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Career Aspirations

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Prior Research and Reasons for Dissertation

Continued education is one of the most important decisions of our lives, and this seems especially true in Hungary today. Largely based on the Bourdieu tradition, Hungarian educational sociology testifies to a strong social determination in the success of the school career. According to this theory, the latent function of schools is to reproduce social structure so as to ensure that that the children of the elite and the middle class may continue to inherit their parents' social standing. Unconsciously, educators often place a value on middle class culture and the capacity for graceful communication in addition to knowledge. As a result, traits that are not primarily acquired in school also become an integral part of the assessment process and already give children from families of higher social status a distinct advantage in the classroom at a very early stage. This holistic functional approach has come under much criticism in terms of methodology. In Boudon's view, alongside the process of transmitting social capital in the course of choosing schools, there is also a secondary effect that takes place when parents and children select the best from among the possible courses of study. In this case, the process becomes a rational calculation of investment and profit based on the information available. The distance measured between a given school and the individual varies, however, so the calculated "cost" largely depends on the social status of parents.

Several researchers claim that the expansion of secondary schools in Hungary took place in conjunction with an increase in social polarisation (*Gazsó, 1997; Andor-Liskó, 2000*). According to Boudin, when education expands, opportunity at the lower levels becomes equalised, but increases on subsequent levels (*Boudon, 1974*). Other researchers indicate that the higher we move in the school system, the more selective the groups we encounter, making it difficult to discover the effect of heredity (*Mare, 1981*). This also explains why the influence of the family often seems to disappear on the level of higher education (*Bukodi, 1995; Csákó et al., 1998*).

Secondary school expansion in Hungary meant diversification in terms of both structure and quality. The appearance of programs varying in length (6 and 8 grade secondary schools) made it possible for certain social strata to become isolated from the "mainstream" very early on. Highly divergent levels of quality are even apparent among programs that are similar, and this fact is also supported by student achievement tests such as the Monitor observational studies conducted by the National Institute for Public Education (OKI). Data from international surveys of scholastic achievement among 15-year old students (PISA, OECD) caused a great stir in Hungary as well. On one hand, it turned out that the achievement of Hungarian students was below the international average, but it was also revealed that Hungary is the country where the education of parents has the strongest effect on the scholastic achievement of students. This factor is so strong precisely because the mix of Hungarian schools is exceptionally homogenous, and it is through this selective prism that the influences children bring with them from home are further reinforced. The results indicate that the socio-economic status of schools[1] offers a better explanation for scholastic achievement than the social background of individual children. Since parents and students have little perspective on differences in quality among schools, further education today continues to be a risky business. The powerful selection mechanism not only leads to the establishment of elite schools, but on lower levels may also create a school environment in which both students and teachers feel deprived. In schools where many students exhibit a low

[1] This means the general family background of students attending a given school, which is typically characterised by their parents' level of education and the prestige of their occupation.

rate of achievement, contra selection frequently takes place among educators as well, creating an atmosphere that thoroughly undermines the self-confidence of students (and teachers).

The aim of this dissertation is to shed light on the factors influencing the career aspirations of students. My basic hypothesis is that decisions regarding continued education are the result of several different factors, where various influences are not independent of one another. Consequently, I was interested not only in factors affecting career choices, but also in their operating mechanisms and the relationship between them. Micro-communities (family, classmates, school and local society) play a fundamental role in students' career decisions, and therefore the way in which these smaller groups are formed and their typical characteristics must be taken into consideration. Such communities are significant elements in the development of a student's system of relationships and social norms (i.e. social capital). Insofar as schools and classes are strongly homogenous, groups form among those with a rich set of contacts and among those who are deprived in this area. Since the latter make very little contact with the former, they are unable to improve their already poor social capital, and this also influences the development of their future preferences with regards to continued education.

My thesis is founded on the database resulting form an empirical study[2] conducted in two phases by the OKI Centre for Research. This project strove to discover the career aspirations of 13 and 17-year old students from three smaller regions of the country. The first sociological survey, completed in the spring of 1997, concerned the career choices of 13-year olds in three metropolitan areas (among 2,439 seventh-grade students and their parents in Kecskemét, Szombathely, Békéscsaba and the community of Békés). Research was continued in the spring of 1999, again in the form of a survey conducted in the same three cities, this time among 3,664 eleventh-grade students in secondary and vocational schools. Students filled out the questionnaire during lesson time in the presence of independent interviewers. Some of the questions were identical in both phases of research, which made it possible to compare answers from both age groups when making a detailed analysis of the data at a later stage. In the course of selecting samples from the survey, we tried to ensure that these reflected the entire scope of education offered in each region. (Otherwise - by omitting certain strata - we would not have been able to make an appropriate comparison with the results of earlier surveys.) All three cities also act as county seats and vary somewhat in size, but the average population of each ranges from 50-100 thousand. The regions they represent are located in three separate parts of the country: Szombathely in western Transdanubia, near the Austrian border, Békéscsaba in the east, along the border of Romania, and Kecskemét between the other two, in the centre of the Great Plain. Our sampling is unique in that the elementary school sample from 1997 covers only 50% of seventh-graders in the given cities, whereas the 1999 survey included eleventh-grade students at all secondary schools.

In writing this dissertation, I sought answers to the following questions:

1.) To what extent are students' choices for continued education determined by family background, and outside of cultural orientation, do rational considerations also play a role? In other words, how much can the differences between career choices be attributed to divergent cultural background, attitudes toward continued education, or to marks received in school and therefore to a kind of *rational deliberation*?

[2] The survey was conducted with the support of the Ministry of Education, the KOMA (Public Foundation for the Modernisation of School Education) and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Research was supervised by Ildikó Szabó in cooperation with Anna Imre, Judit Lannert and György Mártonfi.

2.) Can we discover any sort of special regional differences in connection with varying views on continued education? Especially worthy of attention is the influence of regional characteristics e.g. local school structure and education policy. Small regions can also be regarded as unique spaces in which players interact with each other. They may differ in terms of their education policies, selection mechanisms and the atmosphere of their schools, and these factors may affect students' ideas about further education.
3.) I was particularly interested in the role of schools in developing student aspirations. Does the given school affect its students' career choices? *School influence* can be multiple:
    - Infrastructural differences between schools (school size, class size, the number of faculty members, the ratio of female teachers, the qualifications of instructors) can influence schoolwork and therefore career orientation.
    - The role of the pedagogue can be fundamental in developing the career aspirations of a student (even though this is the hardest factor to measure in practice).
    - The school has a direct influence, but also an indirect one in that it homogenises groups, making them uniform (schools and classes), and the characteristics of school directors and teachers also adjust to fit the unique composition of schools and classes (*Ladányi-Csanádi, 1983; Ildikó Szabó, 1998*). Classes with a special atmosphere presumably have some degree of influence on the career orientation of students, also independently of their individual family backgrounds.

The first chapter of this thesis discusses in detail the changes that took place in the Hungarian school system during the 1990s. In addition to the expansion of secondary schools, there also has remained a selection mechanism of the kind which - according to international tests of scholastic performance - essentially decreases the standard of student achievement, and this has in fact become increasingly obvious. With regards to training programs, the structural diversification and differences in quality that have accompanied expansion do not make the situation of students continuing their education any easier. The second chapter focuses on student performance and factors that indirectly influence career orientation - also considered important in professional literature: family background, location and the influence of the school itself. The third section deals with the analytical framework, methods and variables incorporated in the analysis. The fourth contains descriptions explaining the career aspirations of students in the three aforementioned regions while the fifth chapter addresses the factors influencing these choices: parents' level of education (5.1), the role of rational decisions (5.2), the connection between the characteristics of the given settlement/region and ideas concerning further education (5.3), the infrastructure, pedagogical operation and school mix (5.4), and the role of students' aspirations and social capital (5.5). The sixth chapter examines these factors in one model using the method of multinomial logistic regression, and is followed by a summary of the results. The dissertation also includes a bibliography, an appendix containing the sampling and a description of the small regions involved, a brief description of the research methods used, a map of each region and the material used for both questionnaires.

The approach taken in the thesis is novel because it examines the characteristics of the influential mechanisms that determine career decisions while dealing with the cultural influence of the family milieu and the role of rational consideration on a separate basis. A significant result of the research shows that in the course of time, these factors exert their

influence in varying ways, and that *individuals make rational decisions when they have the necessary information on which to base them.* In addition, the dissertation looks at regional influence on a micro level, in which various sources of data (student sampling, educational statistics, plans for development) make it possible to simultaneously analyse the structure of the local society as well as the concept and effectiveness of local education policy. Another important conclusion is that *the structure and development of local society fundamentally influence the local school system*. Independently of family background, regional differences can profoundly affect a student's educational career path. Furthermore, *ideas regarding continued education also vary depending on the environment; schools create homogenous groups via a selective mechanism, which in turn has a strong indirect (contextual) effect on career aspirations*. My dissertation examines this based on an aggregated classification of parents' qualifications. While professional literature in Hungary deals with the family background (level of education, income) as well as the connection between regional characteristics (type of settlement, county, country) and notions of further education in great detail, it focuses much less on how schools and individual classes within minor regions influence career decisions. In the course of examining entire classes of students in three small regions, the database available to me made it possible to study these aspects more closely.

Unfortunately, the thesis could not focus on examining how individual capabilities and the work of educators affect career decisions. Doing so would have required observing the work of teachers in the classroom and the use of tests to measure the abilities of students, something which is outside the author's sphere of competency. In reality, a far more interesting area of research would be to examine the efficiency of schools, comparing the concrete efforts of teachers (number of lessons, qualitative indicators) and the organisational and supervisory structure of the given institution with the actual performance of students (using tests to measure students' level of achievement). Depending on the school, marks given are used to measure different types of performance. A mark of "A" given to a student at an elite school certainly does not reflect the same as the one given to a student at a vocational school. The dissertation also touches upon this problem indirectly from time to time since in reality it is more likely that the local value attached to marks given from class to class stands behind many contextual influences rather than some kind of strong group norm.

International professional literature today is primarily interested in the question of how schools can be efficient, effective and equitable. While research asserts various different viewpoints in terms of input, the output used for comparison is always student performance. The same is now true in the case of Hungary; one cannot argue definitively about education in Hungary without being able to say something about the achievement of students. What this means, however, is that research focusing on education sociology must function within an interdisciplinary format, where economists, sociologists and professionals in the field of assessment apply their respective competencies together.

Methods used – analytical framework

Social activity - and decisions concerning continued education can rightfully be regarded as such - is seen in traditional sociology as something primarily influenced by social norms and values. In this sense, the individual acts as a part of society and in conjunction with all of its structural determination. Since this view suggests that the motivation to act is the social environment itself, social determination is frequently over-exaggerated to the extent that individual freedom to act all but disappears. A different approach, primarily based on economics, regards the individual as a rational agent independent of everything else, and whose activity is driven by the maximalization of personal gain. In the final analysis, this does not take into account that the acts of an individual are not independent from one another, and certainly not from the broader environment. The concept of the over/under-socialised person has come to be an object of criticism in the social sciences. This issue can also be regarded as a problem of the difficult passage between micro and macro approaches or, in a methodological context, the contradiction between the individualistic and the holistic approach. Those who ask why someone acts the way they do basically start with the individual, hence the individualistic nature of their microanalysis is the main determiner. Those who are primarily interested in how a system works and what keeps it functioning are using a macro approach, and their explanation may also be of a holistic nature ("the system operates, and therefore acts"). In considering that social contact between people is also a structure, it is possible to simultaneously explain individual acts and the development of certain values, norms and in fact social capital that result from this kind of interaction, thus making it easier to bridge the gap between the micro and the macro approach. New concepts such as embeddedness or weak ties (*Granovetter, 1985*) retain the concept of rational action, but also include organisational relationships in the analysis, where organisations have their own history and continuity via a network of personal interaction between people. Bridging the gap between micro and macro approaches provides an opportunity to include the concept of social capital, which is essentially manifested in the relationship between acting individuals. At the same time, social capital can also be regarded as one of the most decisive resources available to active individuals (*Coleman, 1998*).

Pierre Bourdieu speaks about economic, cultural and social capital. In the case of cultural capital, he distinguishes between three different forms: that which is internalised, in an incorporated state, that which has become objectified, and that which has been institutionalised (*Bourdieu, 1998*). In terms of investment in learning and education, the *"transmission of cultural capital in the family"* is of fundamental significance (*Bourdieu, 1998*), and thus ability or talent is a product of time and the investment of cultural capital. Based on this, it could be misleading to regard the time it takes to acquire an education as the standard of qualification since the early stage of socialisation and the nature of how a small child is raised in the family must also be taken into account as something which either fostered or inhibited successful learning at a later stage. The symbolic effectiveness of cultural capital originates in the logic of transmission. The accumulation of cultural capital from early childhood can only take place uninhibited and without loss of time in families that already possess strong cultural capital, where the entire period of socialisation is also a period of accumulation (*Bourdieu, 1998*). This requires time, however, and this is only available where the supply of material wealth allows for an appropriate length of time to accumulate cultural capital without economic constraint. Consequently, the relationship between economic and cultural capital is created by time. In the same way, the reproduction of social capital also requires time and money since it demands continuously maintaining the contacts that come about as a result of interaction between groups. Those who expound on the theory

of rational action have also called attention to the role of time. An individual's decisions are strongly influenced by the degree of emphasis they place on the future merits of those decisions, but this is also influenced by the degree to which they are capable of imagining the future (*Becker, 1998*). Many people underestimate the future benefits of their decisions because they have difficulty imagining the future. Energy invested in learning assumes that the individual is willing to sacrifice time for the future, even at the cost of gaining no benefits in the present, which means they place a higher value on future benefits than on those that are missing in the present. Education develops the ability to grasp the future, and in turn decreases the discount rate used in calculating future profit (*Becker, 1998*).

Max Weber differentiates between social class (position on the market) and order. Market processes make no distinction between people; class circumstances are impersonal and classes in and of themselves do not create communities (*Weber, 1996*). In contrast, order is inseparable from the individual's participation in human groups and their culture, and this also means the unique lifestyle of group members. According to Weber, the culture of order is the tool with which the status group retains its cohesion and preserves its ability to maintain distance from other social groups (*Weber, 1996*). Bourdieu claims it is due to the educational system that participation in a privileged order is rewarded to such a high degree. Social capital is a resourced based on affiliation with/belonging to one group (*Bourdieu, 1998*). A network of contacts is the product of individual or collective investment strategies that are consciously or un-consciously geared towards creating and maintaining the kind of social contacts which will eventually yield direct profit (*Bourdieu, 1998*). Certain researchers stress the fundamental significance of communicative competency in the maintenance of contact between group members, which also means the style of discourse (*DiMaggio-Mohr, 1998*). Communicative competency leads to cultural capital, which contributes to the acquisition of high social status.

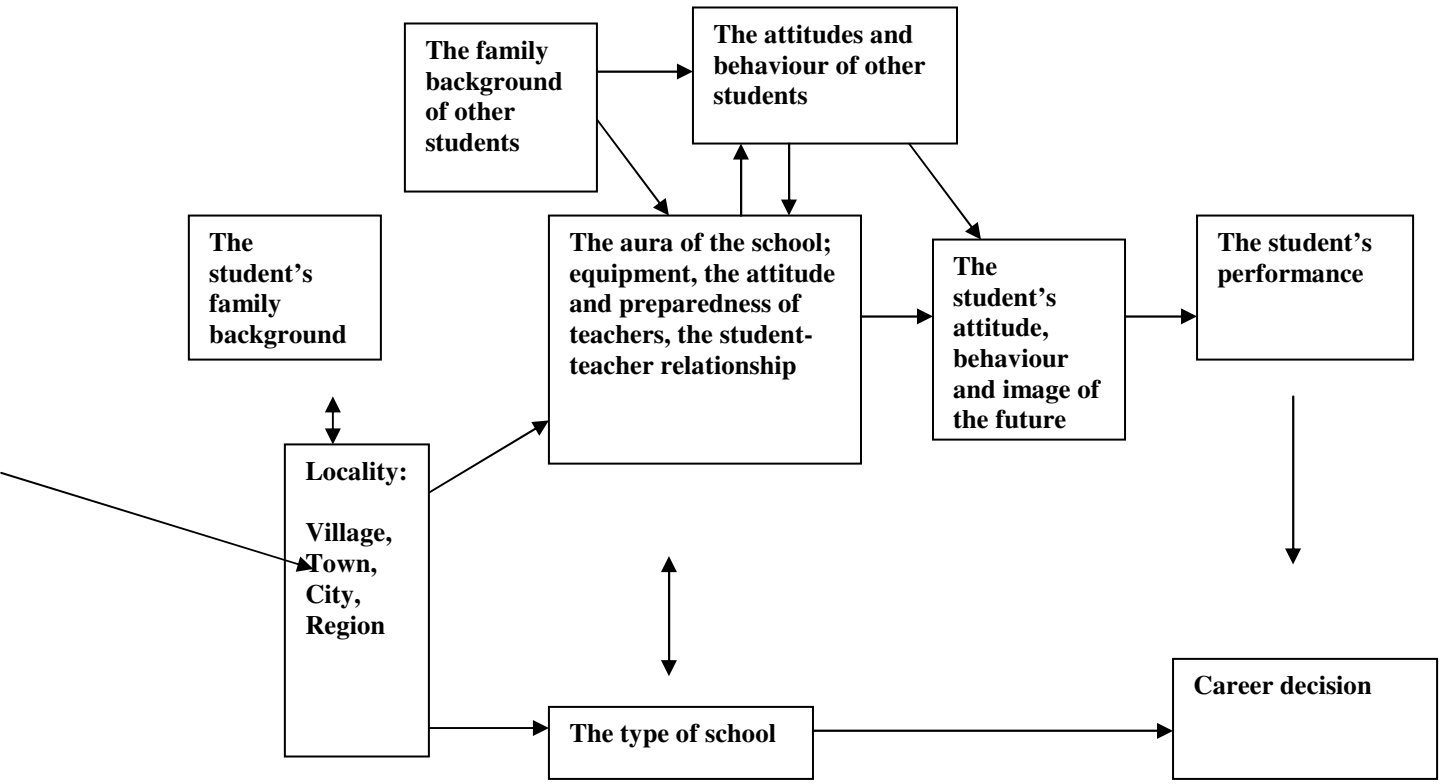
Social capital may be of essential significance in the area of learning and continued education as well. The fact that a home library contains many books or parents' high level of education in and of themselves do not necessarily play a role in the life of the child unless there is an active relationship between the children and their parents, in which mutual discussion, reading books together etc. serves to embody the social capital of the family. Therefore, in addition to the financial and human aspects of the family background, it is also important to examine social capital when investigating decisions about education. Naturally, the latter is more difficult to access, but the number of siblings in the family, the expectations children and parents have of each other, the extent of the family's network of contacts and its density can give us some kind of tangible picture. Social capital is also important in communities outside of the family, which may primarily mean the school and the circle of friends. Another crucial factor may be the isolation of contact networks and their relationship to one another. A tense relationship between the family and the school will certainly decrease the kind of social capital that could play an important role in the child's successful learning and further education. The individual aura of schools may also be an important factor in building social capital. It is no accident that research seeking to reveal the criterion of the "effective school" most strongly emphasises the prevalent norms and human relationships of a given school. The results of Coleman's research on the effectiveness of secondary schools indicated that Catholic schools had greater discipline, less absence, and also stronger achievement. At the same time, this had no connection with the Catholic faith since there were also Catholic students attending other non-parochial schools, and their performance was no better than that of their classmates of other denominations. Coleman attributes the effectiveness of Catholic schools to the fact that the social capitol embodied in the adult

community organised around the school unit exerts a great influence on the achievement of students by strengthening solidarity and discipline (*Coleman-Hoffer-Kilgore, 1982*).

Personal contact networks and the resources that can be mobilised through these can provide individuals with different opportunities in life. The central tenet of Weber's stratification model is that individual opportunity depends on the power relations that occur in society. In addition to Weber's distinction between economic, symbolic and political power, we can also mention social power (*H.D. Flap-N.D. DeGraaf, 1998*). Contact networks can affect the process of distribution. If we interpret contact networks as a form of social capital, it can be said that the more social capital someone possesses, the better their quality of life will be.

Professional literature acquaints us with several models that describe how factors influencing student performance and social status function (e.g. the Wisconsin model). In the case of decisions regarding further education, Coleman's model can also be a good starting point. Such decisions are fundamentally influenced by the scholastic achievement of the given student (1). In turn, scholastic achievement is strongly connected to family background (2), and the family's social capital, which also includes communication potential. The student's performance is indirectly affected by their attitude towards learning, their values and their orientation towards the future (3). Via the work of teachers on the given faculty, the school type and its aura in part have a direct effect on the student's attitude and discipline, which also has an indirect effect on their achievement (4-3-1). At the same time, the school type and its aura depend on the availability of resources in the settlement where the school operates as well as on where its students travel from (7-8). In addition, there is a direct connection between the type of school and the type of students who attend the institution (9). Through schooling policy and the characteristics of the local population, through its students' attitude and family background, the school and its aura may affect the attitude, performance and career decisions of individual students (10-4-3-1; 11-14-3-1; 11-13-4-3-1). In the case of secondary schools, the school type directly influences notions of further education (15).

A model of factors influencing notions of further education



There are two traditions of research in sociology that somewhat contradict each other from the standpoint of methodology. One focuses on society as a whole, concentrating on its structure and structural elements while the other examines individual behaviour and its regularity. Both the micro and the macro-level approach have their own drawbacks. While macro-analysis primarily examines structure, it pays less attention to change and individual processes. The micro approach, however, looks at the motivation behind individual acts, thus placing change itself in the forefront to the detriment of structural analysis.

Yet another approach - often referred to as methodological individualism - regards human activity as the basic element of social life. Explanations about social institutions and social change focus on how these are formed through human activity and interaction (*Elster, 1995*). The activity of people is essentially determined by opportunity and desire; they do what they can and want to do. Of course this assumes that people are basically free individuals whereas there are also acts that take place under constraint. It is the potential set of human acts that is made possible by existing limitations – financial, legal, psychological etc. At the same time, within this possible set of acts there is also another filter at work which determines the acts an individual chooses to undertake (*Elster, 1995*). This filter may be comprised of social norms, or even rational considerations. Concerning the issue of career choices, insofar as we regard structural limitation as having an exclusive effect, it can be said that in the case of certain existing limitations, the output can be accurately predicted. The educational career of a child who lives in poor financial circumstances, in a family that has hardly any cultural capital, is almost pre-determined, and although there is greater likelihood of a certain outcome (e.g. dropping out of school), there are also numerous examples to the contrary. Even under limitations, there is always some freedom left for individuals to make decisions. So-called contextual analysis attempts to create a link between individual acts and the social structure by perceiving social factors that affect human behaviour in such a way as to connect individual traits with those of the environment. This approach is quite old and has existed since the time of Durkheim. Samuel Stouffer's study entitled "The American Soldier" is the most famous example of how individuals judge themselves based not only on their own personal traits, but also in comparison to others living in their environment, hence adjusting their behaviour in accordance with the norms of that environment. The result most often quoted shows that the higher the number of promotions in a given military unit, the more dissatisfied the soldiers in the outfit were, irregardless of whether they had been promoted or not. The phenomenon is explained by the fact that those who had been promoted did not feel the prestigious nature of their position while those who were not awarded such prominence where the majority of the group members had received promotions gradually became conscious of their own failure to achieve. In other words, the soldiers' behaviour was significantly affected by the unique characteristics of the group they themselves belonged to (*Moksony, 1985*).

Since contextual analysis centres on the individual's environment, it is by all means expedient to define which groups can be regarded as comprising a genuine environment. Some researchers distinguish between three types of collective units that are made up of individuals (*Moksony, 1985*): aggregated units, the social category, and systems of interaction. From the viewpoint of contextual analysis, the last two are of significance. Social categories serve as the basis for social differentiation (e.g. age groups, occupational groups). These have no structure; their components have no connection to one another. Systems of interaction, however, are typically characterised by the connection between their components – the nature of communication, its intensity, power relations, and so on. Connections within the group may be extremely tight where members are in direct contact with each other, or looser where

contact is indirect. Some claim that the basis for contextual analysis should be real groups where interaction is taking place between individual participants. At the same time, in the case of groups characterised in terms of social category, it can be said that although there is no direct link between members, their common living circumstances provide a similar cultural background. Environment is a system of conditions created by the acts of different individuals, and its influence is transmitted through social contacts (*Moksony, 1985*). Contextual effects do not stand out independently of a single individual's behaviour since that individual is also part of the interaction, but surveys in which it is possible to directly measure the interactive influence of a specific group on the individual are rare. For this reason, I feel it is more useful to employ a broader interpretation of contextual analysis, focusing on how individual acts fit in society by examine the acts and behaviour of individuals in several dimensions (taking into account membership in several different groups at once).

It seems especially obvious to use contextual analysis when examining decisions in connection with further education. Particularly at the early stage, students often make such choices together with their parents, which means that the micro-environment i.e. the interactions taking place in the family, may strongly affect the child's decisions. Simultaneously, the basic organisational unit of teaching is the school class, where the student learns in the same community for several years with the same teachers, exposed to similar influences within a powerful group dynamic, possibly under intensive peer pressure, which certainly increases with age. Classes operate within schools, which can also have their own distinct traits, among which perhaps one of the most significant is the given combination of students. The data survey that acts as a basis for this dissertation also makes it possible to examine a significantly larger unit, a small region, in terms of its certain contextual influence as well as the effect exerted on the individual by concrete interaction taking place in genuine groups i.e. the family, the class and the school. Since it was conducted in three separate regions with polling in every class of students in the given year group, the survey is suitable for contextual analysis, even if it was not created for this purpose and so did not directly examine group interaction. On the other hand, there are numerous indirect indicators that allow us to examine students' career decisions in the context of the local environment. A career decision is not merely a single act, and so explaining it only with individual factors would be misleading. Individual characteristics (scholastic results, place of residence, parents' level of education) in and of themselves already suggest a certain probable outcome in connection with decisions about further education, but do not shed light on exactly what kind of mechanisms are at work when students make one of the most important decisions of their lives. Thus contextual analysis allows us to discover not only a mass of potential opportunities and limitations, but also the modus vivendi that in the end forms a common mass of opportunity and desire.

The individual traits of students, their scholastic results, diligence and discipline by all means play a role in their career decisions. Generally, the better the student, the greater the likelihood they will continue their studies at an institution of higher education. This is the first level of analysis. At the same time, students in a group based on similar individual traits among its members (e.g. good students) still make different career choices depending on which group they belong to. Consequently, outstanding students from families with higher as well as lower income families may make different decisions about where they will continue their studies. In the same way, the decisions made by good students in both villages and cities may also vary. At this stage, it is no longer just individual traits, but connections with a broader group that can also determine their decisions. Beyond the influence that belonging to a social group exerts on career decisions (which professional literature discusses in detail), it

may be even more interesting to look at how various characteristics of genuine groups (class, school, region) - the actual territory of individual acts – effect decisions. A school class can be characterised by the social background of its students (the number of school grades the parents have completed, in terms of average, dispersion, or ratio), the number of students in the class and the intensity of their relationships (unfortunately, data from the survey did not provide an opportunity for the latter). The class can therefore be described as an aggregate of the traits unique to its participants. The larger units - school and region – have characteristics that are independent of individuals. In the case of schools, however, there exists data that actually refers to the dominant atmosphere in a given institution (which can also affect and portray the interactions taking place within). Examples include various performance-related data (drop-out rates, failure), social data (the number of all day students, how many eat at school), the quality of teachers (based on qualifications), etc. With regards to small regions, interviews and development proposals are available that reflect the intentions of the active elite in the area (municipal leaders, educators) and the nature of teaching in practice, hence the interactions and influential concepts typical of the given region.

In the course of analysis, I often use multi-dimensional cross-sections and graphic depictions of the same. These are simple tools, but quite demonstrative. In order to examine the effect of changes incorporated in the analysis, I utilise the method of multinomial logistic regression.

Main conclusions

1.) The strongest factor influencing the direction of further education is the student's scholastic achievement, which is not independent of the parents' level of education.

- Among 13 year-olds, more than half of students with poor scholastic achievement choose vocational schools while three quarters of those who study well opt for secondary school. Almost 90% of good students at the age of 17 would wish to continue their education whereas the ratio of poor students who desire to do so is less than 50%. The direction of continued education also differs significantly; more than half of those who with a high standard of achievement choose to continue at the university level while the ratio among bad students is hardly 5%.
- Notions of further education are also influenced by family background. The higher the parents' level of education, the more inclined the children are to choose educational institutions with higher prestige (secondary school, university). There is a dramatic difference between the children of mothers who have completed university-level training and those who are less qualified. The probability that 13 year-old students among the latter will choose vocational school is 114 times higher than those among the former. The combined influence of both parents is even stronger. If one parent has not completed secondary school, the odds that their children will choose vocational school instead of secondary school is 220 times higher. In the case of 17-year olds, more than 80% of those whose mothers hold university diplomas desire to continue their education; the ratio is hardly more than 50% among those whose mothers have completed less than 12 years of schooling.
- In the case of both 13 and 17-year olds, the role of mothers (in terms of qualifications) seems to be more important than that of fathers on both an implicit as well as an explicit level. The mother's level of education indicates a stronger connection with regards to both career aspirations and scholastic achievement than that of the father, and this tendency remains the same at a later age. Consequently, the hypothesis that claims the influence of the mother decreases with age does not correlate with this database. At the same time, the exceptional role of the mother is also manifested in the fact that her higher level of education offers a greater defence against low career aspirations than the father's.
- A highly influential factor in the case of students at the secondary school level is the type of institution they are attending. Practically all students attending secondary schools with changing structures would like to continue at the college level, while 90% of those at 4-year institutions, 60% of those at specialised schools and only 40% of those attending vocational schools would like to continue their education in one form or another.

2.) There is a limited rationality in decisions concerning further education.

- Beyond the cultural orientation provided by the family background, considerations of expense-benefit also play a role in where someone would like to continue their studies i.e. there is limited rationality in decisions regarding further education. Poorer, less-educated families are more sensitive to scholastic achievement, or in other words, the scholastic achievement of

children in these families has a much stronger effect on career decisions than in families with higher education. It is only worthwhile for them to shoulder the long-term expense of continued education if the odds of a future return on the investment are more certain – if the child in fact performs well and there is little risk of their dropping out. As a consequence, the higher a student's performance, the less drastic the difference is between the career aspirations of students from various social strata. This means that a greater ratio of those children among students with low performance whose parents have a higher education go on to secondary school than their peers whose parents have less education, and yet the difference between the two strata seems to disappear in the case of students with a high rate of achievement.

- Specialised secondary schools and colleges fulfil a kind of equalising role. It is mostly poor learners whose mothers have a higher education and good students with less educated mothers who choose this type of institution. It can be said that continued education at the secondary school level only provides benefits on the labour market at a later stage if it is followed by several years of study at an institution of higher education. On the whole, it is rather the children of the better-educated, well-to-do strata who find an affordable alternative in secondary school education. Good students from poorer families tend to choose specialised secondary schools, where the goal is not necessarily continued education so much as the acquisition of a trade that can be utilised on the labour market. It is clearly revealed that in Hungarian education there exists a kind of "regal path", which leads from secondary school through university, and a less expensive, second-rate solution in the form of specialised secondary school training followed by college. At the time of the survey (1997-1999), the latter seemed a safer option since the training period was shorter and already offered job-oriented skills at the secondary school level.[3]
- The more information an individual has available to them, the more rational their decision will be. In the case of decisions made at a later stage, when students have much less reliable information regarding their chances of continuing their studies (among other things because they do not know what their future scholastic results will be), cultural motivation from the family becomes stronger. Rational consideration tends to play a role in short-term decisions rather than in decisions affecting the distant future. Students making decisions for the long-term have far less concrete information available to them, and so are clearly motivated by the cultural influence that comes from their family background.
- The type of settlement students live in has a profound effect on their decisions precisely because of cost-benefit analysis. The proximity of the school plays a much stronger role in the choices of low achievers in smaller towns than it does for children in the city. It can be said that although quality and availability play a role, it is primarily among poor students in villages that the proximity of the chosen institution influences their career decision (generally vocational school) because in their case distance significantly raises the cost of their education in comparison to the results they can be expected to achieve. In the case of city children, a larger ratio among those who are good learners choose secondary schools than their counterparts in small communities, which may

[3] After 1999, this period of study was lengthened in accordance with new regulations.

also explain the difference between the performance content reflected in marks given in village primary schools as opposed to those in the city.

4.) Local society and school systems differ from region to region, which also results in significant differences with regards to both the ratio and direction of continued education.

In all three of the smaller regions examined, it is the worst students who attend vocational schools, while the best choose secondary schools. On the other hand, study of children in groups with varying scholastic results shows, for example, that a larger number of children in Kecskemét choose vocational schools while those in Szombathely tend to choose specialised secondary schools, and that students in Békéscsaba generally choose to attend comprehensive secondary schools. In light of this, we can see that the direction of continued education differs in each region, independently of the students' grade point average (and also the parents' level of education).

- Typically, local society is different in each region. In our sampling, the rate of dispersion in connection with parents' level of education was the highest in the vicinity of Kecskemét. While Kecskemét showed the highest number of parents' with university diplomas among the three cities examined in the survey, its general vicinity also had the highest number of parents with a low level of education. Albeit at a different level, both the areas of Szombathely and Békéscsaba showed a far more balanced picture in terms of parents' education. In spite of the above, the more stratified a local society is, the stronger the correlation between the highest rate of education among parents and the direction of continued education among their children. This correlation was strongest in and around the vicinity of Kecskemét while the lowest was in Békéscsaba, where the distribution of parents' education levels reflected a relatively homogeneous local society.
- The structure of the local school system also varies from region to region. The higher the rate of stratification in local society, the more selective the local school structure is. The higher the number of 6- or 8-grade secondary schools, the greater the difference is between marks given to students from school to school, and the higher the rate of entrance examinations. While 90% of students surveyed at the 4-year secondary school in Kecskemét were accepted on the basis of entrance exams, this figure was 73% in Békéscsaba and only 25% in Szombathely.
- The higher the rate of stratification in local society and the higher the number of 6- or 8-grade secondary schools, the greater the rate of school segregation taking place independently of regional segregation. The standardised level of segregation reveals that even in comparison with the two other regions, the territorial dispersion of parents' level of education in Kecskemét and the student mix of local schools compared to the other regions indicates a higher degree of segregation.
- The effectiveness and work of educators is again different in each region. The rate of drop-outs and failure as well as the degree of filtration among students is the highest in the vicinity of Kecskemét. At the same time, indicators that reflect the role of schools in terms of integration (number of daytime students, the proportion of those who take meals at school, library usage) are the most positive in Békéscsaba and the surrounding area. Analysis of documents

concerning plans for development also shows that education policy varies significantly in each region. While modern values are represented in Szombathely and its vicinity, Kecskemét represents conservative Christian values and Békéscsaba socialist values.

- The opinions of students concerning school are also unique in each region and reflect regional differences that also exist in other territories. Religious belief is present among students in Kecskemét to a much greater extent, and many more consider the transmission of such values to be the task of the school than their peers in the other two cities. They also place a higher value on the role of school in promoting traditional values such as order, respect and discipline. In contrast, students in Szombathely expect schools to transmit modern values like preparation for further education, language teaching and the development of skills and thinking whereas children in Békéscsaba emphasise the provision of all day services in schools where they can feel comfortable, with opportunities to play sports and engage in fun activities.

Schools can indirectly affect career aspirations via their student mix.

This indirect influence serves to redistribute social capital. In essence, the direction of continued education for children in a given class depends more on the average education level of their mothers rather than the individual education level of both parents, which suggests some sort of combined interactive effect. Depending on the class mix, a varying proportion of students whose mothers have the same level of education and who achieve the same kind of scholastic results will choose from among different types of secondary school training. The fact that the influence exerted on notions of further education by the given class mix goes beyond that of scholastic performance and parents' education is also true among older age groups. In a class with a worse combination of students, 13% of poor students whose mothers have no secondary school diploma aspire to attend college. Where the ratio of students from families that provide greater social capital is higher, this figure reaches 23%. In a class with a better combination of students, three quarters of good students with mothers who hold diplomas from institutions of higher education aspire to attend university. In classes where the mothers' level of education is average, the ratio drops to only 33%.

- The composition of a given class more strongly influences students with educated parents. It is generally true that if the education level among the mothers of students in a 7^{th} grade class is higher, the proportion of students who wish to attend comprehensive secondary schools is greater than those who aspire to attend specialised secondary schools. The combination of students in a class exerts an even stronger influence on the children of educated mothers, however, than on the children of uneducated of mothers. The fact that these students become more confident and ambitious is probably due to a combination of individual and community social capital.
- Class mix also has a greater effect on average students: it is here that the influence of class mix is most noticeable, among students whose scholastic performance has not yet determined their career path as strongly as it has in the case of the other two extremes. For example, in the case of children whose mothers have not completed secondary school, and insofar as these students do not study well, their career intentions do not change much in accordance with changes in class mix – they hardly aspire to continue their education at the secondary school level. Students who study well are more sensitive to these

changes, but usually a larger number of them aspire to attend secondary school. In a class with a better composite of students, far more of the average learners among them will choose to attend secondary schools than their peers in classes with a worse mix.

- Class mix influences visions of the future and notions on the importance of learning. The degree to which a student is able to imagine the future and how important they consider learning to be fundamentally determines the level of their career aspirations. The greater the education of parents in a given class, the greater the odds that the students' notions concerning the future will be less concrete and personal, but all the more abstract and global, and this is true irregardless of their scholastic performance.

5.) There is a certain correlation between school specificity (the number of students per single teacher and per class) and the direction of continued education.

- There is a reverse correlation between students' performance and class size in the case of children in cities and in smaller communities. It can be said of village children (independent of their mother's education) that the better learners they are (or the better marks they receive), the smaller the class and the smaller the number of students per teacher. In the case of urban children, the situation is exactly the reverse: the better learners the students are, the larger the class they attend, and the larger the number of students per teacher. There are many ways to explain this phenomenon, but in the interest of supporting our assumption it would have been to our advantage if we had been able to measure the students' achievement using tests. Size has a different meaning in small communities than in cities. In urban environments, where competition for students is very high, large class size may actually be a sign of success, and the children of motivated parents, who are better oriented to learning, tend to be concentrated in these schools. On the other hand, it is large class size that provides an opportunity in these schools to divide classes further. In small villages, where there is usually only one school, small class size does not reflect a feeling that the school has fallen behind in the competition for students. There is more time available for individual children, and this can have a positive influence on the students' development. Of course it is also possible that marks given in smaller schools are not as strict. For this reason, results from competency tests would be necessary to examine how different class sizes in different settlements influence the achievement of students.
- In larger classes, scholastic results in connection with further education are more flexible. It is also true of urban children that the better they learn, the more likely they are to choose secondary school, but practically all good students in large classes aspire to attend this type of institution (94%), while less than half of good students in small classes do so (44%). It seems that the "flexibility of scholastic results" in connection with further education is the highest in large classes. The likely reason for this is that in classes with a large number of students, the majority of which come from well-to-do families, competition between students is more intense, and marks given probably give more information about actual achievement than in small classes, where there is less competition and marks may not be as dispersed. This calls attention to something that in fact almost everyone at the local level is aware of: the same

mark signifies different standards depending on the type of school the child comes from. Competition is greater in larger schools, and hence there is a stronger correlation between marks and actual performance than in small classes.

- Examined in light of parents' education, the "perverse" effect of class size disappears, meaning the larger number of students per class, the lower the level of scholastic achievement – if we regard family background as unchanged. This does not contradict our assumption that larger class size creates greater competition among students, and that marks are more dispersed, which means there may be more bad marks. Large class do not foster effective pedagogical work since there is much less attention paid to single students. This effect is hidden by the special composition of large classes - usually students in elite urban schools whose parents have a higher level of education - since highly motivated children in such an environment are less negatively affected by class size. On the other hand, if we regard family background as a constant factor, it turns out that it is actually smaller classes that better facilitate effective teaching.
- There is also a relationship between the integrative power of schools and class size: the extent of integration measured in the ratio of all day students, those who eat school meals and those who use library facilities is the lowest in large classes where the average scholastic achievement reflects two extremes. In classes with a large number of students who learn well, the ratio of educated mothers among their parents is also higher than expected, which means that these students probably do not need to spend their entire day in school, eat at the school cafeteria or use the library. They are likely to eat lunch, study and use the library at home. It is also revealed that in the institutions these students attend, there is a much lower rate of failure; hence there is less need to integrate them. In contrast, the home environment of students in large classes with low rates of achievement is most certainly worse, and the schools they attend less integrative, which supports the idea that students in large classes perform better due to a large concentration of more motivated urban children with well-educated parents. Large class size, however, becomes a distinct drawback if the class has a high concentration of disadvantaged children. Even in large groups, children from more advantageous family backgrounds are likely to be more disciplined and motivated to learn, and the lack of pedagogical differentiation is compensated for by financial, cultural and social capital at home. Children from families who do not possess such capital, however, are also likely to be much less motivated to learn. Such classes offer no opportunity for differentiation, and the students' level of discipline probably leaves much to be desired. Consequently, large classes composed of good learners present no obstacles, but in the opposite case, the results can be catastrophic.

7.) The pedagogical work that takes place in a school can have a direct influence on students' choices for continued education.

- Schools pursue either an exclusive, integrative or a neutral policy. Where the ratio of repeaters, exemptions and private students is high, and only a low number of students eat at the school, it is likely that the institution is not characterised by a bustling atmosphere, meaning that students tend to live their lives outside of its walls. In places where there are many all day students and the library is utilised frequently, life in the school is probably more colourful, which suggest that students enjoy being there. It is based on this that I use the terms exclusive and integrative to designate the two factors resulting from these variables. Whereas Békéscsaba has more integrative schools, Kecskemét and the immediate vicinity tend to have more of the exclusive kind. In comparison, Szombathely and the surrounding area show no unique characteristics in this regard.
- The more a school tended to exempt students and get rid of weak achievers, the more likely that its students would go on to attend trade schools, while a higher ratio of students at accommodating schools choose specialised secondary schools. The greater tendency among students to choose secondary schools in cases where there is either a low degree of exclusion or integration may be connected to the fact that small secondary schools attended by students who chose to come there in the first place are difficult to place in either category. Naturally, there is a connection between the aura of a given school and its other traits, but the fact that the dominant pedagogical approach in the school can influence career aspirations indicates that although students whose mothers have a high level of education tend to choose secondary school as their potential path of continued education, in schools where there is a high drop-out rate, fewer children with well educated mothers will choose secondary school than their peers under similar circumstances in a more integrative school.
- Schools that employ a large number of graduates from trade schools on their faculty have a higher rate of student failure. During the mid 1990s, trade schools provided elementary school instructors with the opportunity to obtain certification to teach one or two subjects on the upper level of primary school. It can be seen that in places where there is a higher ratio of educators with this type of certification, there are fewer primary school teachers i.e. the two types of training substituted one another. At the same time a higher ratio of trade school graduates indicates a connection to a higher ratio of private students. It is possible that this type of training raised the level of expectation among educators without providing them with a set of tools to realistically convey these expectations.
- There are also unique regional differences in terms of pedagogical work (Roma schools, private tutoring): it matters a great deal whether a student gains access to some kind of skills development activity in school or not, and also whether they have to pay for it or not. Békéscsaba has the largest number of students who attend private tutoring lessons in school, and it is also worth noting that in comparison with the other two cities, vocational schools in Békéscsaba and the surrounding region provide students with the most opportunity for sports and language learning. In addition, among students attending vocational schools, those in Békéscsaba also comprise the highest ratio of those who attend free separate lessons. In Szombathely, however, it is typical for a large majority of

students to attend separate lessons outside of school, and usually at additional cost. Among the three cities, the unique difference between students' with regards to their activities in private lessons may be most evident in the area of tutoring. Relatively equal ratios of poor students attend tutoring lessons in Szombathely and Kecskemét, but the ratio is much higher in Békéscsaba. In the case of Szombathely, however, just as in Békéscsaba, the number of students attending tutoring lessons decreases proportionally with an increase in scholastic performance, but on a higher level. In light of this, it is interesting that the better someone learn in Kecskemét, the more tutoring lessons they attend. One indication that this divergence cannot be explained merely on the basis of differences in local society is the fact that secondary school students in Kecskemét are in a far more advantageous position regarding e-mail use than their peers in local vocational schools. The local school system is not particularly successful in moderating social inequality, and in fact seems to reproduce it on an expanded scale: students who already have the best advantage gain better access to services that could actually improve the odds of continued education for disadvantaged students (tutoring, Internet, e-mail). As we saw earlier in connection with the ratio of selection and segregation, students who are at an advantage in Kecskemét and the surrounding area gain far more benefits from the local school system while the situation of disadvantaged students is far worse.

- Schools are able to compensate in the case of middle strata, but not on a lower level. The value of integration is highest in classes where the majority of students are the children of mothers with a secondary school education. The extent of integration is lower in classes - and schools - with children whose mothers have a higher level of education, and it is the lowest in schools with the most disadvantaged children. Therefore, schools are able and willing to compensate in the case of middle strata, but in the case of children from the lowest segment of society - especially in classes with a large concentration of disadvantaged children - they are no longer able to do so. On the other hand, the more homogenous a class is (the lower the dispersion of mothers' educational level), the higher the ratio of integration. Thus integration (in the way that I measured it) performs a social function behind which a more differentiated, personally oriented pedagogical approach cannot be rendered probable. The value of the integrative factor is high in schools where there are many all day students, many eat lunch at school and many use the school library. The higher the value of integration, the higher the degree of satisfaction among the children of mothers with low education, but the integrative strength of schools has no effect on the satisfaction of children whose mothers hold university diplomas. The most important in our case is what kind of classes these children attend and what their classmates are like. Other social services the school has to offer do not particularly affect them, and so do not influence their opinion of the school either. The latter primarily depends on scholastic results, opportunities for continued education and their classmates.
- The extent of integration is linked to specifics. In order to separate the influence of class mix and family background from the two factors and various indicators, I ascertained the link by using the average education level of mothers per class of students as a control mechanism. Based on this, the value of the exclusion factor no longer correlates with the number of students per

class. In other words, the "perverse" connection that originated in the correlation between the size of the school and parents' level of education (larger classes have a lower drop-out rate) ceased to exist. It is interesting that integration is connected to the specific indicators of the school i.e. the larger the class and the fewer students per single teacher, the higher the degree of integration. On this basis, it is likely that the degree of integration I measured is more successful in schools where there are not only a large number of students (which in itself is an indicator of the school's success), but also relatively large number of teachers who can pay attention to the children. Even so, the fact that this does not necessarily entail an increase in grade point averages (tests of student performance would give me more solid ground to base my claim on) shows that more positive specific indicators do not yield more effective pedagogical work in the classic sense. In large schools, therefore, where the number of teachers is relatively high, there are fewer children who drop out, but their scholastic progress does not necessarily improve.

- The influence of the teacher and the school is most significant among children with poor family backgrounds. This means that for students whose families generally place less importance on learning, the climate of the school can play a fundamental role in strengthening positive attitudes towards learning. A secondary school student from a family where there is no doubt about the importance of learning will feel that learning is important even if they do not feel comfortable in their school. In contrast, students in vocational schools react with greater sensitivity to the aura of their school – the more they enjoy being there, the more important learning is for them.

7.) The supply of social capital plays an essential role in the development of long-term decisions concerning continued education.

- The transformation of financial and cultural capital into social capital is not an obvious process; the connection between a school's infrastructure and scholastic achievement seems a weak one. This suggests that school infrastructure in and of itself functions as dead capital unless it is turned into cultural capital and thus social capital. Insofar as these are not utilised, or not utilised well, they cannot have much of an affect. While the supply of financial resources makes it possible for students to attend a larger number of separate lessons and gain better marks, social capital requires that these opportunities be well taken advantage of. Intentions to continue education are influenced by the family's financial situation, its cultural capital (parents' level of education) and the both the student and the family's system of contacts. At the same time, these do not carry the same degree of influence. Scholastic achievement primarily correlates with the latter, but cultural capital and the family infrastructure hardly have an effect on this. This shows that the change from financial capital to cultural capital and then social capital is not a clear course.
- Taking into account the level of career aspirations, it is essential to examine the degree to which parents are involved in their children's future. Parents of 13-year old children who are uncertain about the near future actually provide less of a secure background for their children and seem to be less committed to their future. There is a relatively strong link between the child's aspirations and parents' uncertainty about the future. More than half of children whose parents

are uncertain responded that they would continue their studies at vocational schools, and only 10% desired to attend secondary school.

- The children of uneducated parents are more sensitive to the issue of available social capital than their peers with educated parents. Generally, the same ratio of students with more educated mothers choose secondary school and vocational school regardless of which group they belong to, but the children of uneducated mothers react far more sharply with regards to the amount of social capital available to them. More than half those who are deprived of social capital (parents have only vague notions about their children's future, one parent is unemployed or only one parent is raising the children) choose to attend vocational schools, but this ratio comprises only one fifth of those who are at a more advantaged level. It is likely that in families where the mother's level of cultural capital is low, the importance of factors we took into account in order to measure the presence of social capital increases. On one hand, a much smaller ratio of families with educated parents (10%) fall in the deprived category (this ratio is 17% in the case of uneducated mothers), and on the other hand, the children of educated parents probably face less risk of failure in the event that there are many siblings and/or one parent is unemployed or missing. This is partly due to the fact that these families are better able to handle situations of temporary crisis in light of their better financial circumstances. Furthermore, even if one parent is unemployed, they have better odds of finding work, and more quickly than uneducated parents. Moreover, if an educated parent is forced to stay at home, they probably will devote more effective time to their children's scholastic progress.
- In general, it is large classes with high levels of achievement that have the greatest degree of social capital. Children who attend such classes probably use the network they have brought from home in addition to that of their classmates, and in doing so multiply their existing social capital. In the event that the class has a large concentration of disadvantaged students with only a modest amount of social capital, they are unable to increase each other's capital and this has a negative effect on their aspirations. Moreover, the negative group mix that can result from this situation may serve to reinforce negative attitudes - lack of discipline and motivation, deviance – which further decrease social capital in that they deprive students of opportunities to develop their horizons so that they are capable of making sacrifices for their future benefit. The students' network of contacts and their chances to access information depend on the mix of the given class, but also on the size of the class and the type of pedagogical work taking place at the school. It is in large classes with a high rate of underachievement, and where the exclusion factor is strong that students with low levels of social capital tend to be concentrated. Among the three cities examined, there was a much greater concentration of children from families deprived of social capital in this kind of class than the overall dispersion of such classes within a single city. This is also a reason why the aspirations of this stratum remain at a low level.
- The development of notions concerning the future depends on the mix of the given class. In classes where the majority of mothers hold diplomas, global values play a higher role in the desires of their children, independently of the students' scholastic progress. Success as a value appears more among children with mothers who have either an average or higher level of education. Therefore, in the case of poor learners, their parent's diploma does not

necessarily protect them from short-term thinking, while in classes where parents are generally well educated, long-term thinking appears among poor learners as well. It may be that with their unique student mix, schools can influence children's notions and attitudes in connection with the future by either strengthening or weakening their opportunity to develop long-term thinking. Independently of the students' grade point average and their mothers' level of education, the importance of success, the size of contact networks as well as the interest of both children and parents in the future also play a role in the formation of aspirations in connection with continued education.

- Students' attitudes concerning the importance of learning fundamentally influence career decisions, and the climate of the school can be essential to their development, primarily among children whose families place little emphasis on learning. It is extremely interesting that for students from such families, the school climate may play an essential role in developing a positive attitude towards learning. While it is generally true of secondary school students that learning is important for them even when the feel uncomfortable in school, students at a vocational school are much more sensitive to its climate. If they happen to like the school, they usually consider learning to be important, but if they do not like the school environment, they do not feel the importance of learning either. For students from families with far less cultural and social capital, the school and the teacher could play an essential role in the development of their attitudes towards learning, thus increasing their cultural and social capital. Unfortunately, these children generally attend schools where neither the institution itself nor the class they are members of (together with classmates who have similar disadvantages) are able to provide them with access to resources that could help them to improve their situation.

The career aspirations of boys and girls differ significantly.

- The range of choices for boys is more diversified, which is why the directions of continued education they choose vary.
- Learning is generally more important among girls, and this increases their aspirations.
- Secondary school boys are more ambitious and deliberate with regards to their desires for further education than girls.
- The influence of teachers as role models is stronger among boys and children from an urban environment, and this significantly increases their aspirations for continued education.

Analysis of the Factors Influencing Career Aspirations

In the following chapter, I will attempt to examine the factors influencing students' career aspirations on a collective basis. In the case of both 13 and 17-year olds, I was curious to find out how the previously described factors assert their combined influence. Using the method of multinomial logistic regression, I have examined how the following factors act collectively to influence notions of continued education:

1.) Family background and individual factors (scholastic results, gender)
2.) Regional phenomena (type of settlement, small region)
3.) Characteristics of the school based on the data available (the number of students per teacher, the average level of education among mothers per class as an indication of class mix)
4.) The student's social capital (channels of information, attitude towards school and learning

In the case of 13-year olds, I examined the odds of students choosing secondary school and specialised secondary school as the path for continuing their education in comparison with the odds of their choosing vocational school, and with 17-year olds the odds of their choosing university or college as opposed to other courses of training. It is important to make clear that what I am discussing here are not facts that have come true, but notions that have a strong basis in reality.

My starting point was the model that assumes scholastic results have the greatest affect on career aspirations. Unfortunately, in my case, I was only able to measure this based on grade point averages, whereas different surveys suggest that there is a relatively loose correlation between marks and actual performance. For students, however, it is primarily marks that transmit assessment by the school and teachers concerning their performance, and they tend to refer to this when making decisions about continuing their education since they are also unaware of their actual achievement (partly because it is not measured and partly because if it were, there is no certainty that they would be informed of the results). It would be interesting to examine whether students who receive marks that are worse than their achievement measured in tests have enough confidence in themselves to continue their education at the secondary school or university level. Does a Pygmalion effect exist in Hungarian classrooms or not i.e. is the teacher capable of guiding students towards the career their abilities predestined them to in the first place? An answer to this question would require observation in the classroom and research in the form of tests conducted on several occasions to measure students' achievement.

Career decisions therefore are strongly influenced by marks, and naturally, the better a student's results, the more ambitious plans they have. On the other hand, career aspirations are also affected by the choices available. Vocational training mainly offers alternatives for boys, and for this reason a far greater ratio of girls continue their education in secondary schools rather than vocational schools. Family background and individual traits (scholastic results and gender) help to explain the decisions of 13-year olds more than those of 17-year olds (*see Figures 4. and 5. - Model I. – Cox and Snell's indicators*). Scholastic results strongly influence career aspirations in both age groups: the better the student, the greater the odds that they will choose a prestigious secondary school or university. The higher the parents' level of education, the more likely their children are to select secondary schools or universities. The odds are approximately one in five that children whose parents are uneducated will choose secondary schools or universities in comparison to vocational training or other courses. In the case of parents with secondary school diplomas, the odds are less than one half. At the same time, parents' education plays a lesser role in the case of students who

choose vocational schools. The same is true of gender, which has a stronger influence on pupils who choose to continue in secondary schools or institutions of higher education. In comparison with girls, the odds that boys will choose secondary schools are 50% lower, but in the case of higher education, the odds that boys will choose universities are 2-3 times higher, and 1-2 times higher in the case of colleges. One explanation for this is that boys in secondary schools are much more ambitious than girls (*see Fig. 1*). It seems that boys are far less influenced by class mix – male students with poor scholastic results are not as discouraged as girls. Regardless of their scholastic results, boys in vocational schools also tend to opt for college, as opposed to girls, who are more willing to choose other opportunities for continuing their studies. The statistically greater ratio of girls attending institutions of higher education stems from the fact that their partial ratio in secondary schools which ensure continued education is far greater than boys. Even so, the multinomial logistic regression model shows that if there is an equal distribution of girls and boys in various institutions of secondary education, a higher ratio of boys will continue their education. Paradoxically, while the desire among boys for continued education in secondary schools is much lower than that of girls, the situation is exactly the reverse with regards to aspirations for university study. The unique reason for this is that in the years of study following primary school, the structure of the secondary school system scatters male students more since the choices available to them represent a wider spectrum. As our sampling demonstrated in connection with parents' level of education, this may also result in a far greater dispersion among males in terms of their education. Girls often attend secondary schools because there is nothing better, and it is highly likely that for this reason boys who continue their education at secondary schools are more consciously preparing to attend institutions of higher education than girls who selected the given school for lack of a better choice.

Figure 1. Notions of continued education after secondary school according to gender

Type of institution	Scholastic results	Direction of further education	Boy	Girl	Total
Secondary school	Poor student	University	24,07	4,55	15,31
		College	48,15	31,82	40,82
		Other	27,78	63,64	43,88
	Average student	University	35,63	17,26	26,22
		College	52,50	62,50	57,62
		Other	11,88	20,24	16,16
	Good student	University	81,58	60,34	67,70
		College	16,32	37,43	30,11
		Other	2,11	2,23	2,19
Specialised secondary school	Poor student	University	5,00	4,05	4,62
		College	49,62	35,26	43,88
		Other	45,38	60,69	51,50
	Average student	University	15,85	3,95	9,82
		College	62,20	54,55	58,32
		Other	21,95	41,50	31,86
	Good student	University	33,12	26,92	28,76
		College	61,69	56,04	57,72
		Other	5,19	17,03	13,51

The second model (*see Figures 4. and 5.*) also takes territorial factors into consideration. The odds that students in urban elementary schools will choose secondary

schools to continue their education is two and a half times greater than that of their peers in villages, and this ratio is one and a half times greater in the case of specialised secondary schools. In comparison to small communities, among those students who attended primary school in cities, the odds are one and a half times greater that they will choose university study as opposed to other types of training. When the goal is college training, however, the choice no longer depends on the type of settlement students attended primary school in. Regional differences may be even more intriguing. Taking into account scholastic achievement, gender and parents' education as constant factors, in comparison to students in Szombathely, the odds that students in Békéscsaba will choose secondary schools are twice as great, while this ratio is almost one half less in the case of students in Kecskemét. When the choice falls on specialised secondary schools, only differences between students in Kecskemét and Szombathely remain significant. In light of the above, there are important differences from region to region. Students in Békéscsaba tend to choose secondary schools while a larger number of their counterparts in Kecskemét choose vocational schools compared with children in Szombathely. On the other hand, a much smaller ratio of students in Békéscsaba aspire to attend university than their peers in Szombathely. This is likely due to a structural influence - the structure of the local school system - because when checked in comparison to the type of secondary school, the divergence between Békéscsaba and Szombathely disappears. Even so, the odds that students in Kecskemét will choose to attend university are still almost twice as great as in the case of students in Szombathely. This is partly explained by the fact that the majority of secondary schools in Kecskemét have 6 or 8 grades, and many among them are maintained by church organisations. Career aspirations in these schools may be far higher than they generally are in secondary schools. Analysing the rate of continued education also plays a prominent role in plans for development in Kecskemét. It is striking that in the case of 17-year olds, the explanatory power of the third model, which also takes into account the type of secondary school in question, is far greater than the other two models. At the secondary level, the type of institution is almost as important as scholastic results. The odds that secondary school students will choose to attend university are 9 times greater, and for students in specialised schools, 5-6 times greater than in the case of their peers in vocational schools. A secondary school student is 15 times more likely to choose college study than a student who is attending a trade school. Communities of students at secondary schools, specialised schools and vocational schools differ radically from one another. An additional dividing line is the fact that secondary schools and specialised secondary schools provide school-leaving certification while trade schools do not.[4] It is due to this powerful selection mechanism that the influence of family background seems to disappear in the homogenous community formed at the secondary school level. In contrast, our model continues to reflect the significance of family background and scholastic results with students who intend to study at universities, but this significance does in fact become more vague in connection with intended study at the college level.

I had no school data available to me in the case of secondary schools, but since the type of institution in question strongly influences various data on input and output, the variable indicating school type probably contained other existing differences between schools (specifics, qualification of faculty members, etc.). In the case of primary schools, however, I was able to incorporate school data in the model. Interestingly enough, the more students there were per teacher at the given primary school, the greater the odds that they would choose to continue their studies at secondary schools. (I should also add that the number of students per class was not a significant element in the model, and I omitted it for this reason.)

[4] This distorted the model somewhat, but I felt that I had more to loose by examining only those institutions which provide secondary school certification.

The explanation for this connection can no longer be that schools are larger (i.e. they have a larger number of pupils) precisely because classes composed of good students allow them to be successful and therefore parents overrun them in an effort to have their children accepted. These effects have already been checked, and so it cannot be said that students at larger institutions of a specific size want to attend secondary schools because their schools have a higher concentration of children from families that represent a higher level of career aspirations. One could assume that in places where there are many students per single teacher, the level of attention devoted to students is unsatisfactory and therefore these students will be less ambitious with regards to continuing their education. As we have proven in the case of class size, when checked against the mix of the given school, large classes have a negative effect on scholastic results. In this case, however, the situation is exactly the opposite. Although I was unable to gain a clear answer to this phenomenon based on my data, the explanation may be that in schools where class sizes are not too large, but relatively few teachers must deal with larger numbers of students, pedagogical and financial effectiveness may work together simultaneously. It is possible that this kind of ambiguous effectiveness may also make a school more efficient in terms of teaching as well as in creating the desire for continued education. Almost everywhere, professional literature dealing with the effectiveness of schools emphasizes the existing connection between the management culture of the given school and the success of its students.[5]

The school type and the number of students per teacher bear witness to the state of the given institution. Quite frequently, however, we are unable to sense the direct influence of the school, but rather in the form of a contextual influence that occurs via the unique mix of its student body. It was in order to measure this that I introduced the indicator designating the average level of education among mothers per class. According to my theory, insofar as this indicator significantly correlates with students' notions of continued education when checked against the individual influence of their parents' education, then some sort of contextual group influence may actually be taking place. The average level of education among mothers per class strongly influences the odds of students' choosing to study at universities or colleges. This plays a particularly strong role in the case of university study: in cases where the mothers' level of education is one unit higher than that of the given class, students are 3 times more likely to choose universities as opposed to other types of training than students in classes where the mothers' average level of education is one unit lower.

Incorporated in the model, indicators measuring the social capital of students do not significantly improve its explanatory power, but they do comprise an important part of it. The number of information channels (network) only plays a role in the case of university study. The selection of teachers as role models, which assumes that an excellent communicative relationship exists between the teacher and the student, more than doubles the odds of a student choosing secondary school. It is interesting that the inclusion of this variable in the model once again made the type of settlement in question an important factor. In the third model, this factor was made les important by the specific indicators and the mix of students at the given school since its influence could primarily be felt through these. At the same time, the appearance of the teacher as a role model reflected a higher ratio of urban students who chose secondary schools over trade schools. This can be attributed to the different way in which urban and rural students regard their teachers. A higher ratio of children in small communities claimed the teacher was their role model (in the sampling, 10% listed their teacher in first, second, or third place), but this does not have any special effect on notions of

[5] At the same time, it is possible that these schools attract the most talented students – independently of their parents' level of education. Once again, a clear answer would require data on student achievement.

continued education. In contrast, fewer urban children designated their teacher as a role model, but among those who did, a far greater ratio would continue their studies in secondary school rather than vocational school (*see Fig. 2*). This may correlate with the results of public opinion surveys concerning education, according to which the higher someone's level of education is, the more critical they are of the educational system. Probably due to their low level of social contacts, students in smaller communities are generally more accepting of their teachers and choose them as role models more frequently without this having any influence on their career choices. Urban students are far more critical, which means that if they choose teachers as their role models, the decision is more likely to be a rational one rather than an emotional one (this of course does not mean that there is no emotional contact between students and teachers). This influence is far stronger among boys, and in their case, a good relationship with a teacher can radically increase the level of their career aspirations.

Figure 2. The direction of continued education among 13-year olds who claim and do not claim the teacher as their role model, based on the type of settlement, 1997 (%)

Role model	Trade school	Vocational school	Secondary school	Total
CITY				
Teacher not mentioned	94,50	91,45	87,78	90,25
Teacher mentioned	5,50	8,55	12,22	9,75
Total	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00
VILLAGE				
Teacher not mentioned	86,62	83,88	85,11	84,99
Teacher mentioned	13,38	16,12	14,89	15,01
Total	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00

Among 17-year olds, those who consider learning important and value the significance of the school are more likely to choose university or college in order to continue their education than other forms of training. Taking into account both the type of secondary school and the importance of learning also significantly influenced the data with regards to differences between genders. Typically, girls attach far greater importance to learning than boys (*see Figure 5. – Model 4.*). Consequently, insofar as girls and boys are studying in the same type of institution and attach equal importance to learning, boys will aspire to university more than girls. It is clear that girls' commitment to learning is higher - perhaps because they generally have a greater tendency to follow norms - but the role of the school and the teacher with regards to continued education can be a prominent influence in the case of boys. Moreover, the gender of the teacher may also be of significance in this process. Since there are few male teachers, boys have a much fewer models to follow in the course of their school career, hence if they happen to meet an outstanding male teacher, this can be a decisive turning point.

Figure 3. The importance of learning among 17-year olds according to gender, 1999 (%)

	Not Important	Less Important	Important	Very important	Total
Boys	82,61	63,23	50,63	39,31	49,14
Girls	17,39	36,77	49,37	60,69	50,86
	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00

Figure 4. The analysis of choices (secondary school and specialised secondary school) using multinomial logistic regression, Exp. B.

	Secondary school				Specialised Secondary school			
Ref.: trade school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Grade point average	1,343	1,355	1,343	1,344	1,189	1,197	1,192	1,197
Boy Ref: Girl	0,483	0,489	0,472	0,491	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Father has no GCSE	0,162	0,171	0,186	0,194	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Father has GCSE Ref: Father is university graduate	0,259	0,227	0,225	0,237	n.s.	0,409	n.s.	n.s.
Mother has no GCSE	0,123	0,129	0,211	0,207	0,248	0,253	0,282	0,285
Mother has GCSE Ref: Mother is university graduate	0,272	0,253	0,326	0,331	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Urban school Ref.: Village school		2,479	n.s.	1,732		1,577	n.s.	1,493
Békéscsaba and vicinity		1,916	1,889	1,865		n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Kecskemét and vicinity Ref: Szombathely and vicinity		0,613	0,396	0,393		0,646	n.s.	n.s.
Number of students per teacher			1,249	1,251			n.s.	n.s.
Mothers' average level of education per class			1,533	1,522			n.s.	n.s.
Network				n.s.				n.s.
Teacher is role model				2,208				n.s.
Cox and Snell	0,409	0,434	0,464	0,468				

Figure 5. The analysis of choices (university and college) using multinomial logistic regression, Exp. B.

	University				College			
Ref.: Other training	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Grade point average	1,336	1,335	1,283	1,244	1,121	1,120	1,096	1,082
Boy Ref: Girl	2,334	2,356	3,111	3,445	1,247	1,238	1,650	1,745
Father has no GCSE	0,196	0,206	0,335	0,303	0,468	0,482	0,582	0,547
Father has GCSE Ref: Father is university graduate	0,457	0,480	0,584	0,537	0,686	0,702	n.s.	n.s.
Mother has no GCSE	0,167	0,171	0,585	0,609	0,355	0,361	n.s.	n.s.
Mother has GCSE Ref: Mother is university graduate	0,368	0,377	0,661	n.s.	0,630	0,636	n.s.	n.s.
Urban school Ref.: Village school		1,464	1,517	1,467		n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Békéscsaba and vicinity		0,726	n.s.	n.s.		0,742	n.s.	n.s.
Kecskemét and vicinity Ref: Szombathely and vicinity		n.s.	1,953	2,010		n.s.	1,380	1,406
Mothers' average level of education per class			2,983	3,115			1,788	1,862
Secondary school			9,391	8,610			14,532	13,991
Vocational school Ref.: Trade school			5,625	5,539			14,878	14,806
Network				1,240				n.s.
The significance of school				1,318				1,317
The importance of learning				2,097				1,487
Cox and Snell	0,376	0,382	0,520	0,533				

Summary

The decision to continue one's education is one of the most important in our lives, along with employment and marriage, and the paths that result from further education determine our unique career in life. In this case, individuals make a decision that requires them to take many factors into account simultaneously. The decision can be influenced by both individual and contextual factors. In addition to family background, the education level of parents, their financial situation, the individual's own abilities and what is offered by educational institutions, there are also contextual factors that help the individual find their place in society. The family and the school both play a prominent role in this process. The marks students receive are the most obvious feedback they are given in regards to where they can rank themselves. Moreover, the aura of the given school, the preparedness of teachers and the family background of students can also have a strong influence. Although the decision to continue education is an individual one, it crystallizes through interaction with others. It is not only the information content of conversations in the family, with teachers and classmates that can be decisive, but also the nature of these discussions. What a personal relationship is like, how various social groups relate to one another (family, school, class, friends) and whether this leads to the development of a strong and positive set of norms are factors that can fundamentally determine a student's career choices. Relationships between mother and child, parents and teachers, and social interaction between children can either serve to strengthen, but also weaken the other. In reality, it is in school that children first encounter the broader scope of society, and yet the school is greatly influenced by the culture of the local society around it and the attitude of its students' families. The elite in local society play an essential role in the development of local educational policy. This influences what schools have to offer, enrolment practice and the degree of segregation. The more hierarchical and ordered a society, the more its elite are willing to influence school policy so as to ensure their beneficial position in society i.e. strengthening the status quo. The less obvious the process, the more successful it is. Today, the reproduction of financial and cultural capital takes place in a regulated form, and yet in the case of social capital, these processes are less visible. For today's elite, it is becoming increasingly obvious that where and what the child learns is not important, but with whom. This is the process for which the school is intentionally or unintentionally at fault since it is in the course of selection supported by pedagogical principles that homogenous learning environments are formed where social capital and the odds of improving it are divided on an extremely unequal basis.

The decision to continue education is merely an issue of cultural orientation, but also one of rational consideration in finding the mutual congeries of desire and opportunity. The individual's attitude towards time is critical when weighing the costs and the benefits of further education. The more someone is capable of visualising the future (which in itself is a kind of social capital), the more information they have and the older they are, the more capable they are of making rational considerations. Since rational calculation is systematically influenced by cognitive embedment, reinterpreting a decision may lead to changes in preference. With decisions concerning continued education, we can see that the more information someone has about their chances, the greater the role of rational consideration. In the case of young people, it is natural that they are better able to visualise the outcome of short-term decisions than that of long-term decisions, hence marks played a strong role in education continued after primary school (cost and benefit calculation), and with regards to long-term education following the secondary level, cultural influences became stronger. Actually, culture limits rational activity. People are primarily driven by their own interests and values, or norms, and these two principles demand a "usefulness" that cannot be traced back to either (Szántó, 1999). The children of less educated parents react more sensitively to

the information transmitted by marks when making decisions about further education. In other words, they only continue their studies at institutions where the type of training is time-consuming (secondary school) if they have a strong chance of success. In the case of more educated parents, there is not such a close connection between marks and the intention to continue education. This can be explained in two ways. On one hand, it can be assumed that more educated parents also have a higher income, and so are better able to shoulder the risk that their child who is a weak learner will drop out early on (rational decision). On the other hand, data suggests that there is another explanation: among the children of educated parents, the norms that assume the absolute value of further education have such a strong influence that they are inhibited in making a rational decision.

The decisions of individuals are fundamentally influenced by the environment in which they live. This is primarily manifest in the network of contact maintained with other individuals and the communication that takes place between them. The nature of the microenvironment (family, school, class, friends and local conditions) strongly effects the student's decision. This is important because in addition to the role of financial and cultural capital, in the case of education, the value of social capital increases, which primarily means the system of relationships between people. The wider this network, the more information that can be accessed through it, and the richer the communication, the greater the student's advantage in terms of scholastic progress. At the same time, both financial and cultural capital play an important role in the formation of social capital. The availability of financial capital relieves the family of direct economic constraints, leaving children with more time to acquire cultural capital. The acquisition of cultural capital, however, also assumes the presence of social capital since the incorporation and acquisition of culture in reality is only possible to imagine in an active, communicative relationship. In today's society, where marketing activity, the media and politics are important, yet overvalued elements in the theatre of our lives, communication skills as the ability to maintain and broaden relationships between people can drastically influence the social status of an individual. The Internet has radically changed the way we communicate and acquire knowledge, and it is no longer our schooling and knowledge that help us to get along in life so much as our ability to stay informed and navigate through the vast heap of information accessible to us. Consequently, the wider someone's network is, and the more they are able to maintain and utilise it, the more they will be able to gain quick access to the information, resources and help they need in everyday life. Today, continued education does not so much reflect the intent to acquire as much knowledge as possible, but rather an effort to gain concentrated access to a wide network of contacts. Students at an elite school use not only their family's resources, but also the resources of their classmates and their families, and at a later stage, these contacts can be further strengthened – among others through continued education and employment. Recognising this - if not always consciously – is also what leads to the development of elite schools, thus reinforcing downward selection as well.

At present, a "feudalistic" reproduction of social capital is taking place along with increasingly unequal distribution, which stems from the nature of the reproduction itself. The divergent mix of schools fundamentally redistributes "utilities" and places individuals on new paths towards growth or failure, even against their own will. Social capital is common welfare, something which the individual has little influence over, and it generally comes about as the external consequence of unintentional acts. This is the process that has happened and is happening in the Hungarian school system today, where methods of selection always in existence have been revived by the appearance of 6- or 8-grade secondary school programs. Elite schools born of this process were not established for the expressed purpose of providing

the social elite with an opportunity to isolate themselves from other layers of society. Historical traditions, financing constraints and the incompetence of local governments also played a role in their development, but since the social capital of the communities that have formed in such schools is extremely strong and can also be multiplied within a closed system, the creation of such externals leads this kind of system to reproduce itself again and again. In part, the increasingly unequal distribution taking place via the school system serves to ensure the isolated status of the elite social order, an elite which today is characterised not only by cultural capital, but also an abundant supply of social capital. Maintaining this position, however, means that other social strata are deprived of quality training, which decreases the potential knowledge of society as a whole. This is in fact a consequence of the strong selection mechanism that exists in the Hungarian school system. The mechanism itself is not always clear for the layman either. While the obvious method of admission is limited and regulated by law, other less obvious methods – operating in the guise of democracy, allegedly increasing equal opportunity - are allowed to flourish. A prime example is the process of admission to institutions of secondary education. The entrance exam itself became a standardised, uniform test of competency as of the 1999/2000 school year. The intended goal behind the introduction of this test was to provide equal opportunity to those applying for admission to secondary schools so that the truly worthy could also gain entrance to the best schools, and not only those whose parents could afford to pay foe private lessons. For this reason, the entrance exam focuses not on knowledge, but on logical skills which are theoretically independent of family background and reflect the "genuine" abilities of the applicant. At the same time, sociological surveys do not testify to any change having occurred in the student mix at elite schools, or that these schools have become any more open to the children of strata who have less cultural and social capital at their disposal. There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, logical skills are not entirely independent of cultural capital within a given family. Secondly, the new type of entrance exam that has appeared in the Hungarian school system is one that Hungarian schools do not prepare students for at all. As a consequence, practice of the skills necessary to perform on competency tests (which can be developed just as any other kind of skill) can only take place outside of the school. In order for someone to recognise this and mobilise resources, they must have an overview of how the entire Hungarian school system functions. It is rather members of the social elite who have the most appropriate information and resources as opposed to other strata. Moreover, it is not at all in the interest of primary schools to begin training students for continued education in 6- or 8-grade **secondary schools** because otherwise they would lose their most talented students, making it more difficult to finance the given institution and threatening the future of its teachers. At the same time, children from families where the range of cultural and social capital is less extensive can only prepare for such exams with the help of the school, thus precisely those students for whom the school provides the only possibility for advancement are the ones who are placed at a disadvantage. By means of subject teaching, they are more prepared for an entrance exam based on subject knowledge, and lacking the proper training and information, have no chance of competing. Furthermore, oral exams have remained a dominant element of the admission process, where a relatively wide point margin makes it possible for teachers to accept those who "fit" in the school. In this way, the standard competency test has done everything but increase the odds of disadvantaged students being accepted to elite secondary schools.

The enrolment policy and admissions strategy of schools - which is also supported by motivated parents – serves to maintain the selection mechanism since this makes it possible to establish elite communities where social capital can be multiplied. This, however, also leads to the formation of communities where negative processes may begin due to the low level of

social capital. In schools with less prestige, this launches a process of counter-selection in which both students and teachers see their position as a losing one, thus further decreasing their already weak level of self-confidence. Schools with a large concentration of disadvantaged students also begin to experience counter-selection among teachers (and these schools are kept alive and reproduced by the isolation strategy of the elite). Weak self-confidence, disbelief in one's own abilities and narrow outlook work to reinforce negative attitudes towards learning – after all, even the teacher, who is the only representative of the intelligentsia at such schools, is not necessarily a positive role model either. Such an environment not only does not improve the future opportunities of young people, but in fact makes them worse since this kind of contextual influence can decrease the value of future benefit and put students in a situation worse than the one they would have in an environment that was less characterised by "bottom-up homogeneity". By isolating themselves, the elite deprive other strata of the chance to expand their social capital, which could in part be accomplished in the course of interaction with the elite. Breaking out of this trap would require that the elite be willing to sacrifice certain benefits i.e. it would require social solidarity based on the notion that social integrity and the quality of knowledge decrease in proportion to the unequal distribution of social capital.

In the view of Emile Durkheim, one function of the division of labour in society is to inspire feelings of solidarity in people, thus creating one of the necessary conditions for social integration. This simultaneously assumes a frequency of social interaction and the uninhibited flow of communication among the members of society. The division of labour therefore makes possible the concentrated development of unique forms of social contact, which Granovatter referred to as bridge-like weak ties (Szántó, 1999). The strength of these ties/bonds may range from superficial acquaintances to deep friendship. At the same time, one of Granovetter's most important conclusions was that weak ties are far more likely to bridge the gap between local groups of individuals with strong attachments to one another than strong bonds (*Granovetter, 1985*). The more weak ties exist within a given group, the greater the group cohesion will be. These acquaintances play an important role in finding various opportunities for mobility at a later stage. Taking all this into consideration, for children in families who have no sensible contacts beyond a network of relatives and neighbours, the social capital established by the family can be utilised in the interest of gaining access to resources found exclusively within their direct physical environment. Since these are generally of poor quality, not much advantage can be gained from them, and this makes the credibility of adults questionable when they attempt to control their children's behaviour (*Fernandez Kelly, 1998*). There is no way to establish a strong norm (social capital) whereby the credible and consistent expectations of adults can in turn contribute to the development of a strong set of norms and orientation to the future in their children. A separate problem is the fact that frequently teachers also lose their credibility in the eyes of these children. Due to territorial segregation and school selection, teachers in such schools also come to see their own situation as a failure, hence no network forms between parents and educators in which they could develop a firm local set of norms by reinforcing each other through continuous communication. Beyond the fact that poor networks do not facilitate the development of strong norms, they also deprive disadvantaged children of the chance to break out of their situation by using external contacts. An important trait of contact networks is multiplicity, meaning the extent to which the network of social contacts is made up of individuals with divergent social status who maintain a variety of contacts with one another. Groups of varying size become integrated society through personal contact (*Fernandez Kelly, 1998*). In the event that society is torn into isolated, homogeneous groups, this kind of multiplicity does not develop. The selective mechanism in Hungarian schools fosters the development of a caste

system in which individuals from groups with modest social capital hardly make contact with those who have widespread social capital at their disposal. Already in the early stages of training, we can witness the appearance of Roma schools where the children are almost hermetically sealed off from members of society (other children) who have more extensive contact networks. A variable network would make it possible for individuals to utilise the resources of others through "weak ties." Students who are disadvantaged (small communities, schools with a unique student mix, uneducated parents etc.) may have strong contacts with friends and family (strong bonds), but they have no contact with other social networks (weak ties) which control their access to opportunities, for example information concerning the opportunities offered by different schools in the case of continued education. One recommended solution to this deadlock is to extend the networks of disadvantaged children, bringing them into lasting contact with individuals who have a wider perspective and a stronger image of the future (*Fernandez Kelly, 1998*). This certainly means having to improve the quality of educators in schools where there is a weak mix of students since it is primarily through teachers that disadvantaged students can increase both their cultural and social capital.

In light of the above, schools can play a decisive role in producing and distributing social capital. In the case of decisions concerning further education, we can see that the education of parents can exert its influence on an individual level and through the class environment. In classes where the majority of parents hold diplomas, career aspirations are even higher than those which could be expected on the basis of individual parents' level of education. This influence also works in reverse. It was when I was trying to ascertain the influence of the school on decisions regarding continued education that I most strongly recognised the unintentional effect produced by the selection mechanism, where schools actually reinforce the advantages and disadvantages that children bring with them from the family by forming homogeneous classes. In a peculiar way, the factors that come about based on performance indicators in schools (exclusive, integrative) also suggest that the school does not play an especially positive role with regards to decisions concerning further education. At any rate, it should be made clear that the school plays a role in developing notions of further education that extends beyond the influence of the family, but this role - which can be attributed to undifferentiated pedagogy - comes about as a negative external of homogenisation.

The contextual influence according to which the level of career aspirations among students is higher in classes where their parents' education is also at a high level can be explained in several ways. 1.) It is possible that marks given in classes with a better student mix reflect a higher level of achievement than identical marks in classes with a worse mix, hence marks given in classes with a good mix have a higher value, and students are also aware of this. 2.) Students who are placed in classes with a better mix are generally more talented, yet they may also come from a less educated family. Therefore, students with more humble family backgrounds who attend such classes already have better individual capability from the start. 3.) It may be that a kind of "bandwagon" effect is at work – "Hurry up, or we'll be left behind!" – where a majority of students with high aspirations pull the rest of their classmates along with them. 4.) It is also possible that the educators teaching in these schools are so good that they are capable of compensating for the initial drawbacks suffered by disadvantaged pupils. Unfortunately, we could only test these theories in light of reliable information on the cognitive abilities of students and also on the work of teachers.

Moreover, the role that selectivity in the school system plays with regards to the redistribution of social positions is not independent from the structure of the local society. The three regions examined in the survey comprise three local societies with radically different culture, traditions and structures. It is peculiar that these differences could also be perceived in data from several different sources. Data on the effectiveness of primary schools (failure, the ratio of repeated years and private student), development plans for counties and local municipalities as well as data on 13 and 17-year old students all reflect these differences. Society in Kecskemét and its general vicinity is characterised by a unique set of Christian-conservative values, a highly selective school system and an extremely strong local hierarchy. The school system in Békéscsaba and the surrounding area represents a higher ratio of vocational training, educational policy places a stronger focus on social sensitivity and local society holds an average level of education, comprising a relatively homogeneous environment. Perhaps Szombathely and its vicinity represent the strongest signs of modernity; local society is relatively homogenous and the majority of local residents are educated. The local school system is neither integrative nor selective, but rather uniquely individualistic. Due to better family conditions, the majority of students do not require the social assistance of schools, but since local society is less hierarchical, there is no desire for isolation of the kind that could have contributed to the development of a selective school system and 6- or 8-grade secondary schools.

How schools function in these three regions also suggest that the elite of today protect their status with the expanded reproduction of social capital. This means that groups belonging to the elite function in a closed order, for which the selective school provides the framework. The elite multiplies its power through a wide-ranging network of contacts (since it also has quasi-access to others' capital), but its isolation from other social strata (see elite secondary schools and classes with a homogenous mix) deprives groups with less social capital of the opportunity to accumulate this type of capital. In principle, a less selective school system could make it possible for the disadvantaged to profit from gaining contact with students and families with greater social capital, but this is not necessarily in the interest of the more advantaged since it would threaten their elite status; sharing their social capital would serve to decrease its rare value. The significance of social capital rises due to the fact that the channels for transmitting economic and cultural capital today are more regulated and limited, while the stable benefits secured via contact networks are less visible. Severely decreasing selectivity in the school system would be one way to alleviate the unequal distribution of social capital since it is precisely when as many people as possible come in close contact with one another that social capital increases. Steps to decrease selection would require the elite to recognise that if they insist on maintaining the status that results from the unequal distribution of social capital, they will decrease the global potential of social capital. Higher economic performance and scholastic achievement in countries with more democratic and less selective school systems shows that social capital can be transformed into cultural and economic capital. In this way, those who inhibit the growth of both cultural and economic capital by concentrating social capital will inevitably fall behind in the competition between nations.

This dissertation only gives fragmental answers to the fundamental question of what role the school plays in the development of students' decisions with regards to further education. It has also been suggested in connection with the PISA survey that weaker students in a homogeneous school environment do not meet with appropriate models to follow and receive insufficient help. In a highly selective school system, it is easier to guide weak students towards a less demanding scholastic career than to make efforts to help them bridge

the gap. The homogeneous school environment does not even inspire educators to use a personalised approach. Moreover, a disadvantaged and homogeneous school community in all certainty decreases the aspirations of already disadvantaged families (parents and children) while doing exactly the opposite in the case of students with more favourable circumstances (*Education Policy Analysis, 2002*).

Although the results presented here primarily suggest the indirect negative influence of schools, in places where teachers can become role models for children, they can also perceptibly increase the level of aspirations for further education. Those who regard the school as important have better odds of gaining entrance to universities than to colleges. Educators in schools where the teacher acts as a role model, or where students attach great importance to the school are most certainly devoted pedagogues who care about young people and handle them with great competence, setting an attractive example for their students. A good school atmosphere and the commitment of educators can be especially helpful in raising the aspirations of students who have modest social capital as a consequence of their disadvantaged circumstances – so that learning becomes important to these students due to the positive influence of the school. Since this remains even when we take the school mix or the background of its students into consideration, it is likely that we are witnessing some sort of pure pedagogical influence. Unfortunately, this dissertation is unable to shed light on more, which is also due to the nature of the available data; we had little information about either the work of teachers in the classroom or the actual scholastic performance of students. It is likely that in the future it will be impossible to conduct even a single piece of research on the influence of the school, its efficiency or its effectiveness without such information.

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