

# Forgetting Influences and Believing We Develop Our Interests in a Self-Determined Way

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## Abstract

There seems to be widespread belief that we have control over what we're interested in. This assumption is subjected to an empirical analysis here. The result<sup>1</sup> shows that interests do appear to have been independently selected. However, the reports highlight the close link between social backgrounds and what we experience – in other words the influence from outside sources. The fact that social influences are forgotten is a genuine characteristic of the 'habitus' as described by Bourdieu. Therefore we are using the data to analyse to what extent habitual characteristics play a role in interest development.

## 1. Foreword

*Self-determination* will be briefly defined to start with. We will then look at *target group research* and their concepts of interest. We will subsequently explore *research into interest development* and contrast the discourse with Pierre Bourdieu's habitus concept. A glance at the qualitative data will follow. And finally, similarly to Krapp (2002) as well as Deci and Ryan (2002) we took a discriminating approach to self-determination. However, we will be looking at this aspect based on the habitus theory. Therefore, we hope to be able to cautiously link two areas of research that tend to be separate (research into interest and research into the target group).

## 2. Gradual and Apparent Self-Determination

A brief definition of self-determination is to be given here, even if we of course cannot conduct an exhaustive philosophical discussion. The key elements of the term are (at least) the word "self" which is to be specified in more detail and which in a relationship (also to be specified in more detail) with the world and others decides on an issue.

Therefore, our understanding of the term echoes the discourse of "self-determined learning". This term is different from "self-organised learning". The decisive criterion is the question of whether learners can decide on course content. If not, learners merely have the freedom to make organisational decisions, in other words it is all about self-organisation and not about self-determination (Faulstich 1999, 2002).

At the same time, the question of how decisions on content and interest arise is not understood by Faulstich as dichotomous between teachers or institutions or people learning, but as an axis on which different "degrees of self-determination" are possible (Faulstich 1999, 2002). The empirical data shows the efficacy of this differentiation with which a dichotomy of self-determination versus determination by others is revealed.

We then clarify how the relationship between self and the world is described in a plausible manner through Pierre Bourdieu's habitus concept (1987), in other words that social class has an impact on habitus and on personal decisions. However, we do not believe that the habitus cannot be changed; instead we think it is merely inert. As a result, theoretical space is created for a subject to take action: We are presupposing a subject who on the one hand has intentions and plans and acts in his overarching interest, but we are not assuming that these intentions are

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a slightly revised version of the article entitled 'Vom Vergessen der Einflüsse: Vermeintliche Selbstbestimmung bei der Interessegenese' (Grotlüschen/Krämer 2009). In: *bildungsforschung*, volume 6, issue 1, available online at: <http://www.bildungsforschung.org/Archiv/2009-01/interesse/>.

rational or conscious (Holzkamp 1993, p. 27ff.). We are not basing these concepts solely on the theory of research into interest, however there are interesting connections (Krapp 2004).

The concept of self-determination which we are referring to based on Bourdieu and Holzkamp, is not to be confused with the concept of self-determination developed by Deci and Ryan which is important for the Munich interest theory (see Grotlüschen/Krämer 2009). Deci and Ryan maintain that self-determination is a continuum that leads from non-motivation via four types of extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation (Ryan/Deci 2002, p. 17f.) whereby autonomy increases gradually. Basically the concept is all about the required differentiation of the dichotomy between self-determination and determination by others. The basic needs assumptions which are based on requirements theory do not however match the metatheoretical framework preferred here. Dewey, Holzkamp and Bourdieu stress the reasoning structures and the intentional aspects of individuals in the interest process and the way they deal with the world, whereas Deci and Ryan observe how people pursue basic needs.

When comparing the individual and the world, we need to reflect on another level: interest is a process, not merely a condition. Interests are not established gradually between self-determination and determination by others. They have grown – and what's more in a social process in a particular historical and economic situation. Several theories suggest that something determined by others is successively internalised and becomes something that has been self-determined (e.g. Elias's civilisation process, Foucault's techniques of the self and Bourdieu's habitus concept). Therefore, we assume that the choice of interests is made by a gradual self-determination process, which the individual does however believe and internalises as something that is self-determined. Any outside influences are overlooked, forgotten or diminished. However, in terms of theory we do not want to go too far and will restrict it here to Pierre Bourdieu.

### **3. Asymmetrical Concepts of Interest in Target Group Research**

Since the beginning of target-group research in adult education, the motives and interests as the driving force for learning have been subject to widespread debate. At one time, studies were published that specifically asked about the educational/training interests of various groups of the population (e.g. Hermes 1926, Engelhardt 1926, Grosse 1932, Buchwald 1934). Afterwards the concept of interest disappeared. It has only emerged again recently – narrowed down as an interest in further education and training (Barz 2004). The preferred terms show that when individuals take part in further education/training researchers label this as interest, motivation, reasons, objectives or predisposition. These terms imply localisation with the self, less than in the world. The opposite end of the spectrum is however striking: if individuals do not take part in further education or training, barriers, hindrances or obstacles are quoted. It is implied that localisation tends to come from the outside, in a world which is obstructive. In our opinion this traditional terminology is asymmetrical and therefore inadequate (see table 1).

Table 1: Interests in taking part in and shunning further education and training in literature (until 2006)

Year	Author	Page	Terms explaining the appeal of a certain subject or further education/training course	Page	Terms explaining why a certain subject or further education/training course is rejected
1999	Bremer	58	Motives	58	Barriers (external and internal)
2002	Brüning/Kuwan	199	Motivation	158 122	Barriers (further education/training) Reasons (for not taking part)
2004	Baethge/Baethge-Kinsky	62 62	Inclination (further education/training) Predisposition	55 62	Barriers (further education/training) Obstacles
2004	Schröder, Schiel/Aust	93 98 74	Interest (further education/training) Interest (further education/training) Need (further education/training)	74 74 74	Reasons Obstacles Reasons (for not taking part)
2004	Barz/Tippelt I	117	Interest (further education/training)	118	Barriers (further education/training)
2004	Barz/Tippelt II	92	Motives	92 92 cf.	Refusal Barriers (further education/training)
2005	Wilkens	512 514	Goals Interest	514	Barriers
2005	SOEP	506 506 511 515 506	Interest Motivation Goals Benefit Motives	511 511	Barriers Reasons (for not taking part)
2006	Kuwan et al.	275 275	Motives (further education/training) Interest	261 265	Barriers (further education/training) Predispositions
2006	Schiersmann	45	Need (further education/training)	47 47 47	Barriers (further education/training) Motivation (insufficient) Interest (low)

This term is a problem when the localisation of interests changes.

- In a positive scenario where the individual does participate, the implicit reason is said to lie in a person (however that person is conceived) who clearly has a sustainable self-determined influence on interests.
- If people do not participate, the reason appears to lie in the world around them. However, these localisations contradict the underlying theories.

Therefore, the symmetry of the terms must also be reflected in a stable concept of interest. The Munich theory of interest understands interest as a specific relationship between a person and an object and is a good approach here. One of its exponents, Andreas Krapp, commented on life-long learning and adult education, therefore we prefer to refer to him here. We will not look at the link between interest theory and self-determination theory. We will be following Krapp and the Munich-based direction, which tends to be associated with action theory, but not Deci and Ryan and their needs-based theory.

Action which follows an interest always takes place in the social arena and is not spontaneous, but based on individual development and historical backgrounds. Furthermore its purpose is to generate a sense of belonging or distinction (Bourdieu 1987).

#### **4. Habitual axis of interest development**

A whole range of terms could be discussed in more detail, but there is no scope to do so here. We will merely look at interest and therefore suggest a definition, which takes account of two discussion threads. Firstly we are talking about a pragmatic approach which started with John Dewey (1913) and which clearly inspired the Munich interest theory (e.g. Krapp 2006). We will put this one aside here.

The second is a thread of habitus theory, which traces interest back to social backgrounds as well as the habitus gained and forgotten there (Bourdieu 1987). We accordingly define interest as a specific relationship between the person taking action and the subject area of interest. However, we will be revising the perspective to include the procedural axis (Dewey 1913) and the habitual axis (Bourdieu 1987). We will examine various assumptions based on habitus theory in order to take a closer look at the social integration of interests. These allow us to gauge the social arena in medium-sized units, which can be localised between levels that are individual and those that include society as a whole. As we believe that interests are not solely generated individually and in current situations, but have their roots in habits and socio-economic structures, this approach is important in order to describe how interests are generated. Therefore, a brief characterisation of habitus as a term is vital.

Habitus can be considered a place where external aspirations are internalised and internal aspirations are externalised. It is expressed in lifestyles. They are the systematic products of habitus and are displayed in “endlessly redundant” (Bourdieu 1981, page 347) often only sub-consciously perceived distinguishing features such as language, clothing, posture, gait, manner etc.

“The habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification [...] of these practices. It is in the relationship between the two capacities which define the habitus, the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste), that the represented social world, i.e., the space of life-styles, is constituted.” (Bourdieu 1987, p. 277, own translation).

The recipe for creating and operating it is taste. This spawns elective affinities which interconnect via the subconscious deciphering of the outer characteristics mentioned. Bourdieu states that taste is both the link between things and people, which match each other and the strongest class barrier too (see Bourdieu 1987, page 347 cf.). Social classes and sections of society are reproduced via innate aversions to other lifestyles. Taste appears to impose a hierarchical structure (see same source, page 381 cf). Elsewhere Bourdieu explains in more detail how strongly he believes job choices are influenced by the habitus.

“The long dialectical process, often described as ‘vocation’ and through which people choose to become something that has been imposed upon them, they choose what chooses them. At the end of the process, various areas meet precisely those actors who have the habitus required to ensure that these areas functions perfectly.” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 124, own translation).

However, this remark is not to be understood in a deterministic manner. Bourdieu's theory system does allow a chance of transcending these class barriers, however this process usually entails losses for people (e.g. previous social relationships, confidence in their own habitus).

The habitual axis of interest development described is particularly evident when looking at the importance of potential contact with a topic. What areas of interest people can encounter at all is primarily influenced by their social background. The habitual axis is evident in the importance of the others surrounding it. Our reports on interest development will show that interest is generated based on contact with subject areas, but this point of contact is forgotten. We will also demonstrate that others can take on significant influence but that this influence can be reinterpreted to the point it is no longer recognisable. The result is that in the final analysis, against better judgement, an apparently self-determined individual is created who is free to decide at will. But does the issue of self-determination as regards interest and interest in further education/training play any role at all?

## 5. Quantitative findings on interest in further education/training

Many studies explore reasons why people are interested in further education/training and particular topics. For example, Schmidt (2006) analyses the interest in further education/training by older employees and their starting points. The categories presented by Schmidt are: "requirement by the company", "suggestion by superiors", "my own idea" (own initiative). The result was that employees over 50 (46.9%) more frequently took part in further education/training than younger ones (44.8%). However, superiors less frequently suggest that older employees participate in a training course (20.4% v. 24.2%). Schmidt emphasises that assertions about interests can only be made by performing a differentiated analysis that includes all the significant main effects such as vocational training, gender and the year the data was captured. Similarly to many other studies, we also have to ask whether the development of interest in further education/training is experienced as being gradually self-determined or gradually determined by others. The study suggests that the localisation of interest development needs to be clarified further. We find the same problem in our own, small empirical study, which we are carrying out for the DFG. One of the questions we ask is what level of interest do people start a course with and what is their level afterwards. Key questions are the connection between interest and self-determination mentioned at the beginning and the interest developed and if participation is voluntary.

Three different types of courses were included in our small survey: an academic course on life-long learning (WWB), a course for long-term-unemployed female immigrants (MWB), as well as two career development courses for business people (HWB & FWB). Three of the courses are open to anyone and one course is obligatory and has been arranged by the employment office (MWB).

The questionnaire on interest in further training/education (FSI-W)<sup>2</sup> was based on the questionnaire on interest in a graduate course (FSI) (Schiefele et al. 1993). The difference between the two was that "graduate course", which occasionally emerged in FSI-W, was replaced with "further education/training".

All courses researched were surveyed using the FSI-W at the beginning and end of the course. The differences in average values between the initial and final survey are all insignificant. This had a rather sobering effect on us because we expected interest to rise during the course. However, the spread is very wide, so that the change in average values sometimes cancels itself out again. Those taking part in the academic course stay at a high level (WWB1: 2.07 > 2.03 and WWB2: 2.10 > 2.06). The commercial career development

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<sup>2</sup> We could have called the new version FWI (questionnaire on interest in further education/training). As however the items and scales in the FSI only had to be changed slightly, we believe it is a good idea to highlight the close relationship with the FSI appropriately.

course reveals similar results at the beginning of the courses<sup>3</sup>. The values at the beginning of the courses for female migrants are slightly lower, but the increase is higher (MWB: 1.82 > 1.93).

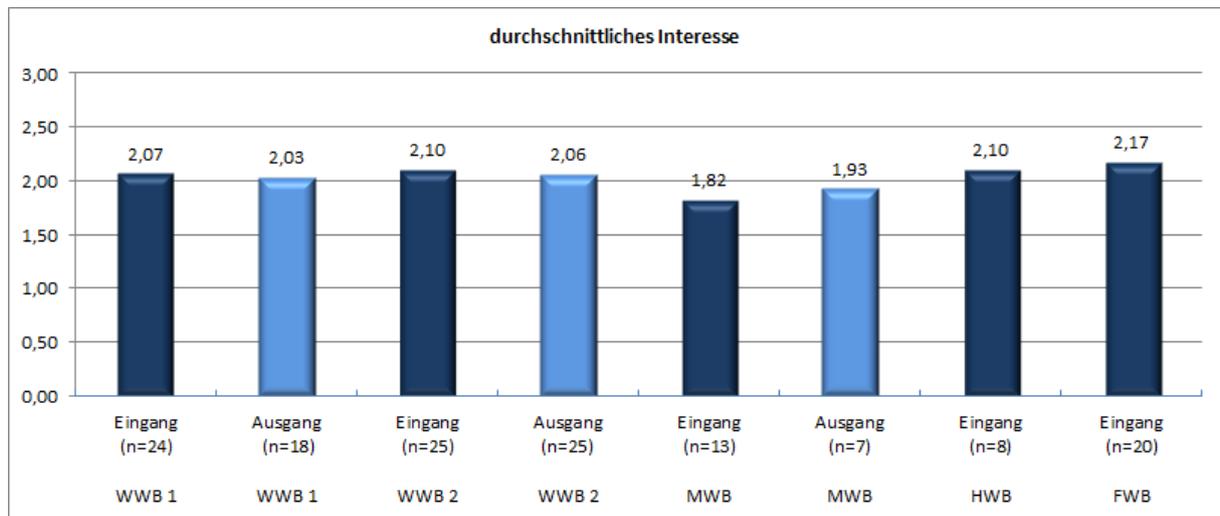


Figure 1<sup>4</sup>: Stagnation of interest – average interest before and after a course (initial and final survey n = 92, differences in average values are not significant anywhere).

One conclusion drawn from this data could be that people who start further training/education are either already very interested (WWB, HWB, FWB), or have been forced to take part because they have been threatened with penalties if they do not (MWB). However, based on these studies it is difficult to identify what role mandatory or voluntary participation plays in the development of interest. Therefore, we are now making use of a survey in which we can reconstruct retrospective reports of various types of interest development. We are now going to look at the relationship, which is described between self and the world retrospectively. The data is based solely on successful progressions of interest.

## 6. Qualitative findings of retrospective accounts of interest development

The following extracts are taken from a larger interest study with several theoretical and empirical approaches (Grotlüschen 2010). The categories presented here stem from a theory-generating analysis of interests described. These were written down by over 80 students retrospectively who reported on how their own interests developed. We are following a modified coding paradigm (Strauss 1996; Glaser 1998): Instead of “causes” that are easy to misunderstand and have causal-analytical connotations, we are assuming “reasons” for subjective logic in the action taken (similar to: von Felden 2006). The theory system generated in this way includes several phases of interest development. They reflect the pragmatic axis of the interest theory that has been revised in this way, but do not take centre stage. There is still an intertwined structure of involvement and influences. In this article we are only dealing with how influences are dealt with specifically. These theoretical elements show the habitual axis of interest development and its progression. It becomes clear that there is a superficial perception of self-determined interest development but that it is inconsistent with explicable influences. These are forgotten and it is this very type of incorporation that is

<sup>3</sup> These are two-year courses, so final surveys are not yet possible.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Beck captured the data and created the graphics as part of the “Entwicklung von Weiterbildungsinteressen durch formative Leistungsbewertung” DFG project (GR 3336/1-1).

a typical feature of the habitus. Forgetting the influences can be described, following Bourdieu, as a process of internalisation and naturalisation of the individual's own social position (what Bourdieu calls social background). Bourdieu calls this area of internalisation, but also externalisation, taste. But taste is not by any means a natural characteristic of an individual, but gained within the individual's social class. However, the acquisition of this taste is denied until its origin has been forgotten (see Bourdieu 1987, p. 123f.)<sup>5</sup>.

### **6.1 Lasting interest (attribution to continuity)**

According to all the analyses that we have been able to carry out to date, interest does not develop from within the individual, but requires initial contact and usually several other incidences of contact between active players and an interesting subject. This contact does however adopt a form of continuity, which probably develops to such an extent that the individual's own points of contact with the subject are forgotten and we call this attribution to continuity. With hindsight, interviewees said that as children they had already found interests since they had been capable of cognitive thought, always, or were interested in a subject area from a very young age. The following table shows how similar the wording chosen is.

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<sup>5</sup> "Similarly to any ideological strategy generated by the everyday class struggle, the ideology of natural taste draws its ideological veil and its effectiveness from the neutralisation of real differences. The differences in the methods of acquiring education, in a reversal of nature, as a legitimate relationship to education (and similarly to language) only allow aspects to apply which show the weakest traces of its development."

Table 2: Always had consistent interest (figures: person and paragraph of the interview)

Category	Quote (qualitative data)
As a child already	I've always liked travelling since my childhood (72-2).
	I'm interested in football. I've been curious about this sport since my childhood (31-2).
	My interest in music stems from my childhood. In my family it was always quite natural to switch on the radio at any opportunity (56-2).
	As a child I was always imagining I'd have a little town with real people in it (58-3).
	I've been interested in music for a long time. As a child I already loved listening to music and watching the Mini Playback Show (34-2).
	I'm studying to be a teacher of maths and biology/social studies. From a very young age I was more interested in sciences (64-2).
Since I can remember	Since I can remember art was always very important to me (7-2).
	I'm interested in veterinary science and psychology [...] Since I can remember we've had dogs, horses and small animals (86-2).
	For as long as I can remember my mum always played music in some form or other. So back then I had quite a lot of contact with music (56-3).
	I've been interested in music as long as I can remember (63-2).
	As long as I can remember, I always enjoyed interacting with children (57-3).
	I was just a few days old when my mum took me into the stables. As long as I can remember I always felt drawn to horses (73-2).
	As long as I remember I was always interested in every aspect of sport (80-2).
Always - at an early age	I've always been interested in photography (21-2)
	I've always been interested in photography (21-2)
	I have always enjoyed working with children (22-2).
	A career as a primary school teacher is and always has been the only thing that really interested me. However, this interest didn't just suddenly develop on its own. It was much more the result of years of positive experience with pedagogical work (26-2).
	As my parents always worked, I always spent a lot of time with my younger siblings (12-2).
	The reason is probably that I grew up with two younger siblings and as the oldest child I had to take responsibility for my brother and my sister at a relatively early age. We spent a lot of time with one another and often played together.
	From an early age I knew that I wanted a people-based career, particularly something to do with children (41-1).
	That's how it was with me because there are a lot of teachers in my family. So I was introduced to this career path at an early age (42-3).
	My interest in development in early childhood and education started early on. When I was still a child myself, I already wanted to have children myself one day, look after and bring up children (59-2).
	At an early age I realised that I was strongly drawn to children (47-2).
	I was interested in writing from a very early age [...]. I could hardly wait to learn to write at last and therefore express my opinions (76-3).
	Similar: 81-4, 18-4, 49-2

The mode of expression shows how much interest development appears to be a continuum to the authors and that the starting point of this continuum is generated virtually before the person becomes conscious of it. It is interesting that of 85 interviews, some 24 do have this continuity aspect. Compared with the 55 precise interviews at the beginning this is the smaller proportion, but it seems to be normal for individuals to use “always” when talking about their interests. There are also accounts which start with a continuity argument, with a process of reflection occurring later on from which more precise starting points emerge. Therefore, each

continuity aspect is not credible in itself: It is an initial approach to reflection and is clearly a typical point of entry as regards terms to describe an individual's own interest development.

Interest development contains a moment of consolidation, which is reflected in the narration of continuity. Two aspects emerge here: Interest occurs through contact, which becomes a continuum to perceiving an issue as a matter of course and it is internalised in this way. At the same time, possible subject areas are co-determined by the family the individual comes from and its horizon. Music for example is not defined by an instrument, but is attributed to contact with the "Mini Playback Show" on TV – alternatively the radio is sufficient too. It would be interesting to see how people from different social backgrounds respond to music and what horizons are opened up to or removed from family members as a result.

## **6.2 Forgetting Influences and Attributing Them to Self)**

Another key category is fully defined as follows: "Labeling interest development a decision not subjected to influence". At the beginning, we coded the appropriate passages as "An illusion of self-determination". This illusion becomes clear when we asked authors if they "decided themselves" what they wanted to occupy themselves with. The authors answered the question in different ways. It is very interesting that more than a quarter of the group said that their choice of interests had not been influenced, although this influence had been quoted a few paragraphs earlier. Similarly to attributing it to continuity we call this attribution to self. One account includes passages, which portray interest development as a decision in which influence has played no part and which contradicts passages in the same account in which special influences were illustrated.

When defining the category more precisely it becomes clear that a dualism of self-determination and determination by others has no place here. Any confrontation with influence, also rejecting influence, is always carried out in relation to the society around the individual. Therefore, even the most independent of decisions is already related to the actual society the individual has experienced. Consequently, this phenomenon is a contemporary label given to adults as free, self-determined and individual. However, in the final analysis interest development is linked to the family of origin, the type of society and many other facets. It is therefore worthwhile taking a discriminating look at the dividing line drawn by those interviewed here.

In some cases interest is illustrated as an individual development, whereas several paragraphs later a reason is found in other areas:

"I developed an interest in disabled children all by myself. [...] I'm glad that I've done a year's volunteering in this area which aroused a new interest in me that I'd like to pursue job-wise". (9-4)

Or stimuli from individuals' environments and peers are mentioned which in turn are not considered influences, but a reason to stop and reflect:

"I became interested because of things I'd observed and by talking to my own friends. So the choice of subjects is up to me". (87-12)

This contradictory way of describing events in which decisions are simultaneously attributed to the subject and a third party or an event, are retrospective constructions, which say more about the person's self-image than about interest development as such. Nevertheless it is plausible that interest development only proceeds if it is compatible with the individual's self-image. As a result, there are some actors who believe it is "natural" to decide what areas they are interested in on their own:

“Of course I decided what I was interested in. I’m convinced that if you’re forced to do something you lose interest in it straight away“. (55-12)

“Of course at the beginning of my degree I did pick this subject voluntarily“. (75-7)

This shows that explicit types of coercion are considered to be damaging to interest development. It appears not to matter what an individual is forced to do – the mere perception of coercion destroys any interest to start with:

“My parents never forced me to do sport and they always let me decide on my own whether and what I wanted to do. Otherwise, I think sport would never have become my hobby“. (29-4)

Or in short: Regardless of what it is, if you are forced then interest wanes. As a typical reasoning pattern, this phenomenon is also encountered in the theory of learning based on the standpoint of the subject. The core of what is known as the “key inversion of the argument” (Holzkamp 1993, p. 450ff) is (abridged): If the school bombards me as a student with a whole host of mandatory requirements and penalties to force me to learn specified content, the content cannot be particularly exciting. Otherwise they would not have to put so much pressure on me.

However, mandatory requirements are sometimes made that do not destroy the interests of the authors either. Massive influence from third parties is interpreted in such a way as if it were not compulsory:

“I should stress however that during this period I wasn’t pressured by my parents to perform in any way. Quite the contrary, I was allowed to make up my own mind. The only condition placed by my parents was that I was to take riding lessons every week to learn riding properly and not simply just gallop about the countryside“. (6-3)

The author stresses that no pressure was applied on her. The condition (!) imposed by her parents is not interpreted as pressure or a restriction of her right to make decisions. The core characteristic of interest, i.e. to be free of any form of coercion, is therefore a question of agreement between the actors and third parties. If the obligation concerns an interest that appeals to the subject, interest development is not impaired as a result. When differentiating extrinsic motivation, this interpretation of self-determination is encountered in a different form in four stages (Deci 1993).

Other people also perceive the influence of third parties, but come to the conclusion that, all in all, interest development has come from themselves. This is also true in the following case: The family does have specialist magazines on the table, but interest is attributed to the individual:

“All in all, I would say that it was my own decision to tackle this area because I don’t have to do it and can stop if I no longer want to“. (70-7)

In other words, this pattern – an opt-out opportunity – is the dividing line between self-determination and determination by others as regards interest development. Under these circumstances, influence by third parties is considered a cornerstone, providing stimulus or support or igniting interest:

“I think it was my own decision to pick this area, but the foundations were laid by the circumstances I was living in and by my parents“. (86-2)

“I’m sure my mum influenced me in that direction [...] Nevertheless, I can’t remember ever having been PRESSURIZED to emulate her”. (73-4, also: 85-3)

The person cannot remember and thus subtly hints that a *process of forgetting* occurred here, which is so characteristic of the habitus that it has to be reflected for the theory creation. Again it becomes clear that the person’s “own decision” is only defined by an opt-out option. As long as the person can opt out, the issue is judged to be their own decision. The subtle, or obvious influence by third parties or history, the media or situation the person is living in, is not perceived here, not reflected on, or has possibly been forgotten:

“It was usually my own decision to take a trip. Sometimes I was influenced by people around me. But of course it was still always my own decision to travel”. (72-5, also: 11-7, 21-9)

Therefore a freely made decision is understood as an opportunity to reject something. As long as there is an opt-out possibility, the influence of social background (which the interviewees clearly state and reflect) is still not considered to be dominant. On a positive note, not taking the opt-out possibility means to start or continue a matter:

“I think it’s up to me, I just carried on. If you are open to trade union courses, then you often feel that some things just fall into your lap. It was my own decision to carry on in this area”. (71-7)

Sometimes the answer oscillates between influence and autonomy. At the same time it does not appear to be opportune to generate interests that individuals do not present and decide on themselves:

“My interest in social studies basically developed all by itself. However, influence from my family can’t be neglected and ruled out. The interest in scientific issues appears to be in the family, as well as the interest in teaching. Despite this, I developed my own interests and am also focusing on a different direction”. (74-9, also 36-9)

Clearly, any steering in a particular direction by others appears to be not very beneficial for the individual’s own identity and concept of self-determination or – in vivo – independence. Another narration indicates the illusion that interest has “come from within”. The person relates that they grew up near to a foundation for people with special needs and got to know them when taking school trips there. The account finishes by talking about a university course

in pedagogy for people with special needs. Despite the description of how interest developed, the process is expressed not very clearly and as a gut feeling:

“I think I did make this decision on my own. But I don’t know how it came about unfortunately as it was a gut feeling, nobody forced me into it – I just felt it was right”. (10-8)

The empirical data again forces us to pose the question about forgetting: Why is such an important decision like a career choice declared to be a gut feeling, although processes of gathering information and weighing up possible pros and cons clearly preceded it? Is it not the case that the individual was driven by the opportunities and information that the environment provided – in order to remember this decision as having been taken freely?

We believe that the influence should not be underestimated that is played by emancipating oneself from one’s parents. This independence is characterised by permission to make their own decisions:

“From a certain age, I decided myself what type of sport I wanted to do and what also I am prepared to invest in this area. I make these decisions myself”. (81-10)

Very plausible is one particular argument that quotes the different interests of siblings to underscore individualism vis-à-vis the influences of the family:

“I think my family had a strong influence on this interest. [...] Nevertheless, I don’t think that this was the only factor that played a part. My sister, who was after all brought up in the same way as I was, is interested in completely different things [...]. I think that my own character also plays a role”. (49-6)

At the same time however, it is not clear whether the parents perhaps encouraged the siblings to different extents. Nevertheless, this argument sums up how influence is processed individually. Denying any influence serves to maintain a self-image for which freedom, scope to act and even autonomy appear to be vital. The opt-out option which theoretically exists is sufficient to sustain the feeling of autonomy.

The two attributes presented here (continuity and self-ascription) make the localisation of an interest in an uninfluenced self possible (or in exaggerated terms: interest development is presumed to be determined by self). The ascriptions encourage people to forget and internalise – in other words habitualise – past contact with the world and influences from other people. Therefore, we believe they cannot only be gradually localised between self-determination and determination by others, in the sense of Faulstichs “degrees of self-determination”. In fact we have to describe these ascriptions at the same time theoretically as a habitual axis of interest development, because they represent an internalisation of influences from other people.

These empirical results do of course have certain limitations. On the one hand we need to ask to what extent generalisation of the quantitative data is possible, because with a small sample and a lack of significant differences we can only draw cautious conclusions from the data. On the other hand this also applies to the qualitative data because in this case only young adults were quoted who had been successful in educational terms. A large number of over 80 stories on interest development is available, but these are only of limited depth. Therefore, this data must be seen as a module, which could be used for further research.

## **7. Elements of apparent self-determination**

To sum up, we will once again say in an exaggerated form what the conclusion is and how the two qualitative elements that emerged come together to produce apparent self-determination. From a subjective standpoint interest has “always” been there and “I” decided to pursue it.

We maintain as follows: A long tradition of research into target groups and interest forms the asymmetrical concepts and remains unconnected. We have uncoupled the Munich School's incisive concept of interest from the needs-driven self-determination theory and recombined it with arguments based on habitus theory. The quantitative findings show that self-determination is an important issue in interest research. The qualitative findings however show two elements: a continual ascription (always) and a self-ascription (I) in the development of interest. Both allow subjects to believe that they decided on what they were interested in. If we look more closely, various points of contact with the world emerge which run counter to the ascription of continuity. In other words, interest does not arise from within but as a result of contact with the world. The influences of third parties are also easy to see, thus interest does not develop in an isolated form, but as a result of encounters with other people. At this level, inter-subjectively recognisable, gradual self-determination (Faulstich 1999) is apparent. On a second, more abstract level however, subjectively perceived self-determination needs to be looked at again. Interests are only seen as self-determined retrospectively, even if they were at the beginning only gradually selected or even without any element of self-determination at all. This mechanism can be explained based on Bourdieu's habitus concept.

The subjects attribute the role of self or continuity to the development of interest and forget the role of contact with other people and the world. As a result, interest development is seen as a personal achievement and is separated from socio-cultural influences. It appears that anybody could be interested in everything and that we have freedom of choice. Bourdieu exposes this analysis and refers to the habitus, which is incorporated particularly via the process of forgetting. However, habitus is always tied to the situation in the social arena, in other words it is not individual, but has a social, historical and economic background. In terms of interest, the conclusion is that opportunities to become interested in something are not equal for everybody, but are structurally unequal. This is a fact that is easily forgotten.

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