' career sample. This corresponds to graduation years around 2000, 1990, and 1970.

For the graduates in all cohorts, extensive questionnaire data is available. It includes, among other things, income and number of subordinates as frequently used objective success measures, a number of person-related variables, e.g., social background, personality structure, and various elements of organisation-related opportunity structure variables, e.g., size of organisation, membership in crucial decision-making boards, sectoral characteristics, and position in the organisational life cycle.

The analyses in this paper are based on data from 198 members of the 1990s cohort. 39% of the sample is female and 61% male. This corresponds exactly to the gender proportions of the WU graduation year 1989/90. The mean age is 40 years (± 3.4 years), with the female part of

the sample being slightly younger than their male counterparts: 39.7 years (± 2.6 years) vs. 40.3 years (± 3.8 years).

5.1 Social origin and career habitus

We assume that social origin affects adolescent lifestyle. In turn, this has an impact on adult lifestyle. Both influence the incorporation of cultural capital into the career habitus. The distinctions between different types of social origin and lifestyles, i.e., cultural capital acquisition patterns, should eventually lead to distinctions in career outcomes.

Social origin is represented by the degree of parental education, the degree of prestige of parental occupations and the degree of urbanity. Lifestyle, i.e. a specific pattern in the attendance of cultural events, reading books and newspapers, watching TV, practising sports etc. is measured by 46 items about recreational behaviour in adolescence and in adult age (very similar to Schulze, 1992).

In a first step, the 46 items describing cultural capital acquisition patterns were subject to factor analysis. For both the adolescent and the adult cultural capital acquisition patterns, a principal component analysis yields 14 factors (Eigenvalue > 1 , Varimax rotation), explaining 64 percent of the 46 items' variance.

For the adolescent phase, these 14 factors by and large contain the former leisure time activities of our sample (see Table 2).

	Factor	Variables explained by factor (weaker relations in parentheses)	Percent of variance explained
1	Classical culture	listening to classical music, attending classical concerts, the opera and theatre, playing a musical instrument (reading classical literature, listening to classical radio stations, dancing, further education)	7,758
2	Business and politics	reading the business and politics sections of daily newspapers, news magazines, watching documentations on history (and on science and technology) on TV	6,644
3	TV	watching TV, especially thrillers, whodunits, TV-shows and TV-quizzes, action movies, documentations on nature, science and engineering (reading the yellow press)	6,297
4	Pop	listening to pop and rock music, and to pop-radio-stations	5,710
5	Folk culture¹	listening to folk music, watching sentimental films with regional background	4,719
6	Sports & Hollywood	cycling, running, swimming, tennis, windsurfing, skiing; going to the movies	4,287
7	Creativity	writing, painting, tinkering (attending the theatre and alternative cultural events)	4,175
8	Shallow & easy	reading glossies, going to the pub (going to the movies, reading news magazines)	3,731
9	Reading	reading novels and thrillers, modern and classical literature	3,659

¹ This factor revolves around ‚Heimat‘, a concept which is hard to translate precisely. It is not merely folksy, but also includes elements of patriotism, nationalism, narrow-mindedness, and triviality.

10	Old folks' activities	playing golf, listening to classical radio stations, collecting	3,512
11	Avant-garde	listening to modern classical music, attending modern arts' events, dancing, further education	3,435
12	Jazz	listening to jazz (playing a musical instrument, watching nature-documentations on TV)	3,377
13	Watching sports	attending sporting events, surfing the WWW, playing soccer, (collecting)	3,365
14	Yellow press	reading the yellow press; reading the section about local events;	3,359
		Total	64,028

Table 2: Adolescent lifestyle factors, variables and percentage of variance explained

For adult cultural capital acquisition patterns, 14 factors can be extracted from the corresponding 46 variables describing adult lifestyle, too. The amount of explained variance is even slightly higher. Many of these 'adult' factors resemble the factors during adolescence. This indicates a continuance of cultural capital acquisition patterns. Overall, the following picture emerges (see Table 3).

	Factor	Variables explained by factor (weaker relations in parentheses)	Percent of variance explained
1	Classical culture	Going to the opera, listening to classical music, attending classical concerts, reading classical literature, listening to classical radio stations	7,053
2	TV and yellow press	watching TV, especially TV-shows and TV-quizzes, thrillers, whodunits, action movies, reading the yellow press, reading glossies	6,776
3	Pop	listening to pop- and rock music, and to pop-radio-stations	6,184
4	Business and politics	reading daily newspapers of high quality, reading the business and politics sections	5,103
5	Cinema, reading & going to the pub	going to the movies, reading novels and thrillers, reading modern literature, going to the pub, (reading classical literature)	4,957
6	TV & Knowledge	watching TV documentations on nature, science, engineering and history	4,900
7	Sporty midlife-style	attending the theatre and modern arts' events, playing tennis, skiing, windsurfing (further education, listening to classical music)	4,320
8	Folk Culture	listening to folk music, watching sentimental films with regional background	4,297
9	Mainstream midlife-style	reading news magazines and glossies, cycling, swimming and running, collecting	3,729
10	Creativity	writing, painting, tinkering, further education	3,588
11	Music & Dancing	playing a musical instrument, dancing, (listening to folk music)	3,580
12	Soccer & Sports	playing soccer, attending sporting events	3,411
13	Avant-garde	listening to modern classical music and jazz, surfing the WWW	3,404
14	Old folks' activities	playing golf, collecting	2,906
		Total	64,208

Table 3: Adult lifestyle factors, variables and percentage of variance explained

In a next step, we attempt to link social origin to adolescent and adult lifestyle patterns. According to our assumption, different lifestyle patterns should emerge depending on educational and occupational characteristics of the parents and the degree of urbanity. In addition, there should not only be differences, but also a systematic relationship: Good education, high occupational prestige and urbanity should lead to more (beneficial) symbolic capital, i.e., more prestigious forms of cultural capital acquisition patterns and, correspondingly, cultural capital as part of the career habitus. Therefore, the cultural capital acquisition patterns have to be grouped according to their prestige, indicating the amount of symbolic capital that can be acquired.

Such a grouping faces a number of difficulties. It is obvious that an evaluation of the prestige for each of these patterns is not universally valid. National and even regional factors play a major role in the process of evaluation. In addition, a fine-grained ordinal ranking will be hard to achieve as some patterns are more or less equal. On the other hand, it seems to be feasible to assign the 14 factors presented above to three major groups with high, medium and low prestige when a specific frame of reference is chosen. This specific frame of reference is provided here by choosing a specific cultural context (the Austrian one in this case) and a specific career field (management). The following table shows the groupings for different lifestyle patterns (see Table 4).

Symbolic capital	Adolescence lifestyles	Adulthood lifestyles
High	Classical culture; Business and politics; Avant-garde; Jazz	Classical culture; Business and politics; Avant-garde
Medium	TV; Pop; Doing sports; Creativity; Reading; Old folks' activities; Watching sports	Pop; Cinema, reading & going to the pub; TV & Knowledge; Sporty midlife-style; Creativity; Music & Dancing; Old folks' activities
Low	Folk culture; Shallow & easy; Yellow press	TV and yellow press; Folk Culture; Mainstream midlife-style; Soccer & Sports

Table 4: Lifestyle patterns and their symbolic value

To assess the impact of social origin on adolescent and adult lifestyle, we conducted nonparametric correlation analyses using Spearman's rank correlation coefficients. Normally, carefulness is required when interpreting correlations in terms of causality when there is no clear theoretical evidence. However, in this case causality can safely be assumed, due to the theoretical assumptions and the clear time-related order of the three groups of variables.

Parental educational and occupational level and urbanity of social origin are statistically significantly linked to five distinct cultural capital acquisition patterns during adolescence: 'classical culture', 'business and politics', 'TV', 'folk culture' and 'creativity'. In turn, each of these adolescent lifestyle patterns is positively related to a corresponding –identical or nearly similar – adult lifestyle pattern. Two of these adolescent lifestyle patterns are correlated with one additional adult lifestyle pattern: 'Business and politics' is positively related to 'mainstream mid-life style', and 'folk culture' has a positive relationship with 'TV, entertainment and yellow press'. The adolescent and the adult lifestyle patterns are linked with significant and relatively strong correlations. This supports the theoretical assumption that a career habitus preformed in childhood and youth strongly forms the corresponding aspects of adult career habitus. Overall, the following picture emerges (see Figure 1).

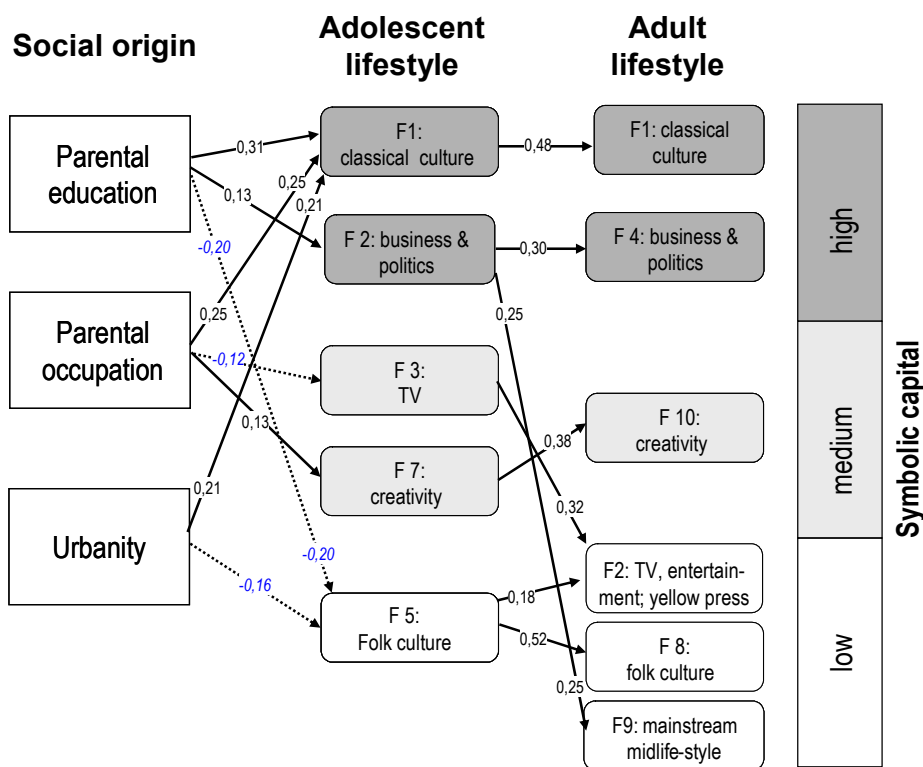


Figure 1: Social origin, lifestyle during adolescence and adulthood and their symbolic value (Spearman’s correlation significant at $p < 0.05$)

A number of aspects supports the assumption that a ‘better’ parental background and a more urban social origin favours more prestigious cultural behaviour both in adolescence and in adulthood, thus increasing individuals’ symbolic capital within the career field.

At the ‘upper end’ of the three groups of lifestyles, the picture is quite clear. The higher the parents’ educational and occupational level and the more urban the surroundings in childhood, the more individuals tend towards ‘classical culture’. If individuals adopt such a lifestyle during their adolescence, it is very likely that they also keep up this lifestyle during their adulthood. One can safely assume that an adult’s preference for classical culture will provide high symbolic capital in the career field of management. Basically the same is true for ‘business and politics’, which is positively influenced by the level of parental education.

Both parental educational level and urbanity are inversely related to folk culture. The better the parental education and the higher the degree of urbanity, the less likely a folk culture pattern develops. Some mixed findings are related to the lifestyle pattern group with medium symbolic capital. Parental occupation level is negatively correlated with the preference for TV consumption, but positively with creativity.

All of the lifestyle patterns representing a high amount of symbolic capital that are significantly related to social origin show a positive relationship with level of parental education and occupation, and urbanity. Vice versa, lifestyle patterns with little symbolic capital have negative correlations. Nevertheless, there are a number of caveats to be considered. First, only five of the fourteen patterns of cultural capital acquisition show a significant relationship with social origin. In other words, for nearly two thirds there is no such relationship. Second, there are some mixed findings in the ‘medium’ group of lifestyle patterns concerning symbolic capital. Third, the relationship between adolescent and adult cultural capital acquisition patterns is not entirely clear. The general pattern certainly points towards perpetuation: leisure activities in adult age remain pretty similar to those during adolescence.

The change in groups of the TV-related factor from ‘medium capital’ during adolescence to ‘low capital’ in adulthood is due to a change in content: informational aspects are replaced by entertainment and yellow press. However, at least one of the relationships does not fit this picture. The high symbolic value pattern ‘business and politics’ during adolescence is positively related to the low symbolic value pattern ‘mainstream mid-life style’ during adulthood.

5.2 Career habitus and career success

Although the aspects of life style analysed at first glance belong rather to the “outskirts” of career habitus and not to its very core, we suppose some relationship with career outcome. To analyse this, we proceed in two steps. First, we will classify the lifestyle patterns according to their capacity to generate symbolic capital and the degree of integration with the career field. For the first of these classifications, we use the differentiation already made in the previous section. Second, we will link these adult lifestyle patterns with various objective and subjective career success measures.

When grouping the lifestyle factors according to their integration with the career field, similar difficulties emerge as in the case of their capacity to generate symbolic capital. There is no absolute classification. The evaluation of the degree of integration of a lifestyle with the career field depends on the career field that is analysed. For example, a cultural capital acquisition patterns such as ‘cinema, reading & going to the pub’ may be highly integrated for the career field of journalists, but there is only little integration when looking at the career field of chemical science. Again, a fine-grained differentiation might be too difficult. Grouping the factors into three broad categories and relating them to one specific career field (management) may at least partly resolve many of these difficulties. The following table shows the groupings for integration and symbolic capital of different adult lifestyle patterns (see Table 5).

Symbolic capital	Integration with career field	Adult lifestyles
High	High	Business and politics
	Medium	
	Low	Classical culture; Avant-garde
Medium	High	TV & Knowledge
	Medium	Cinema, reading & going to the pub; Sporty midlife-style; Music & Dancing; Old folks’ activities
	Low	Creativity; Pop
Low	High	
	Medium	TV, entertainment & yellow press; Mainstream midlife-style
	Low	Folk Culture; Soccer & Sports

Table 5: Adult lifestyle patterns, integration with career field, and symbolic value

In a next step, these lifestyles are linked to objective and subjective career success. Four career success measures are available. On the objective side, hierarchical position as measured by number of subordinates and income as measured by yearly gross income are used. For both measures, the annual mean for the first ten years of working as well as the average increase during that period are taken. On the subjective side, career satisfaction and

career success as perceived by others, both measured on an 11-point scale (high-low) are used. Again, a 10-year average and the average annual increase are available.

To get a first picture, only the mean values for the various career success measures were included (see Figure 2), resulting in the following relationships:

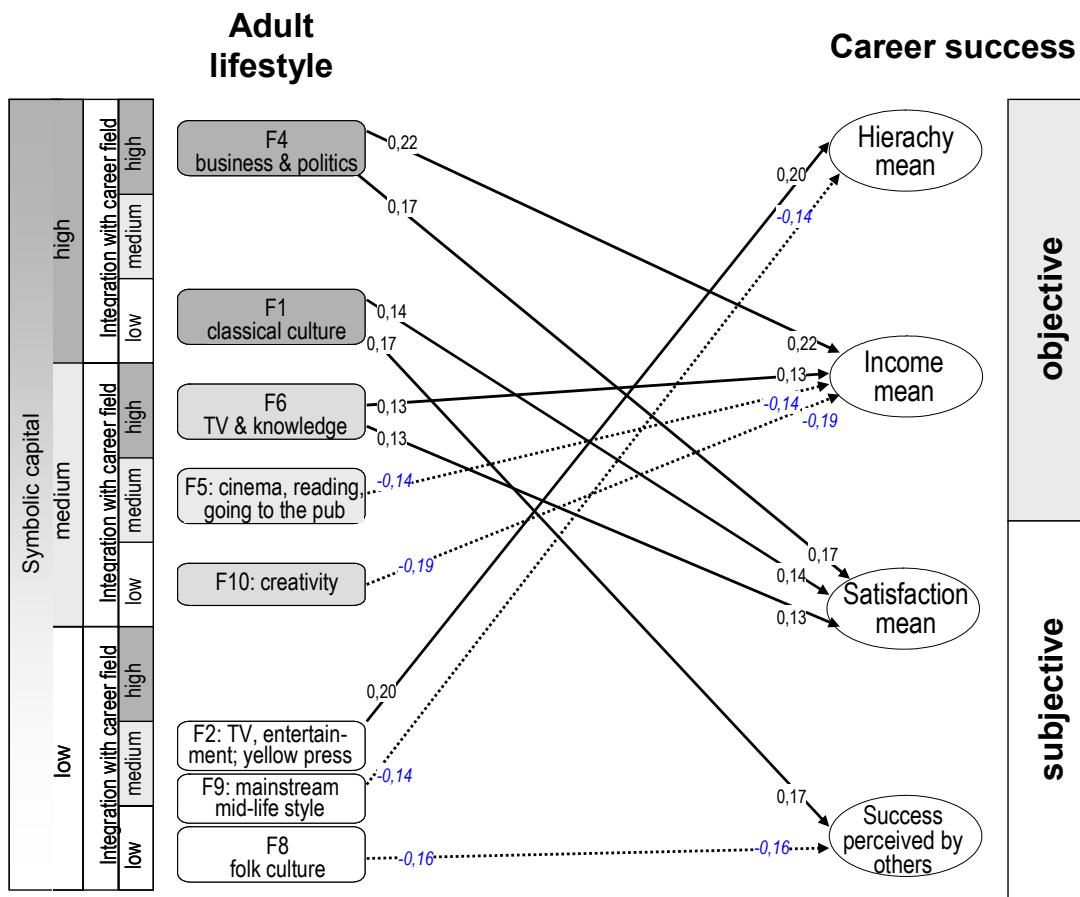


Figure 2: Adult lifestyles and career success – mean values
(Spearman's correlation significant at $p < 0.05$)

For the two lifestyle patterns with high symbolic capital – ‘business & politics’ and ‘classical culture’, the results are clearly in line with the relationship assumed: ‘Business & politics’ shows a positive correlation with one objective and one subjective career success measure: income and satisfaction. ‘Classical culture’ is positively related to both subjective success measures, satisfaction and success as perceived by others.

In the group of lifestyle patterns with medium symbolic capital, the picture is also quite clear. The factor with the highest integration into the career field – ‘TV & knowledge’ – shows positive relations to one objective and one subjective success measure, income and satisfaction. The other two factors with medium and low integration, ‘cinema, reading, going to the pub’ and ‘creativity’ are negatively related to income. Two of the three lifestyle factors, ‘mainstream mid-life style’ and ‘folk culture’, are negatively correlated with mean hierarchical position and success perceived by others. The only exception from this conformity with the hypothesis is ‘TV, entertainment, yellow press’ which has a positive relationship with the mean number of subordinates.

These tendencies become stronger when the average increase over the ten year period for hierarchy, income and satisfaction is added as a success measure. Five additional significant relationships emerge. ‘Business and politics’ (high symbolic capital value) is positively related to income increase. ‘Cinema, reading, going to the pub’ (medium symbolic capital value) is negatively correlated with satisfaction increase. ‘Creativity’, a lifestyle with low integration into the career field, is also negatively linked to both hierarchy and income increase. In the group of lifestyle factors with little symbolic capital, ‘TV, entertainment, yellow press’ maintains its special status. It has a positive influence on hierarchy increase. When combining all career success measures used, the following picture emerges (see Figure 3).

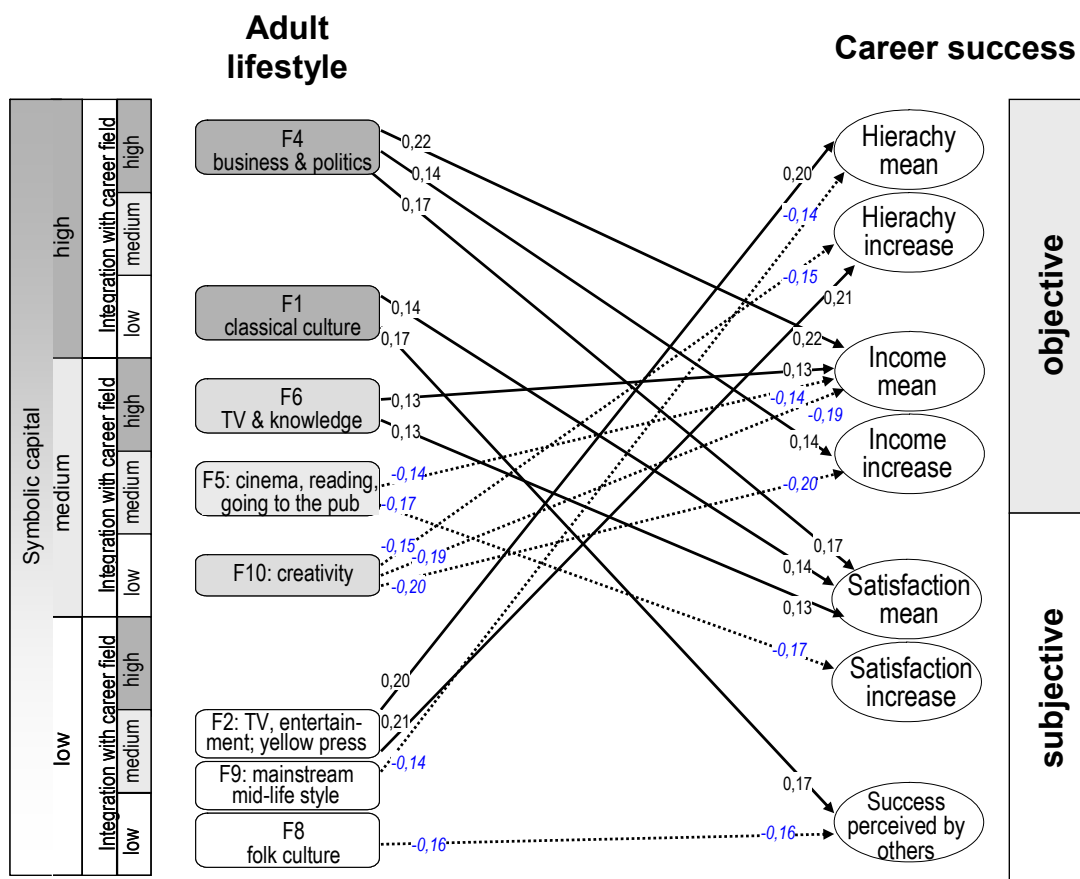


Figure 3: Adult lifestyles and career success (Spearman’s correlation significant at $p < 0.05$)

Overall, there are some relationships between life style and career outcome: With the exception of ‘TV, entertainment, yellow press’, all obtained results corroborate our assumptions. Still, some caveats have to be made. Only 8 of the 14 lifestyle patterns show statistically significant relationships with career outcome variables. In addition, where such relationships exist, they are rather weak, ranging from 0.13 to 0.22. The clear positive effects of ‘TV, entertainment, yellow press’ for hierarchical position might indicate that despite low symbolic capital generation and medium integration there are other components that trigger such effects. One can think of cultural capital such as getting a feeling about broad trends or speaking ‘the language of the ordinary people’ that help in supervisor-subordinate-situations. Despite low prestige, such lifestyle patterns might create-field specific value for the individuals.

6 Afterthoughts – sobering and not so sobering

From a general point of view, our sample is quite homogeneous. There is a quite severe selection based on social class already before individuals enter the tertiary education system. Some groups like children of skilled and unskilled workers are still – even after decades of efforts to create equal opportunities to obtain higher education – clearly underrepresented in universities. Our sample reflects this biased composition. This has two consequences for the results. First, no big differences and effects should be expected as the social background of our sample members is far from spanning the whole spectrum of possibilities. Second, effects of differences in social origin are, as far as they occur, even more remarkable. Having said this, a number of issues arise when looking at the results of our study.

For a long time, sociology took it for granted that cultural behaviour of individuals is closely linked to social class. Lately, this assumption of a ‘quasi-automatism’ where social class shapes behaviour has been criticised. The increasing fragmentation, the emergence of post-modernism and the higher degree of choice for individuals should result in a higher complexity and differentiation of behaviour. Instead of calculable and class-based behavioural patterns, a new confusion was announced, with old role stereotypes breaking up etc. Individual behavioural patterns are more diverse, autonomous and can combine seemingly contradictory elements: elements of ‘high’ and ‘trivial’ culture can co-exist, largely undetermined by social origin. Our findings do not provide much evidence for such a view. While it is true that a high number and diversity of lifestyle factors emerged, there is still a clear and recognisable influence of social origin. Parental as well as regional background does play a role for the development of habitual components that are integrated into the habitus and, in relationship to career fields, activated as career habitus.

The overall support for our line of thinking about the influence of social origin on career habitus as well as the effects of career habitus on career success invites further thoughts.

First, it is noteworthy that career habitus has career effects. This is even more remarkable as our analyses included but a small segment of the overall career habitus. This encourages further analyses that enlarge the scope of discussion by including further elements of career habitus, e.g., the more strategic dimension of career aspirations or political behaviour. Likewise, further forms of capital incorporated into the career habitus, such as social capital, could be included. One would expect that with such an enlarged view, the effects of habitus become stronger.

Second, it is striking that even when looking at a comparatively narrow aspect of social origin – parental and regional background – clear effects on career habitus could be observed. In turn, this encourages further work in this area. This could include a more detailed analysis of the relative importance of different combinations of parental education and occupation, the different influences of maternal and paternal education and occupation, or the effects of various elements of social origin for males and females. For the latter aspect, first analyses that have not been included in this paper, point towards gender-based differences. Males can fully exploit the capital they have acquired due to their social origin, and convert it into objective and subjective career success. Females, however, have more difficulties and show a higher degree of dissatisfaction even if coming from a ‘good’ parental background. Graduating from university alone is no sufficient for career satisfaction. Given the various disadvantages that they have in the labour market, the discrepancy between expectations based on a good ‘capitalisation’ and their reality results in negative effects.

At a more conceptual level, at least two aspects deserve attention.

First, the results about the importance of integration of cultural acquisition patterns with the career field in addition to the amount of symbolic capital that these patterns can generate introduces an additional element in the thinking about career habitus and career capital. While this is not completely new, its important role as an additional factor of capital generation has been highlighted. This adds a dimension to the analyses of such processes.

Second, the field and habitus perspective on careers seems to provide an at least partly useful framework for career analysis. While it is not the primary goal of this paper to ‘test’ this concept, it gives some hints for its usefulness for integrating contextual elements into career analyses. All three basic cornerstones – career field, career habitus and career capital – constitute analytical units that can be at least partly used in empirical research and, at the same time, are systematically linked with each other and open a wider perspective. Thus, they allow first steps towards integrating various levels of analysis or, to be more cautious, work across these levels. At the same time, the route for further development in this respect is wide open. As already indicated above, this paper has just picked a few elements out of a large spectrum. Further enhancements are possible, not only in the area of habitus and contextual background, but also in terms of career fields and career capital. For example, the relationship between various forms of capital and their consequences for careers can be discussed. Likewise, we know little about the mechanisms with which various parts of the career habitus translate themselves into career-relevant behaviour. In addition, the whole issue of career aspirations – the ‘knowing-why’ aspect (Arthur et al., 1999) – and their role in the relationship between career field, career habitus and career capital remains to be more soundly analysed.

Nevertheless, using a habitus based approach for career research remains a challenge. The mere length of the sections needed to briefly define the interconnected concepts of Bourdieu’s framework witnesses both its complexity and the numerous ways it may be further developed. On the one hand, this clearly is a limitation for such an approach. Other well-established concepts neither entail such entry barriers nor relative abstract and ‘vague’ core categories. On the other hand, this also is a large asset. Hardly surprising, we emphasise the latter. Bourdieu’s work has delivered a powerful tool for social research which nevertheless should be considered as permanently “under construction”. It contains many unanswered questions and opens up possibilities which have not been developed any further by the late French sociologist himself. The dynamic dimension of the habitus exemplifies just one of these possibilities.

Bourdieu’s work relies on solid empirical field data. However, using the habitus concept for empirical research is not easy. As a matter of fact, defining one’s habitus is most of the time related to social data, in particular the socio-economic status of an individual and his/her family. This location within the social strata associated to the social trajectory of the family gives valuable insights for the determination of a “class habitus”. A class is being defined here by relative homogeneity in living conditions and the amount and structure of the capital possessed. What remains unclear, however, is the process of actualization of the dispositions forming the habitus. One way to look closer into the habitus “black box” is the use of socio-psychological and psychological constructs traditionally used within career research in order to paint a limited “psychological portrait” of each individual in a work context (Mayrhofer et al., 2002). Adding such variables also minimises the danger of considering potential dispositions as automatically actualised, thus exaggerating the deterministic weight of the social class of origin.

As argued by Mayrhofer et al. (2004b), looking at careers from a “grand” and unified theoretical perspective has a number of advantages. It allows a connection between social phenomena in general and careers in a well elaborated and differentiated framework. It also

allows discussing a great variety of career aspects with a single theoretical language. Refusing to choose between agency and structure and mediating between macro and micro perspectives nevertheless presents the danger of an increased complexity due to the multiple variables which have to be taken into account – or at least one is tempted to take into account. Certainly, here the main difficulty is to limit one's ambitions. The habitus perspective may be taken as a good example for this potential danger. Bourdieu's theory – as each one – contains – as all theories – weaknesses and unanswered questions. In this way, it is tempting to "enrich" this theory with tools originating from other disciplines and/or paradigms as we have proposed above. Such an 'enrichment' also has its limits.

The first is a methodological one and is related to the difficulty of bringing together concepts relying on paradigms which are at the best different but compatible, at the worst contradictory and incompatible.

The second one is maybe even more fundamental. Following the famous dictum by Aristotle never to apply more accuracy to a concept than it allows, we probably have to accept that not everything is up to a full quantitative way of operationalisation. We are convinced that acknowledging vagueness because the phenomenon or the knowledge that can be acquired about it in itself is vague does not necessarily mean being vague. Hence, we do not propose greater exactness than the phenomenon allows (in line with Aristotle's famous dictum, see Jonas, 1974: 127). Once again, studying the habitus may be taken as an example for this statement. As already said, many characteristics of the habitus may be studied especially through socio-economic data. The investigation of the embodied dimension of the habitus – which is arguably one of the most interesting aspects of the concept – calls for other methods. Such methods are primarily based on observation, which means more or less interference with the observer's own subjectivity. Studying one's body language, the way to talk or to dress brings precious knowledge. Of course, such awareness requires to be trained, but also a great sensitivity, and capacity of self-reflection, or in other words having "the sociological eye". In this way, one might get closer to the habitus, but seeing it "completely" remains an illusion. Nevertheless, finding traces of habitus through other data is possible. Combining various forms of data and guided by a potentially powerful theoretical concept, career research might profit – even from a complicated answer to questions nobody asked in the first place.

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