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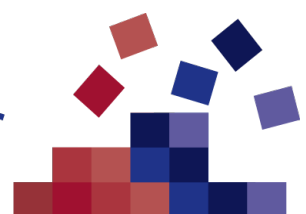
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A u t h o r

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A b s t r a c t

Within the dynamic nature of post-industrial labour markets, managerial and professional careers have witnessed major transformations in recent decades. This paper presents an integrative approach to analyzing managerial and professional careers using a career field and habitus model based on the framework of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. This approach examines the correlation between personal characteristics of graduates from different Austrian educational institutions and early career outcomes, and delineates the impact of higher education, as a key element within social structure. Possible explanations for the development of early managerial and professional careers are offered, with suggested ideas to conceptualize careers as reflecting the values, aspirations, and socio-structural characteristics of specific groups. A first empirical analysis underscores group differences in socio-economic variables between the two graduate groups. However, results for group differences in psychological factors and career outcomes suggest a high degree of standardisation within the entry stage of careers. The last section of this paper discusses some major limitations of these findings and implications of the career field and habitus concepts for future research on theory development and organizational practice.

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1. Introduction

Post-industrial societies have been subject to dramatic demographic, economic, and ideological changes that have led to the emergence of a society in which individuals and political actors are looking for new arrangements in the work sphere. As Streek shows, with the progress of industrial society from early industrialization to the post-World War II period, transformations of the employment relationship – as major institution of the labour market – emerged (Streek, 2005). It is on the backdrop of the reintroduction of the *contract of work* related to an integration of conception and execution of work, organized on a project-by-project basis, into the *contract of employment* that separated conception and execution processes, and facilitated the de-skilling of work, and bureaucratic-hierarchical coordination (Braverman, 1974) that new forms of *professional trajectories* developed (Bourdieu, 1986).

These models of professional trajectories can be seen as the class-, gender-, and ethnicity bound outcome of an interplay between socio-structural factors and individual resources. Mobility theories tend to reduce to the structural aspects of individual mobility on the one hand that which is the product of change in the apparatus for the production of agents (the educational system), and on the other hand that which stems from the transformation of the economic apparatus (Bourdieu and Bolatnski, 1981). Organisation and career studies, on the contrary, mostly focus on socio-psychological aspects of organizing one's work life shaped by one's own capacities put into play – into context. We must avoid both types of reduction: it is the play between the changes in the *educational system*, changes in the *economic apparatus*, and the *individual specificities* that is the source of the relationship between competences and aspirations (integral part of the habitus) and the social structures, all together shaping trajectories. As Bourdieu and Boltanski (1981) point out it is the transformational laws of the field of producer production (the educational institution) and the transformational laws of the field of economic production as dominant agency that affect professional trajectories in post-industrial labour markets. For the analysis of the position of agents and their groups within social structure such an approach has become common practice in leading sociological research (e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994; Hartmann, 1996). At the other end of such a structure–action continuum, influential career researchers stress the impact of socio-psychological aspects and its effect on careers (Hall, 1996; Peiperl & Baruch, 1997; Baruch, 2004). I argue that an analysis of contemporary careers, in terms of "career success" rather than social position within a stratification system, need to be freed from the sole reduction to structural forces. Theoretically, the post-Parsonian structure-action-difference has been discussed intensively (e.g. Evetts, 1992, Lehmann, 2003) and overcome – more clearly in an Anglo-Saxon than French reading – by Bourdieu (1977) or Giddens (1984). „Action and structure stand in relation of logical entailment: the concept of action presumes that of structure and vice versa." (Giddens, 1984: p.171).

Adopting an integrative perspective that is ready to open the black box of the individual and at the same time taking account for structural forces, I argue that careers reflect the values, aspirations, and socio-structural characteristics of specific groups, which may have considerable explanatory power for an entire labour market segment (Sennet, 1998). The graduate labour market is a particular segment of the overall labour market and is particularly sensitive due to the "newcomer status" of its workforce to transformations in the education system and the economic apparatus (King, 2003) – the shaken system of post-war capitalism since the 1980s (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999). Since the early 1960s, the expansion of post-compulsory education took off alongside an international discourse about the expansion of education.

In the Austrian case, the higher education system has undergone a substantial re-organisation process developing from a single public system (state governed) with a single sector (i.e. the universities) into a public and private system (public and private governing bodies/public and private sponsorship) with multiple sectors. This transformation resulted from a policy transfer from the British polytechnics system (Clark, 1986; Mayer & Lassnigg, 2006) in which Austria established the so-called Fachhochschulen (FH) (i.e. polytechnics) by virtue of the Fachhochschul Study Act dating back to 1993. Socially and economically, non-university programs of that kind, as the central providers of higher post-compulsory education, constituted instances of differentiation of titleholders, which were primarily supposed to "relieve" the overburdened universities (Pechar, 2004). The introduction of the mere addendum Magistra (FH) imposed a definition of quality on large segments of graduates, not the least by the increasing debate on inferiority and diversity triggered off by financial consolidation plans which followed the enthusiastic pioneer phase. In this view, I examine the diversity of university and polytechnics graduates in Austria try to identify basic differences in personal attributes and hope to understand better how this re-organisation of higher education institutions reflects structural factors for educational and social inequalities.

In the first section, I discuss those professional careers on the basis of a field and habitus concept of careers grounded on Bourdieu's social theory. In the course of this presentation, I elaborate typical scenarios of sub-fields of careers. Such a typology serves as privileged tool of analysis and description in the social sciences to reduce the complex structure of career realities into a small number of groups or "labels" that facilitate theory building (Kelle and Kluge, 1999). This is followed by a concise integrative presentation of career-relevant socio-psychological dimensions and their presumed consequences for graduate's first career developments. Thereafter, I show how several sociological attempts and organisation studies have attempted to capture the complex nature of professional careers and propose, alongside with socio-structural factors, behavioural characteristics as complementary determinants of career success. In the following section, I illustrate how I applied this plan to empirical data and give details on the methodological choices. Subsequently, I differentiate the analysis with respect to types of career predictors and outcomes for early career outcomes in terms of aspirations, and first positioning. Following is a brief examination of these careers in regard to objective and subjective success dimensions. In the concluding section, I suggest a variety of possible explanations, and point out the methodological limits of the approach and the sample.

2. A habitus-based concept of careers: Basic elements and a differentiated notion of "habitus"

Bourdieu's social theory is characterised by a close interaction between the concepts of habitus, capital and social fields. Avoiding an exegesis and revision of Bourdieusian concepts (for an overview see Warde, 2004), concepts are adopted for the purpose of career research in the hope of clarifying their sphere of influence and sharpening them with respect to empirical investigation.

For Bourdieu the interrelationship between the concepts of habitus, capital and social fields are expressed by the following equation (Bourdieu, 2005: 101): [(habitus)(capital)]+field=practice. Talking about practice in relation to careers, it becomes evident that an explanation is only possible by looking more profoundly at its components, and by allowing for the fact that Bourdieu worked extensively on the concept of practice (e.g. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977 [1972] and *Logic of Practice*, 1990 [1980]), but rarely discussed the relationship between practice and field (*Distinction*, 2005 [1986]; Warde, 2004). Drawing from Bourdieu's work, this paper focuses on the main characteristics of career fields as social fields, and the application of a concept of contemporary careers, including types of capital within career fields, in particular educational

capital. Moreover, it presents an external view of career fields, specifying its relations to the economic and educational systems as well as changes in the structure of those systems. Finally, the link between career fields, career habitus and capital with respect to early career developments will be analysed.

2.1 Career fields
Bourdieu (1977) introduces an elaborate theoretical statement about social fields as a patterned set of practices, which suggests competent action in conformity with rules and roles. By describing social fields as the playground in which actors, endowed with a certain field-relevant capital, try to advance their position, Bourdieu implies that actors within fields compete for social positions; this competition gives rise to social structure, positions of actors to each other according to the overall amounts and relative combinations of capital available to them (Iellatchitch et al., 2003; Anheier, et al., 1995).
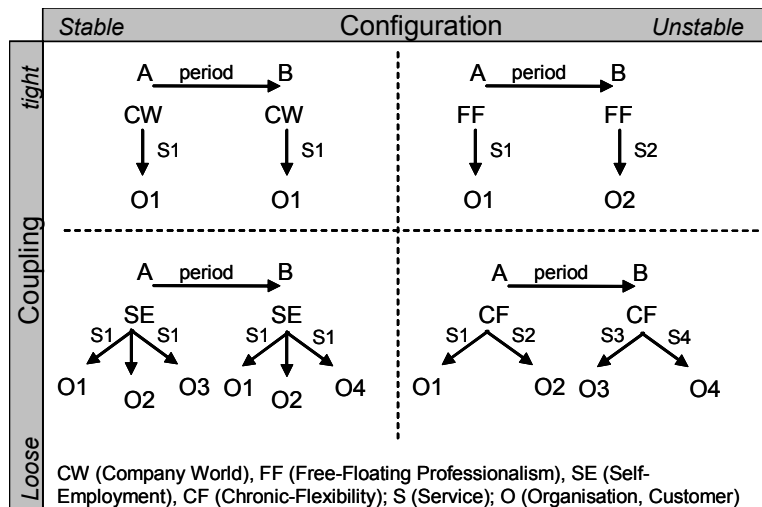
For Bourdieu, fields are "so constructed that agents who occupy similar or neighbouring positions are placed in similar conditions" (Bourdieu, 1986: 17), which in turn makes these actors more likely to develop certain dispositions, habits and interests (Anheier et al., 1995). Each field is based on a historically generated system of shared meaning and its boundaries indicate where its effects end. This implies the (1) social context, and (2) the dynamic quality of social fields in line with Arthur's notion of the time dimension and social space corresponding to his idea of congruence and relativity of careers (Arthur, 1992). Turning to careers, career fields are such a social context within which individual actors of the workforce, endowed with a field-specific portfolio of capital, struggle to maintain or improve their position in the work-related network. This struggle – within and across organisations, jobs or professions – leads to careers unfolding within a field and transform cultural and social capital into economic capital (Iellatchich et al., 2003).
The following typical career sub-fields result from the interplay of two dimensions: *coupling* and *configuration,* which are used to classify the organisational world. The *coupling dimension* emphasises the closeness of relationship and the degree of mutual influence between the focal actor and the other actor(s) and the actors in the configuration (Orton and Weick, 1990). Tight coupling indicates that the actors are dependent on each other in their decisions. Hence, the decisions of one actor reduce the degrees of freedom of the other (Mayrhofer et al., 2002).
The stability dimension resembles changes in the configuration over time in the configuration of relationships between the focal actor and other relevant actors. A stable configuration means that the composition of actors slowly changes over time. On the other hand, unstable configuration represents frequent changes of relationships. This dimension comprises more the rate of change than the number of actors. Figure 1 summarises typical scenarios of the four sub-fields of career, characterised by main differences in configuration and coupling. It depicts an agent's relationships to organisations and customers and illustrates the types of services provided over a period of time, with the time span determined between A and B.

Company world is the field typically reflected in, but not restricted to, the traditional career. Recruits usually enter at the bottom, direct from vocational training, university, school or college, and promotion is up a well-defined ladder. Such movements are generally linked to seniority, as consequently is pay. Employees enjoy high job security and tend to stay with the organisation for a long time. In return, the organisation gains the loyalty of staff (Henry, 2000). Within the period between A and B (see figure 1) the agent works in the same company (O1) and does more or less the same job (Service S 1).The key resource is hierarchical position. The configuration is stable, i.e. there is comparatively little change in terms of actors in the field. Coupling is tight, there is a high interdependence between the actors in the field.

Figure 1: Typical scenarios of the four sub-field of career; Combinations of configuration and coupling dimensions result in a simple typology with the "ideal-typical corners" (Mayrhofer et al., 2002)

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        Stable              Configuration              Unstable
 tight  A ─period→ B                A ─period→ B
        CW        CW                FF        FF
         │S1       │S1              │S1        │S2
         ↓         ↓                ↓          ↓
        O1        O1                O1        O2
       ─────────────────────────────────────────────
Coupling
        A ─period→ B                A ─period→ B
            SE        SE               CF         CF
         S1 ╱│╲ S1  S1 ╱│╲ S1      S1 ╱ ╲ S2  S3 ╱ ╲ S4
        O1  │  O3 O1  │  O4       O1     O2 O3     O4
           O2         O2
 Loose
        CW (Company World), FF (Free-Floating Professionalism), SE (Self-
        Employment), CF (Chronic-Flexibility); S (Service); O (Organisation, Customer)
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Free-floating professionalism is exemplified by specialists who work for different customers. They have relations with only 1 customer at a time. In most cases, the customer is an organisation. The relation is short-term. This results in a sequence of more or less frequent changes in the make-up of one's customers. The agent works for different organisations (O1, O2) at two different moments (A, B).

An example would be a consultant working in a project team for an organisation, e.g. a consultant as a member of a project management team setting up a project structure to implement restructuring plans within an institution. After termination of the project, the project team is dissolved and each of the members is sent to another team where he/she may contribute his/her knowledge and skills. Therefore, the configuration is unstable. Nevertheless, for this short period the link between actors is tight, interdependence is high. The agents within this field stay in their particular domain of expertise, which may of course be increased and diversified through experience and the knowledge gained in the different jobs and/or projects (diversified S1 is defined as S2; see figure 16). The main goal is increasing independence, especially through recognition as an expert. The key resource is therefore knowledge and reputation (Kanter, 1989).

Self-employment is the career field that is illustrated by individuals working outside organisations. Typically, they are either self-employed or entrepreneurs. Although they have a comparatively stable set of actors (O1, O2 and O3 remain the same at time A and B, changes are possible; see new O4 at time B) they are dealing with stable configuration and coupling is loose: autonomy and independence are highly valued; therefore the dependence on a small number of actors is avoided. The key resource in this sub-field is the professional or role ethos (mainly providing S1).

Chronic flexibility may appear quite similar to free-floating professionalism, since careers are also characterised by frequent job changes (O1, O2, O3, O4 at different times A, B). The fundamental difference is due to the disappearing of boundaries of a domain of expertise (S1, S2, S3, S4). This means changing from one job to another may imply not only a change from one organisation to another, but also from one industry to another, from an organisation to self-employment and so on. In this way, configuration is highly unstable. At the same time, coupling is loose, i.e. there is little interdependence since, for example, replacement is easily found. This career sub-field is

characterised by a potentially high level of diversity and radical professional transitions. The key resource may be defined as the capacity for and the rapidity of conquering a new domain.

These typical extremities are simply labels for career sub-fields, but not categories. The sub-fields cut across different arenas of work-life. For instance, not all individuals working in an organisation are located in the "Company world" corner. If an organisation follows a project structure, the configuration may be unstable due to changes in the relationships between focal actors, whereas the coupling may be tight, as actors within a project team are dependent on each other. The typical sub-field would hence be the "Free-floating professionalism".

2.2 Forms of capital and transformational laws

One of Bourdieu's key conceptualisations is his classification of four types of capital (1986): *economic, social,* and *cultural capital*, varying in their potential for accumulation and convertibility[1]. As a particluar type of capital, Bourdieu proposes *symbolic capital* that is closely related to the respective fields. It is recognised as legitimate competence or as authority exerting (mis-)recognition and comprises a combination of the three basic forms of capital authorised by a particular field (Bourdieu, 1986). Career capital is the particular sort of capital valued within the fields of career and corresponds to the issues of "knowing why, knowing how, and knowing whom" competences (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996). It is formed partly by one's genetic disposition and partly by the interplay of personal dispositions and the social context one is embedded in during personal life. In the course of one's personal, educational and professional development, these interactions result in a constantly changing, however relatively stable portfolio of capital (e.g. Mayrhofer et al., 2004).

Career capital is subject to internal and external recognition. Internal recognition takes place within the fields. External recognition on the other hand, reflects an outside perspective – in the case of work-related activities – towards the economic system and its assumptions about the value of each component of career capital for organisational production (Mayrhofer et al, 2004).

According to Bourdieu's theory (1993), fields are structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose characteristics depend on their position within these spaces. The fields are governed by the *general laws of fields* that are stable laws of functioning (Bourdieu, 1993). All agents within a specific field share a certain amount of fundamental interests and exert power according to the capital they own, which contribute to the existence of the field. They are in a permanent struggle to reproduce the rules of the game and, thus, create belief in the value of the field itself (Bourdieu, 1993). Fields are widely autonomous social spaces, but, as already recognisable from the conceptualisation of career capital, the degree of autonomy is restricted to the fact that individuals need access to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1977).

The interrelationship of career fields and the *economic system*[2] is that of mutual dependence. The economic system demands contributions from individuals in the form of skills to improve or maintain their position within a specific segment in the economic system. The set of specific skills is only available in a specific career field. Thus, the economic system is required to send a signal to individuals relating which portfolio of capital is valued. In turn, individuals have to process these signals and turn them into action. This process depends to a considerable extent on the economic, social and cultural capital available for the individual (Iellatchitch et al., 2004).

The relations between the *educational system* and the economic field are that of *relative autonomy* (Durkheim). The degree and type of autonomy is based on a given correspondence between the essential functions and the external functions, which always corresponds to a certain degree and type of dependence on the other sub-systems (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994). It is the *relative*

autonomy that enables the educational system to follow what Bourdieu and Passeron (1994: 197) define as *functional duplicity*: Firstly, the educational system contributes to *social reproduction* by following its own logic of reproduction. This implies that it has to transmit cultural capital (*technical reproduction*) in order to its self-identity. Secondly, it contributes to social reproduction by fulfilling an *ideological function* of "…concealing that social function by certifying the illusion of its absolute autonomy."

The educational system follows its own logic with respect to the logic and structural duration of the economic field. Thus, there is a discrepancy between formal qualifications and jobs. The main feature of the educational system with regards to the economic field is not that it produces producers with a certain technical competence, but that it transmits formal qualifications with a universal and relatively timeless value. This transformational law holds for the logic of the structurally differentiated *career fields* which demand *de facto competence* in contrast to *de jure competence* implied by academic credentials (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1981).

Bourdieu and Boltanski (1981) even describe some kind of *hostility* of the dominant agents in the economic field toward the educational system as collective mechanism of protection and preference for certain internal qualifications. In the case of universities and polytechnics we observe the following: Polytechnics are designed for the "skilling" and "selection of men" destined for production. Compared to universities they depend relatively stronger on economic imperatives, which has shaped the evolution of the inner logic, including the pedagogic code as the organisational principles of institutionalised learning processes (Bernstein, 1977). In such institutions individual success is signalled by annually ordered advancements within the strictly classified institutional curricula, and the gradual selection of a preferred career habitus.

2.3 A differentiated habitus
The habitus is a durably installed generative principle, the active presence of the past of which it is the product (Bourdieu, 1977). The primary orientation of the habitus may be towards the accumulation of symbolic and economic capital, however, the habitus is basically made up of cultural capital or knowledge in the widest sense. Interpreting the habitus in terms of a durable system of dispositions allowing for the non-deterministic character of the habitus, implies a focus on the production side of the concept, which means that the system of dispositions to actions is emphasised. This notion refers to dispositions as "competences" or "generative capacities" as illustrated by Lash (1993).

For this study, a more dual notion of the habitus concept emphasising the production (dispositions) and reception side is adopted. According to Lash (1993: 195) the reception side of the habitus comprises "schemes, categories of perception and appreciation", second, it is made up of "principles of classification". The habitus-based approach looks, from the reception side, primarily at the supply side as the emphasis lies on the generation and accumulation of an individual's capital portfolio. Hence, agents are able to recognise and interpret information about another agent's capital portfolio formed by personal history. However, it does not give implications about actions taken by agents making their capital portfolios recognisable.

A concept related to career developments, including career success, is the concept of career habitus, which is a habitus that "fits" a particular career field. Agents in a specific career field are required to have different dispositions and receptive schemata – the habitus – that fit into the logic of the game of the field. Involvement in a specific career field shapes the habitus of the agent

which, in turn, shapes the actions that reproduce the field. Hence, the relationship between habitus and field is regarded as circular (Crossley, 2001).

Based on the above elements, I posit that objective chances of career success develop with respect to social origin and habitus which are the explanatory elements of the equation for career success in the fields of career. Based on fit perceptions (Kristof, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997) agents anticipate their probability of career success, which determines aspirations defined as his/her intention to be active in one of those fields.

3. Cross-cutting disciplines: Integrating psychological dimensions into the study of careers

3.1 Analytical strategy

Before setting about the hypotheses, I must clarify my research strategy by which I approach professional careers in post-industrial labour markets. Acknowledging the most prominent sociological approaches, such as Abbott's (2005) work on the sequential nature of occupations and professions, Becker and Strauss's (1956) research on the institutional determinants of careers, or Rosenbaum's tournament models (1986), the current approach abandons the firm-centred view of careers in favour of the more complex nature of post-industrial career developments. By bringing psychological aspects of the individual into the analysis, I shift the focus of the sole examination of institutional career arrangements to the "individual" as additional decisive factor. I can thus observe the socio-structural elements and personality attributes in relationship to different moves onto the labour market, as well as first differences in income and job satisfaction.

I translate this program into practice by choosing two graduate groups which most commonly would be associated with the same professional category, that of managerial professions, and that are expected to show certain upward mobility. For the Austrian case, we know that the majority of Austrian managers and business leaders hold a degree from one particular university of economics and business (which is the second largest is Europe) and from a reduced number of polytechnics specialized in management education. I will concentrate on the graduates from the Vienna University of Economics and Business and the best known Austrian polytechnic. First, the questionnaire covered socio-economic variables such as parental background in terms of educational attainment, professional status, social gap between parents and grandparents, as well as annual net income. In addition, I discriminated between four fields of career, described earlier i.e. Company World, Free-Floating Professionalism, Self-Employment and Chronic-Flexibility. It should be noted that these fields depict career specificities in terms of the configurational nature and coupling intensity of jobs rather than a clear-cut hierarchical socio-professional pattern.

Second, I will introduce four groups of socio-psychological attributes (resources): Adaptability, sociability, power and politics motive pattern, and need for achievement (see detailed description hereafter). The adaptability dimension refers to a person's behaviour in different social contexts, in particular the ability to modify his or her behaviour. Sociability as summarised by networking, openness for social contacts as behavioural and personality traits, facilitates the establishment of social networks as a form of social capital. Power and politics motive pattern is associated with "leadership motivation", "self-promotion/self-assertion" and "demonstrating power and status". It contributes to maintaining one's power status and positive self-image. Finally, the need for achievement in terms of "Achievement motivation" and "Conscientiousness" are personality traits and are associated with the readiness to meet high vocational standards and to fulfil tasks with attention and precision (Mayrhofer et al., 2002).

3.2 Socio-structural career determinants

In line with considerable empirical evidence (O'Donovan, 1962; Blau & Duncan, 1967; Bourdieu, 1986; Whitely et al., 1991; Kotter, 1995; Hartmann, 1996; Elman & O'Rand, 2004;), the underlying model suggests that social origin as represented by the educational and occupational level of parents, and the perceived gap of social status of parents and grandparents affects graduates' early careers, including aspirations and the first positioning. A positive correlation between the father's educational and occupational level and the attainment of high management positions of descendants is assumed. In addition, Whitely (1991) reported positive effects of family history on career mentoring and career success. Higher gaps of social status between parents and grandparents lead to higher achievement motivation in the subsequent generation (Kotter, 1995). However, formal qualifications obey certain transformational laws based on reproductive mechanisms and are associated with different sets of social origin (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1981). To examine the impact of socio-structural factors, in terms of socio-economic status, I was hence particularly interested if in the families of University of Economics and Business Administration (WU-) graduates the average family income and educational level at the time of high-school termination was higher. In addition, I postulated that the perceived gap between perceived social status of grandparents and parents was lower, than for polytechnics (FH) graduates.

3.3 Psychological career determinants

As I am particularly interested in the role of psychological attributes for career outcomes in order to avoid overstressing the importance of structure, I analyze the dimensions of adaptability, sociability, power and politics motive pattern and need for achievement.

Adaptability comprises 1. "self-monitoring", 2. "flexibility" and 3. "emotional stability", and resembles those traits that refer to a person's ability to modify his or her behaviour in different social contexts. 1. "Self-monitoring" refers to the ability to adapt one's own behaviour to external situational factors as an "active construction of public selves to achieve social ends" (Gangestead & Snyder, 2000; Kilduff & Day, 1994; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). 2. "Flexibility" refers to "openness to experience" in the Big Five Model (Costa & McCrae, 1989; 1992), which is defined by a high adaptation ability of individuals to all possible areas of life. According to Hossiep and Paschen (1998), this ability is restricted to vocational activities. Apart from findings for occupational sub-groups, no substantial empirical evidence is found for the factor "openness to experience" by Salgado (1997). 3. Emotional stability measures, within the Big Five Model, the degree to which an individual is insecure, anxious, depressed, and emotional as opposed to calm, self-confident, and cool (Costa & McCrae, 1992). It refers to neuroticism within the Big Five Model (Salgado, 1997). Based on that, it is asserted that mental-self selection processes lead low self-monitoring, less flexible and emotionally unstable people into educational fields characterised by stable configuration, which provide an internal structure. Overall, I postulate that WU-graduates display more attributes of "high adaptability" as expressed by 1. self-monitoring, 2. flexibility and 3. emotional stability than polytechnics graduates.

Sociability sums up behavioural and personality traits such as 1. "openness for social contacts" and 2. "networking". These traits induce individuals to establish and maintain contacts with many individual and institutional actors and to structure or maintain relationships with social fields that have only been weakly linked so far. In contrast, the dimension 1. "openness for social contacts" is a personality trait, and implies that an individual is assertive and gregarious versus opposed to social contacts, timid and quiet (Mayrhofer, 2002).

2. "Networking" is operationalised in the Career Tactics Questionnaire KATA developed especially for ViCaPP to measure purposeful behaviour within the work context (see Schiffinger & Strunk,

2003). It refers to the behaviour where people seek a variety of business contacts that may also spill over into private life and, therefore, comprises the establishment, maintenance and use of vocational and private contacts. Research shows that socially connected actors reduce information redundancy and bridge so-called structural holes (Burt et al., 1998). Furthermore, networking positively influences the hierarchical progression and/or salary level from middle to top management (Orpen, 1996; Mehra et al., 2001). Thus, it is expected that high sociable individuals are more likely to have graduated at a university, as this field requires the establishment, maintenance and use of social contacts to a higher extent, and on a self-organised basis.

Power and politics motive pattern refers to the behavioural and personality traits 1. "leadership motivation", 2. "self-promotion" and 3."demonstrating power". These traits induce the actor to build and maintain status, dominance, power and a positive self-image. Studies by House et al. (1991) and Howard and Bray (1990) find a high correlation between 1. "leadership motivation", referred to the temptation to actively influence and shape social processes and perceive oneself as a person of reference, and the person's desire to take leadership positions. In addition, they find that leadership motivated persons get promoted more often.

The dimension 2. "self-promotion", as operationalised in the Career Tactics Questionnaire, concerns a behaviour of actors emphasising their abilities, qualifications and achievements. Empirical findings on "self-promotion" by Judge and Bretz (1994) and Turnley and Bolino (2001) are divergent, mainly due to the varying scope used for this dimension.

Furthermore, the dimension 3. "demonstrating power" is defined as making use of position power, symbols of status, and even bluff to gain respect or compliance from people. Ferris et al. (1992) found evidence for the correlation of the use of power and status on the selection of graduates. The underlying contention is that power and politics motive patterns are considerable success criteria at university as university degrees are still higher in social status (*addendum* for polytechnics degrees) (Pfeffer, 2004; Leitner, 2004) and self-promotion is based on single individual action.

Need for achievement comprises the personality and behavioural traits 1. "achievement motivation" and 2. "conscientiousness", and refers to the readiness of an actor to meet high vocational standards and to fulfil tasks with attention (Mayrhofer, 2002). 1. "achievement motivation" refers to the willingness to reach high performance standards and to benchmark as well as to continually improve one's own performance. Tharenou (1997) finds significant correlations between advancement motives, career motivation, and achievement motives, and career success.

The second sub-dimension, "conscientiousness", is one of the Big Five dimensions (Costa & McCrae, 1989) and is defined as the extent to which an individual is hardworking, organised, dependable, and preserving. Empirical findings strongly support the correlation between conscientiousness and job performance (e.g. Salgado, 1997). Actors scoring high on the dimension "need for achievement" are associated with university due to institutional properties and requirements for high achievement motivation and conscientiousness, e.g. freedom to set performance standards, alternative levels of study programmes, no internal/structural compensation for achievement motivation.

3.4 Aspirations and first positioning

Research has revealed valuable information concerning the relationship between individual traits and social origin variables, and career success (e.g. Barley, 1989; Wayne et al., 1999; Tharenou, 2001). However less is known about the effects of educational credentials on preferences for career fields and first positioning.

The current sample finds itself in transition from university to labour market, and hence, one has to account for *two* relevant structural elements: (1) structure of the educational institution, and (2) structure of the career field. Bourdieu (2005) argues that a number of reproductive mechanisms result from/in the homology of social arenas, as actors in a sub-field determine the structure of the field as well as the recognition of symbolic capital and, overall, contribute to the reproduction of the field. Thus, I expect institutional isomorphism resulting from homologous actors within/across the educational and post-/organisational fields. The educational field is made up of various chances of success implicitly contained in the diverse curricula. These so-called *objective chances* are then transformed at each stage of the academic career by the very structure of the educational system. Objective chances of academic success are related to *capital* (in particular cultural capital) brought by social origin, *institutional structures* (polytechnics versus university) and *actual choices* made (Sainsaulieu, 1981).

Similar properties are assumed for career fields. Individual and structural factors determine which individuals aspire and actually position themselves in certain career fields, on the basis of fit perceptions, objective chances and expected probability for success (Bourdieu, 2005; Sainsaulieu, 1981; Kristof, 1996). I assume that graduates from university are endowed with better socio-economic pre-requisites for academic and career success associated with a more appropriate fit as regards loosely coupled career fields. Additionally, one may argue that behavioural and personality dimensions, in particular, "adaptability" and "sociability" are associated with success criteria for university and for loosely coupled fields.

The final assertion links career aspiration and first positioning and is based on attributional (Shultz & Schleifer, 1983) and signaling processes (Spence, 1973). Additionally, self-selection processes determined by anticipated career success, as a function of capital and habitus, play an important role (Kristof, 1996; Bourdieu, 2005). Hypothesis 7 builds on these insights. University graduates are expected to be more likely to enter loosly coupled fields such as Self-Employment and Chronic-Flexibility than FH-Graduates.

3.5 Objective and subjective success criteria

Subjective-objective career duality (Van Maanen, 1977; Arthur et al., 2005) is essential for a comprehensive analysis of careers. A large number of empirical studies (Tharenou, 2001; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994; Seibert et al., 1999; Lyness & Thomspon, 2000) reflects on objective career success as "advancement along a hierarchy of power and prestige" (Barley, 1989: 49), and most of these operationalise the objective career dimension in their research (Arthur et al., 2005). In turn, the number of studies utilising subjective success criteria is far more restricted. This is specially the case, when it comes to integrating conceptualisation and operationalisation (Arthur et al., 2005). Empirical studies operationlise the subjective dimension for instance by career and advancement satisfaction (Martins et al., 2002), or motivation and sponsorship (Wayne et al., 1999). Research by Boudreau et al. (2001) and Orpen (1998) provides evidence for interdependence between personality or attitudes and objective career success. In addition, Judge et al. (1995) find that the umber of hours worked per week is a main motivational variable linked to ascendancy. Consistent with the above studies on objective success, I assume that university

graduates associated with higher scores on social origin and personality traits show higher objective success criteria.

Since subjective criteria are referred to experiences, attitudes and individual interpretations (Hughes, 1937; Hall, 2005), I propose that the more an actor's experiences at an educational institution correspond to working life after graduation, the fewer *hysteresis* effects, defined as discrepancy between the habitus and the objective conditions of agency, occur (Bourdieu, 1977). Consequently, it is proposed that the greater the autonomy, e.g. to design one's own studies and work organisation, the higher the risk of Bourdieu's *hysteresis effect*s. Hence, practices may incur negative sanctions, if the environment in which they take place is too different from that they are objectively fitted (Bourdieu, 1977). Allowing for different principles of institutionalised learning (Bernstein, 1977) at universities and polytechnics, one may assert that hysteresis effects are expected more frequently among university graduates, thus, result in lower job satisfaction.

In turn, the assessment of success by others such as colleagues, senior partners and customers is expected to be higher for university graduates. Here, the status intensive university degree (Leitner, 2004) is expected to affect the graduates' self-perception as well as the perception of others (e.g. *reputational capital* see Turban & Cable, 2003; Gatewood & Gowan, 1993).

4. Data gathering, scales and sample structure

Data were obtained from business school graduates of a large Austrian university (WU) and a well-known Austrian *polytechnic (FH)*, both being part of two "retrieval waves" in May and September 2001, being part of a longitudinal study, the Vienna Career Panel Project (ViCaPP). Sample members were business school graduates from 1999 to 2000. They received an information package that contained basic facts about the project and an invitation to participate. Interested graduates received a questionnaire and a stamped return envelope. To encourage responses, sample members were promised a web-based feedback of some obtained results via a password generated by the participants themselves, according to a coding scheme included in the questionnaire. This method guarantees anonymity to all sample members while providing personal feedback.

A total of 780 questionnaires were returned, 47.9 per cent female and 52.1 per cent male. This was the result of an intensive follow-up initiative comprising two postal and one telephone reminder which increased the number of returned questionnaires from 331 persons (281 university and 50 from polytechnics) to 643 university graduates and 137 polytechnics graduates, and thus considerably increased the initial response rate from 26% to 61%. Given the Austrian educational system, the sample is quite typical for people graduating from business schools with the equivalent of an MBA. The mean duration of study for university graduates is 13.97 semesters, while *polytechnics*-programmes have a fixed duration 8 semesters. A considerable number of university graduates have worked at least part-time during their studies, in contrast *polytechnics*-graduates most commonly made an obligatory internship of several months, which was included in their curriculum.

Scales and measurement: The annex contains scales that refer to social origin, and personality traits and behavioural characteristics that were entered into the analyses for a first testing of group differences at the early career stage of managers and young professionals. The scales referring to **social origin** for the three groups of variables – volume of capital related to social class of origin, parental employment status and social family history –were entered into the analyses as independent variables. All three input variables were ordinally scaled.

The scales referring to **personality traits** and **behavioural attributes** for the four groups of variables – adaptability, sociability, power and politics motive pattern, and achievement motivation and accuracy. The left column shows the source of each scale. The right column indicates the name of the scale, the internal consistency value and a sample item.

The **Career Tactics** questionnaire (KATA) was newly developed (see Schiffinger and Strunk, 2003) within the framework of ViCaPP. It measures vocationally oriented behaviour within organisational and post-organisational contexts. The scales were extracted by means of factor analysis from a pool of 236 items (distributed among 201 working individuals) based on a variety of theoretical constructs, e.g. impression management, influence tactics, networking, career insight efforts et cetera. The scales were then optimised according to internal scale consistency, normal-distribution-fit and scale range. The descriptions of the separate scales are presented in the annexed KATA table.

General personality traits were measured by the well-established Big Five Model (Costa/McCrae, 1992), which was used in the German translation from NEO-FFI (Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1993). The construct "*self-monitoring*", refers to the ability of an actor to adapt his own behaviour to external situational factors as an "active construction of public selves to achieve social ends" (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000: 546). The remaining dimensions are part of the Bochumer Inventory which was reduced for the purpose of ViCaPP from 17 scales to seven, two out of the area of vocational orientation (Achievement Motivation, Leadership Motivation), and two out of vocational behaviour (Flexibility and Openness for Social Contacts) (Mayrhofer et al., 2002).

The four **career aspirations** scales were developed in order to allow a differentiated four-field view of career aspirations as well as a bipolar view, of organisational and post-organisational fields. Four career aspiration scales consisting of 34 items overall were developed (consistency values ranging between α = 0.86 and α = 0.71). Each item described a feature characteristic for one of the four fields. Initially an item pool with 51 items was complied, with 12 to 15 items belonging to each one of the four career fields according to our theoretical framework. Participants were asked to rate the desirability of the described feature, on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "very desirable" to "not at all desirable"; for instance, "turning a business idea into a profitable company" for Self-Employment. Apart from the usual criteria like item discrimination, item intercorrelation, and item facility, a validity criterion was available as well. This validity criterion was represented by a separate part of the first wave questionnaire, where participants were asked to indicate their preference for one of the four fields (based on short descriptions of each field). Item selection aimed at optimizing 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 annex). 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 has only a low consistency value, the obtained validity value can be assessed as very high.

Apart from this method, an alternative way is to use the scales measuirng configuration and coupling developed in the framework of ViCaPP in order to verify career aspirations. For actual job positionings the latter method has been used, even though it has to be noted that here an "aspiration profile" is created which oversimplifies the complexity of the interpretation of the available data and of the statistical design necessary to test the present hypotheses.

Objective **career success** is, in the first instance, operationalised as gross annual income in Euro or ATS that was directly asked for the first job after graduation. Consistent with Dreher & Cox (1996) and Wallace (2001), objective career success is represented by compensation. In addition,

the number of subordinates and the percentage of management tasks was used (the latter was measured on an 11-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 100 per cent), in order to represent objective career success. Along with numerous studies by e.g. Tharenou (2001), and Judiesch & Lyness (1999), in which objective success was represented by the level in the managerial hierarchy and the span of control, the relative amount of management responsibilities and the number of subordinates are seen to be influential in predicting objective career success. In line with studies by Whitely et al., 1991) and Judge et al. (1995) invested life energy entered present analyses and was measured on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 100 per cent.

Subjective career success was operationalised as job satisfaction and perceived success through others such as colleagues, customers and senior managers. It was measured on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied" for the first job after graduation. Consistent with former research (Seibert et al., 2001; Nicholson, 1993), job and/or career satisfaction is positively related to subjective career success.

5. Results

Quantitative data is organised around two major themes: predictors for career developments represented by socio-economic variables and personality traits and behavioural attributes; and career aspirations and outcomes including objective and subjective career success and actual positioning.

5.1 Predictors for career development
Comparative analyses on the basis of mean ranks and Mann-Whitney-U tests of group differences of university and polytechnics graduates with respect to social origin as represented by the average family income, the parental educational level, and the perceived status of grandparents and parents show two main results.

First, graduates differ significantly in their father's educational level (sig. 2-tailed: 0.049) and their perceived social status (sig. 2-tailed: 0.036 for gap income; 0.01 for gap profession). For the latter categories, values of the grouped median are higher for FH graduates, which indicates a higher gap in social status between grandparents and parents, for income and profession. Hence, *polytechnics*-graduates experienced a higher social advancement within family history, and, thus, grew up in a less stable social setting.
Analyses of the parental educational level show significant results found for the father's educational level. Out of the polytechnics sample 30.1 per cent of fathers fall into the category of highest educational attainment "apprenticeship" (versus WU: 22.5 per cent). In contrast, 26.6 per cent of fathers of WU graduates have an "academic degree" as highest educational attainment (versus FH: 16.2 per cent).

A chi-square test (Pearson) indicates significant differences in the distribution of both mothers' and fathers' occupations for FH and university graduates (fathers' occupations: sig. 2-tailed: 0.033; mothers' occupations: sig. 2-tailed: 0.000). A categorisation of the parents' jobs concerns differences in the upper (e.g. civil servants, entrepreneur) and lower (e.g. worker) end of the "occupational pyramid". While university students are recruited out of the middle and upper part of the "vocational pyramid", FH-graduates are recruited out of the middle and lower part.

Table 1: Parental occupational categories for WU / FH graduates

Frequencies by occupational categories				
	Father		**Mother**	
	WU-Graduates	*FH-Graduates*	*WU-Graduates*	*FH-Graduates*
1 Worker	12.3%	21.5%	5.7%	15.7%
2 Employee up to medium level	12.5%	12.6%	26.3%	30.6%
3 Senior employee	18.4%	19.3%	7.1%	9.7%
4 Chief executive	7.8%	6.7%	1.4%	0.7%
5 Civil servant	16.6%	9.6%	3.5%	5.2%
6 Teaching professionals	6.0%	5.9%	9.7%	11.9%
7 Farmer	6.3%	2.2%	5.7%	1.5%
8 Entrepreneur	15.2%	11.9%	6.5%	3.7%
9 Free-lancer	4.9%	7.4%	1.9%	0.7%
10 Household	-	-	32.3%	20.1%
Sig. 2-tailed	0.033		0.000	

Mann-Whitney-U-Tests and Chi-Squear-Test (Pearson) show no significant differences between graduates' populations concerning *annual family income* (sig. 2-tailed: 0.984), *educational level of the mother* (see above) and the third component of perceived social gap between parents and grandparents as represented by "*gap education*" (sig. 2-tailed: 0.578). However results for family income have to be qualified as this was asked on an absolute basis, and, thus, shows the *sum of earnings* from mothers' and fathers' occupational activities.

Overall, the hypothesis on the social origin is supported by major variables such as *father's educational level* (sig. 2-tailed: 0.049) and *perceived social status* (sig. 2-tailed: 0.036 for gap income; 0.01 for gap profession). However a strict reading would reject the general hypothesis on social origin as not for all variables significant differences were found.

T- and Levene-Tests for the equality of variances for the main *psychological* dimensions adaptability, sociability, power and politics motive pattern, and need for achievement show no significant differences in the sample populations. However, polytechnics graduates score higher on the single sub-dimensions "networking" as behavioural attribute "seek various and numerous contacts" (sig. 2-tailed: 0.008), "leadership motivation" (sig. 2-tailed: 0.053) and "demonstrating power and status" (sig. 2-tailed: 0.003). In order of their relative importance for the differentiation of the two samples: Demonstrating power and status, networking 2 (seeking various and numerous contacts), and leadership motivation. Slightly higher, but insignificant, scores for university graduates are found for achievement motivation, conscientiousness and flexibility.

Figure 2: Habitus dimensions

Differences in means for individual characteristics for WU/FH		Significance 1-tailed*	Stand. Deviation	
			WU	FH
Adaptability				
H2 Self-monitoring	0.15	0.065	0.941	1.074
H2 Flexibility	0.03	0.392	0.961	0.937
H2 Emotional stability	0.06	0.241	0.955	0.952
Sociability				
H3 Networking 1 (alliances)	0.06	0.247	0.865	0.904
H3 Networking 2 (contacts)	0.23	**0.008**	**0.892**	**1.023**
H3 Openness for social contacts	0.09	0.148	0.862	0.934

N: WU = 643; FH = 137
* Significance evaluation based on Levene-Test

Differences in means for individual characteristics for WU/FH		Significance 1-tailed*	Stand. Deviation	
			WU	FH
Power and politics motive patterns				
H4 Leadership motivation	0.14	**0.053**	0.927	0.928
H4 Self-promotion	0.08	0.185	0.899	0.919
H4 Demonstr. power & status	0.23	**0.003**	0.886	0.897
Achievement motivation				
H5 Achievement motivation	0.04	0.322	0.928	0.893
H5 Conscientiousness	0.01	0.092	0.780	0.845

N: WU = 643; FH = 137
* Significance evaluation based on Levene-Test

5.2 Career aspirations and outcomes

Concerning career outcomes, graduates are associated with a higher *aspiration* towards and corresponding job choices for career fields similar to the educational sub-field. Neither do Chi-Square tests (Pearson) indicate significant correlations between educational institutions and aspirations towards career fields (sig. 2-tailed: 0.181), nor do t-tests show any significant results for configuration and coupling dimensions ($p > 0.05$). More precisely, when graduates were asked to tell their preferences for one of the four fields described by a short text each, more than 40 per cent of graduates from both samples aspire towards the field "Company World" (WU: 43.9 per cent and FH: 41.2 per cent). This may be a specific phenomenon at entry stage, as many graduates expect to learn most within an organisational setting at the beginning of their career. In contrast, the field "Free-Floating Professionalism" seems to be the least popular one for both samples (WU: 7.6 and FH: 13 per cent). The current results from cross-tabs have to be qualified by the fact that the field-specific properties are more important than the surface labels. Hence, the high percentage of aspirations towards "Company World" and the low percentage of "Free-Floating Professionalism" may be biased. For example, employees in organisations which follow a project structure, where configuration is unstable due to changes in relationships with focal actors and where coupling may be tight, as actors within a project team are dependent on each other, would be correctly categorised as free-floating professionalists. However, actors would superficially think to aspire for field of "Company World", and thus, name this category as their preferred one.

Similar results are obtained for the first job after graduation which proposes that university graduates are more likely to enter the fields "Self-Employment" and "Chronic Flexibility" (loosely coupled fields). In the analysis of configuration and coupling dimensions, single items representing coupling (security, dependence on persons with respect to job alternatives and easiness of finding

alternative jobs) and configuration (stability of relationships and work content, intensity of relationships) show significant results only for the item "alternative jobs" (sig. 1-tailed: 0.000) which was higher for university graduates.

Assumed differences in *objective career dimensions,* as operationalised by number of subordinates, percentage of management tasks, average annual gross income and individual energy invested in the job. Analyses in the form of t- and Levene tests show no significant results for objective career success.

Major propositions for the *subjective career dimension,* are represented by job satisfaction and evaluation through other persons, e.g. colleagues, senior managers, clients. These are contradicted by the analysis, which shows significant results for higher job satisfaction in the sample of university graduates (sig. 1-tailed: 0.043), but no significant differences for graduates' estimation of their evaluation through others (however, results indicate a tendency of university graduates to estimate the evaluation about their own through other persons higher than FH graduates).

Figure 3: Objective and subjective success

Differences in means for objective and subjective success for WU/FH		Significance 1-tailed*	Stand. Deviation	
			WU	FH
Objective	No. of subordinates** — 1.89	0.406	-	-
	Management tasks in % — 0.48	0.100	2.413	2.819
	Invested energy in % — 0.14	0.289	1.753	1.695
Subjective	Job satisfaction — 0.64	**0.043**	2.735	2.876
	Evaluation through others — 0.03	0.463	1.989	2.050

N: WU = 643; FH = 137; income differences as measured in EURO are not included in this table
*Significance evaluation based on Levene-Test
** in absolute figures

Overall, for this cohort the premise of individual differences as predictors of career success and actual job choice, and as the real boundaries for contemporary careers, is not evident at first glance. While respondents differ in several socio-economic variables, as well as some personality traits and behavioural attributes, differences in career outcomes are not found. However, before abandoning former findings of social theory, a second glance is undertaken allowing for an integrative interpretation of the current results in the last section.

6. Discussion and limitations

Multiple predictions are posited and tested through the use of longitudinal data on the early career sample of the Vienna Career Panel Project: (1) predictors for career developments at entry stage as represented by socio-economic variables and personality dimensions, (2) the role of higher education in the early career stage and (3) the relationship between individual characteristics, career fields, and objective and subjective success.

Major empirical findings for the present cohorts indicate that (1) socio-economic variables and individual characteristics as predictors for early career outcomes play a restricted role, due to the fact that actual differences in socio-economic variables and single sub-dimensions of personality traits have (almost) no impact on the first job after graduation; (2) holders of different academic degrees differ especially in their socio-economic status, e.g. university graduates score higher on the father's educational level, parental occupational status, and family history. Polytechnics graduates score higher on a number of career relevant personality dimensions; (3) samples differ slightly in their career aspiration and first positioning. Despite results from quantitative analyses, which show no differences in career outcomes, a qualitative categorisation reveals a more detailed picture and shows that graduates tend to enter the same fields, but obtain slightly different positions. Hence, the relationship between individual characteristics, career fields and career success, is latently existent, allowing for the limited variety of entry jobs after graduation.

Theoretically, to better understand the process of career developments at early stages, a model has been developed which is supposed to offer a theoretical basis for exploring how early careers evolve, more precisely what main predictors exist. At the same time, this integrative approach sets a framework that automatically implies boundaries which reveals certain aspects while keeping others out of sight. A focus on this approach highlights, on the individual level, the relationship between socio-economic and psychological factors, and the generation and accumulation processes of capital relevant for career fields and implicitly success within these fields. Organisational and societal contexts are included by the inherently politically and economically driven nature of reference systems.   In line with these assumptions, the present findings show that career developments result from a reciprocal process of interpretative acts of capital recognition in the form of career or field-specific capital.

This theoretical perspective and the empirical design of the study thus undertake a first step to uncover an astonishing situation, in which career capital implying certain social origin, and socio-psychological factors, is, at first glance, *inversely* related to the positioning in career fields – which represent relational characteristics rather than hierarchical ones. More precisely, I assume that the more graduates are endowed with career relevant individual characteristics, the more they prefer post-organisational fields. In turn, individuals that are less skilled, strive for the organisational career field. In concrete, the quantitative analyses show no group differences for the first positioning (organisational versus post-organisational). This calls for a qualitative analysis as it can be seen from a glance at the short job descriptions from an open-ended question of the ViCapp questionnaire. Answers indicate *en gros* that the polytechnics graduates enter more frequently the traditional organisational career pattern, whereas university graduates are more likely to enter the field "Free-Floating Professionalism". According to these results, one may reject the assumption that graduates choose the traditional pattern as a matter of psychological compensation[3], and would arrive at the conclusion that "companies get the best skilled students".

At second glance, the integrative approach is employed and the meaning of major factors may make for different interpretations of the "same" data and, thus, one may return to the argument of psychological compensation. Due to findings which show that one sample scores higher on some psychological and lower on socio-economic variables and which is more likely to enter the organisational field, empirical results reveal one strong limitation inherent in retrospective interviews, but which this integrative approach tries to account for: Respondents create an identity of the self (*Selbstinszenierung*). Thus, one may argue that (1) it is inherent in all individuals to strive for advancement, which induces actors to develop the basic motivation for the accumulation of capital, such as career capital. In addition, individuals endowed with less socio-economic status, need to have and show more of the career-relevant capital in order to be equally successful as

individuals of higher social-origin. Beyond this, (2) it is asserted that individuals, who have less relevant capital, have to be more conscious of their personal resources.

Despite many possible interpretations of the compensation argument, one crucial aspect is revealed: The evident difficulty to operationalise career capital by variables of social origin and psychological variables that results from the duality of "being" and "having" (Fromm, 1976). While career capital is mainly conceptualised from a "having perspective" (e.g. occupational status, academic degree *et cetera*) as a result of the general interrelation with the "having-oriented" economic system, the habitus-based approach contains also "being components" (e.g. personal characteristics) which are more complex. While socio-economic status implies "being" well expressed by "having" (e.g. parental occupation, family income, educational degree), the relationship between these components for psychological factors is not expressed by a corresponding "having element". In addition, these "being components" include the ability for reflection of one's self, which, in turn, causes a strong individual bias when describing one's own characteristics. For instance, low status actors, even though not "being" (of high status), pretend even more to "be having" as part of their surviving strategy.

Empirical findings show evidence for beginning effects of socio-economic variables and some personality dimensions on career outcomes. However, effects are small due to the high standardisation of the entry stage. Consequently, the idea to focus on educational capital as possible manifestation ("having element") of social origin and personality traits has proven to be a valuable attempt to capture individual differences. However, interpretation has to allow for self-reflecting and compensating mechanisms.

Finally, the results obtained have to be treated carefully. They concern a particular group of individuals, graduates from two higher educational institutions, and therefore, further examination on the role of other educational sectors and labour market segments would be welcome. For example, the changes brought about by the establishment of pedagogic academies in addition to already existing university study programs should be studied more consequently in order to evaluate the social construction of "ability" for the sense-making of educational trajectories of certain academic diploma holders. Second, an analysis of a larger sample would be highly desirable beyond the relatively exploratory and descriptive status of the current findings. Third, these results are restricted to national data and thus have also to be interpreted in such context. A comparative cross-country perspective should be adopted to account for the larger social context, and allow for the analysis of commonalities and trends of careers in transforming labour markets.

7. Future research and implications

The present study contributes to existing literature on social, economic and career theory. While a number of studies have established the role of capital (Savage et al., 2005; Calhoun, 1993; O'Donovan, 1962; Whiteley, 1991), this study reveals the strengths and limitations of capital, in particular career capital, as predictor for early career outcomes. A future task, subsequent to this analysis, would be to develop a more precise theory that allows for better exploration of capital manifestations and their embeddedness in a wider structural context, in order to elaborate on the extent of structural determination of individual events. For instance, the theoretical perspective may find enrichment from neo-institutionalistic approaches that develop a sociological view of institutions, the way they interact and the effect they have on society. They suggest a new way of viewing organisations and why these develop similar organisational logics and thus also career logics, even though they are involved in different industries.

Another promising avenue for future research and practical implications may be to investigate contemporary and future career systems in order to analyse, assess and reform career systems, including the recruitment of business school graduates and internal incentive-systems for people favouring the post-organisational pattern. As the current findings imply that business school graduates mainly enter the organisational field and the post-organisational field "Free-Floating Professionalism", one could assert that, on the one hand, a first step towards new arenas where careers take place is made, and on the other, that a number of individual actors still prefer the traditional career pattern.

Moreover, findings raise questions regarding workforce diversity. While organisations should develop channels of information to attract a more diverse workforce, including actors aspiring for arenas characterised by unstable configuration, they may avoid targeting individuals aspiring for loosely coupled fields, as self-protective mechanism and strategy of conflict avoidance. In the case of individual actors, they aspire for arenas, in which, according to their internal representation of the self, opportunities as regards e.g. career advancement, value congruence, and power structures reach the maximum level.

Fundamentally, current theoretical and empirical analysis has highlighted the complexity of contemporary career outcomes to better understand potential mechanisms at the early stage. It supports previous evidence that the main boundaries of new careers are not those of formal hierarchy in organizations, but that of latent socio-structural dimensions shaping career logics and intruding into the individual. This explains the relevance of both, socioeconomic and psychological factors as predictors for success in career fields and as main determinants in the reciprocal attribution of ability, itself being socially constructed. Overall, the presented issue comprises the simultaneous acceptance of the traditional and transformed career paradigm within a habitus-based approach and calls for future trans-disciplinary research on contemporary careers adopting a resource-based and longitudinal approach grounded on the assumption of the accumulative nature of (dis-)advantages which may take the form of gender and educational inequalities.

Notes

1. *Economic capital* is "immediately and directly" convertible into money, unlike cultural or social capital. It refers to the most efficient form of capital in the form of financial resources, property rights – convertible money from one generation to the next. It can be more easily converted into cultural, social and symbolic capital than vice versa (Bourdieu, 1986; Calhoun, 1993). *Social capital* involves relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance, resources based upon membership in social networks and group or class membership. It can be legitimised and institutionalised by family, group or class membership and functions as a multiplier for enhancing cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). *Cultural or informational capital* appears in three forms: First, *incorporated* cultural capital which is embodied capital, and as Bourdieu defines it, "the external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a *habitus".* Second, *cultural capital is objectified* through cultural products like books, paintings, machines etc. Objectified capital can be appropriated both materially, which presupposes economic capital – and symbolically – which presupposes cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Third, *institutionalised* cultural capital appears in the form of academic titles and degrees, which are relatively independent of the actually incorporated cultural capital. This academic qualification serves as a certificate of cultural competence which confers the holder a

legally guaranteed value with respect to culture. The actual power of institutionalised capital lies in the power of instituting, which offers the opportunity to impose recognition (Bourdieu, 1986).

2.   The term "economic system" is used as an equivalent to economic field.

3.   "One would expect people who value post-organisational career patterns to be better equipped in … personality traits – i.e. to seek an environment where these traits are especially valued and necessary. Vice versa … individuals who are less active in their communicative and social behaviour and show less dominance/assertiveness might look for a close link to organisations. By choosing tight coupling and a stable configuration they possibly want to compensate for comparatively low "internal" security and low "external" openness for social contacts and ability to influence others." (Mayrhofer et al., 2005: 53)

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Annex

Scales of measurement used for the present longitudinal study (ViCaPP, Mayrhofer et al. 2004, 2005):

Social origin:

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 *(ascertained separately for mother and father)*
	Social level of parental occupation Ordinal variable with seven categories *(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)*
	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' • income • social prestige of occupation • education

Habitus I:

Career Tactics Questionnaire (KATA) ViCaPP (designed for the project) Norming based on N = 539	**Networking** *People who score high on this scale ...* seek numerous and various business contacts that may also "spill over" into private life. **Sample Item:** *After work I often go out with professionally relevant people.* $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 539)} = 0.79$
	Demonstrating Power and Status *People who score high on this scale ...* use their position power, symbols of status and influence, and even bluff to gain respect and compliance from people in their occupational environment. **Sample Item:** *I make use of the power and status that go with my job.* $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 539)} = 0.74$
Number of Items: 40	**Self-Promotion and Self-Assertion** *People who score high on this scale ...* strongly emphasize their abilities, qualifications and achievements and – if necessary – overcome resistance against their plans with sheer pressure. **Sample Item:** *I grab opportunities to emphasize my professional merits.* $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 539)} = 0.78$
NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) Costa & McCrae; 1989, 1992; German: Borkenau & Ostendorf; 1993 Norming based on N = 2112	**Emotional Stability (Neuroticism)** *People who score high on this scale ...* are not easily upset and tend to be free from persistent negative feelings. They rather hold realistic ideas and are good at controlling their impulses and desires. **Sample Item:** *I am not easily worried.* $\alpha_{(Literature)} = 0.85$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 323)} = 0.87$
Number of Items: 24	**Conscientiousness** *People who score high on this scale ...* describe themselves as being systematic, ambitious, strong-willed, self-disciplined, dependable, punctual, neat and well organized. **Sample Item:** *I keep my things clean and proper.* $\alpha_{(Literature)} = 0.85$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 328)} = 0.79$

Self-Monitoring and Habitus II:

Self-Monitoring (SÜW) Snyder; 1974; German: Schiefele; 1990 Number of Items: 11	**Self-Monitoring** *People who score high on this scale ...* display behaviour intended to positively shape the image others have of them. **Sample Item:** *I can speak offhand about topics I know almost nothing about.* $\alpha_{(Literature)} = 0.77$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 326)} = 0.84$
Bochumer Inventory of Job-Related Personality Description (BIP) Hossiep & Paschen; 2001 Norming based on N = 5354	**Achievement Motivation** *People who score high on this scale ...* display willingness to tackle high performance standards. They seek to continually benchmark and if necessary improve their own performance. **Sample Item:** *Even after excellent achievements I try to still get better.* $\alpha_{(Literature)} = 0.81$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 327)} = 0.80$
	Leadership Motivation *People who score high on this scale ...* are motivated to actively influence and shape social processes. They perceive themselves as having natural authority and/or serving others as a reference person. **Sample Item:** *Being able to influence others satisfies me.* $\alpha_{(Literature)} = 0.88$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP – N = 324)} = 0.86$
	Flexibility *People who score high on this scale ...* display a high preparedness and ability to adjust to changing work-related conditions and situations. **Sample Item:** *I can adjust to profound changes in my work contents without any difficulties.* $\alpha_{(Literature)} = 0.87$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP – N = 328)} = 0.89$
Number of Items: 59	**Openness for Social Contacts** *People who score high on this scale ...* are at ease with building and maintaining social relationships within the work context. **Sample Item:** *When I come across people I don't know, I find a conversation topic without any difficulties.* $\alpha_{(Literature)} = 0.90$ $\alpha_{(ViCaPP - N = 325)} = 0.87$

Career aspirations:

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