

Does cultural capital matter in professional settings? Educational value profiles among the personnel in kindergartens

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Abstract

This article presents a study on plausible correlations between social background and educational values in a group of 700 employees in 80 Danish kindergartens. It investigates whether the pedagogical efforts of the staff are indebted to their living milieus of upbringing.

The basic premises of research are developed along Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, outlined in the concept of "normative acts", which also serves as a point of departure for the research design. Employing the multiple correspondence analyses in continuation of the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu, the first section of the questionnaire used gathers information on the respondents' capital assets. In the second section, participants are asked a number of value questions based on the framework of Mary Douglas. Subsequently, I examine the structural interrelationship between the two sections.

The research results show that the respondents typically share pedagogical values across social background, age, and position in the professional job hierarchy. However, it also shows that there are correlations between the possession of acquired capital and particular educational values.

Keywords

Pre-school; educational values; profession; social class; multiple correspondence analyses; Bourdieu

Introduction and progress

It is a common popular saying that “if you aren’t a preschool teacher the very day you enter the teacher training college, you will never succeed!” Even though it is a rather bold statement, it can help to draw attention towards the capabilities, resources, and assets that students bring to their teacher education. Stated in general terms, I ask if social-class background has some specific impact on a professional’s set of ideas, values, and practices. In specific terms, I investigate how patterns of social inheritance and assets accumulated over the course of one’s life might relate to patterns of educational propensities.

The following section provides the theoretical premises of the research project, which examines educational values in professional settings. The challenge is to develop a framework that simultaneously captures educational practice and pedagogical discourses using data from questionnaires administered to kindergarten employees. Bourdieu’s (1990, 1997) theory of practice fulfils this purpose as I initially develop the concept of “normative acts”. This construction of the research object draws on historical epistemology, adapted to sociological research (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1991). Following this point of departure is the outline of research design, analysis, findings, and conclusions. As the title of this paper suggests, I investigate whether, among kindergarten staff, differences in composition and volume of some capital assets correspond with differences in educational values.

An outline of normative acts

The educator is usually competent in his or her work, due to a volume of bodily practical knowledge, which in all regards differs from their consciously contemplative relationship to the world (Bourdieu, 2000). One could also argue that successful educational actions are the calculated results of rational choices; or that opinions guide practice by chance like dice rolls in a game of Yahtzee. However, both alternatives—competence as either rational calculation or chance—are difficult to argue within a theory of action. In this regard, one could rather say that a pedagogical discourse—being advice, instructions, or theories of education—can *accompany* the educators’ practices (Bourdieu, 1997).

Yet educational practices and the associated accompanying pedagogical discourses have something in common; educational work settings are permeated with exchanges of opinions and attitudes, adherence to values, choices of preference, and moral judgments. The educational work in the kindergarten can therefore be considered as continuous normative work comprising two complementarities: “work of appreciations” and its counterparts of “disapproval”, “displeasure”, or “distaste” (Olsen, 2007). According to Bourdieu, normative acts are generated by a given *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1997). *Habitus* is a system of embodied dispositions that organize the ways in which individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it. People with a similar social background usually share these dispositions. Thus, the *habitus* represents the way group culture and personal history shape the body and the mind, and as a result, prepare an individual for social action in the present. The practical capacity of *habitus* is generative and creative, but within the limits of both its origin and actual external social constraints (Bourdieu, 1990). There is a mutual attraction between *habitus* and *field*, that is, between the *habitus* of the preschool teachers and the educational field of kindergartens (Bourdieu, 2000). A *field* can be regarded as a small community of its own, a relatively autonomous system of relationships between agents, each one struggling to promote their own visions and to

accumulate their share of desirable resources under competitive circumstances. These resources are measured as forms of “capital” such as cultural, social, and economic capital. However, beneath such differences in views and consequent disputes, one also tacitly shares common beliefs, the field’s *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1997).

The focus of this project is here where the socialized body of the preschool teachers meets the social environment of the kindergarten. In theoretical terms, normative acts come true in the habitus’ meeting with a field, governed by practical sense. This *practical sense* operates without conscious reflection or other sorts of logical control: “It is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 69)¹. Practical sense is a bodily self-evident way to relate to the world and as such does not require any sort of explicit knowledge as prerequisite. As the preschool teacher engages in everyday working life in the kindergarten with familiarity and confidence he uses his bodily knowledge, he

knows the world, but with a knowledge which, as Merleau-Ponty showed, is not set up in the relation of externality a knowing consciousness. He knows it, in a sense, too well, without objectifying distance, takes it for granted, precisely because he is caught up in it, bound up with it; he inhabits it like a garment [*un habit*] or a familiar habitat (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 142–143).

If the agent is taken out into a pedagogical discussion, this situation inclines him to take up a point of view on his own practice that is neither that of action nor that of pedagogical theory: by this attempt to express his practice, he has already lost any chance to express the truth about it.

Simply because he is questioned, and questions himself, about the reason and the *raison d’être* of his practice, he cannot communicate the central point, which is that the very nature of practice is that it excludes the question. His remarks convey this primary truth of primary experience only by omission, through the silences and ellipses of self-evidence (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 91).

Even if he is questioned on his practice in a manner well adapted to the workspace’s familiar language, the preschool teachers’ answers remain pure guesswork: the truth about the practice is that he is blind to his own truth (Bourdieu, 1990). The agent thus cannot pass on the truth about his own practice, but only reconstruct it as discourse and thus in a completely different register than that of the body. This leaves the respondent using the arbitrary battery of legitimate pedagogical discourses that are at hand and that are already authorized in the field.

Works of normative acts thus become apparent when the preschool teacher’s socialized body encounters the kindergarten’s educational environment. It is the near-perfect accomplished encounter of the habitus with the kindergarten field: the preschool teacher is recognised as a professional as she is being embraced and taken in its possession.

Due to the qualities of social inertia defined by stability, regularity, and resilience of practical educational enterprises, the preschool teachers’ normative acts are stable over time. In spite of being creative in her repertoire of actions, children and colleagues will notice some recurring patterns in her behaviour, regardless of whether they like what they see or not. This construct of normative acts, alongside Bourdieu’s theory of practice, is crucial as it counteracts a basic assumption in modern education. Peters (2004) shows how these discourses are typically indebted to an implicit vision of subjectivity that places

mind over body, giving sovereignty to a more or less refined conscious will in matters of educational practice.

The present study uses a questionnaire; however, understanding normative acts call for more specific determinations of what informs the respondents' answers in the questionnaire. To study the dimension of normative educational acts, respondents are asked to choose between two contradicting value statements over 26 questions, covering 13 pedagogical themes. Here is one example addressing the theme of preparing the children's transition to school:

The views expressed come two by two: tick off the one in each pair you like the best.

- Children need some support to cope with the transition to school, that is why we must see to it that they get able to receive a collective message and become self-reliant with some practical matters.
- The children's school life will be a landmark for them; therefore, I see it as an important task that in pre-school they learn something basic about letters, numbers and nature.

First and foremost, the selection between the two views is to be made from a situation away from the present challenges in everyday work life in the kindergarten with all of its recurring and recognizable demands as well as its unpredictability. The two statements refer to some general issues that kindergarten staff members are supposed to be able to recognize and associate with. The two views are thus not about what the respondent ought to do in a specific, urgent, here-and-now situation, but what one feels should be done in general. The research project's overarching epistemological, theoretical, and methodological question is: what happens when a person with a particular habitus is confronted with a dilemma and asked to react to, and select from two contradictory solutions? It is obvious that there is no "correct" answer: no matter how strong respondents try to calculate their choice, they cannot determine a "correct" answer because it does not exist as such. The important point with this research design is that the act of choosing one statement over the other draws on emotional resources of the respondent and thus leans heavily on level of the body (i.e., the habitus) and not the level of representations (i.e., discourses). Thus, the choices offered are constructed to avoid instrumental adherence to legal, dominating, and common normative views to be found in discourses already circulating both in the professional sphere of kindergarten pedagogy as well as in influential fields such as those of politics and public administration.

In this regard, the dilemma is answered in the indeterminate situation of the habitus' encounter with the kindergarten field. This gives the questionnaire scenario a strict resemblance to the lively kindergarten environment and perhaps recurrent pedagogical discussion within the whole staff group. Accordingly, the situational act of choosing the preferred statement is homologous to the single staff members' every day social encounters in the kindergarten. By this argument, there are close affinities between the dispositions generating normative acts and the choice of value statements in the questionnaire.

However, there is more to this; one may question if the artificial and disengaged situation of filling out the questionnaire is similar to everyday life. If the respondent's acts induced by the survey situation happen to be a mere laboratory artefact, then the complete

educational sense is lost. Under such a condition, the respondent's choice is related to her reactions in real kindergarten situations, in the same way that folklorized rites, performed for the benefit of tourists, compare to the urgency and imperative of rites in the living tradition (Bourdieu, 1990). This is just what the dilemma questions aim to elicit as they awaken some emotional and bodily sentiments, which are characteristic for the respondents' working life situation in the kindergarten as well. Thus, it is intended to be the same habitual dispositions that generate both the respondents' selection of one choice over the other in the questionnaire and their everyday practices and activities in the kindergarten.

Research design

The research project's main purpose is to investigate a two interrelated questions, both of which are directed at understanding a kindergartens'—understood as a child's entry into the formal education system—possible contributions to the reproduction of social inequalities.

A range of research findings indicate a pattern where kindergartens in districts with parents who have a relatively high volume of economic, educational, and cultural resources typically use pedagogies that reflect the educational and cultural preferences of those families (e.g., Ball, Vincent, Kemp, & Pietikainen, 2004; Christensen, 1996; Lareau, 2003; Olsen, 2009; Stipek, Daniels, Galluzzo, & Milburn 1992; Vincent, Ball, & Kemp, 2004). Conversely, kindergartens in districts with parents sharing a relatively low volume of these assets also confirm and support the preferences of those families.

These findings gave rise to questions of whether such patterns of interrelationships could be explained by the recruitment of personnel: would staff members with a relatively high volume of inherited and accumulated capital assets seek their service in districts with comparable social standards? Conversely, would staff members with a relatively low volume of these assets seek to serve in comparable districts?

The overarching question of the project—and of this article—is thus whether the social recruitment of a kindergarten's pedagogical personnel can account for the differences between the kindergartens' educational efforts. Rephrased, I deal with the possible structural resemblances between the personnel's early upbringing and life course, and their expressed value preferences. The investigation is organized around a relational approach combined with use of a questionnaire.

The questionnaire was sent in 2009 to 1,130 leaders, preschool teachers, and educational assistants in 80 kindergartens in two Danish municipalities in the south-western part of Jutland, Denmark². The first part of the questionnaire requested information about the respondents' working conditions, the milieu of upbringing (including family, parents, geographical place, and school attendance), along with the respondents' use of a variety of professional and cultural resources. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 26 dilemma questions organized in 13 educational themes. The concept of capital, as developed and employed by Bourdieu, has guided the planning of the first part of the questionnaire. With this theoretical and methodological framework, it was possible to map two spaces by using multiple correspondence analyses (MCA; Roux & Rouanet, 2005). The MCA reveals the interrelation between many variables simultaneously, unlike the more commonly employed “variable sociology”, which seeks to isolate the effects of an independent variable on a dependent variable.

The idea behind this relational approach stems from Bourdieu's project and book *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 2002), which has inspired a large number of studies. The MCA first draws up a space of positions based on the respondents' stated upbringing environment, investment and participation in education, cultural consumption, and participation in local community life. This first map of *positions* shows the social structure of the group of respondents. It will subsequently be matched up with the second map of *stances*, that is, educational values. Further analysis will reveal whether there are patterns in the space of positions that match the structure in the space of educational stances. In this context, the question is whether the theory of habitus can help explain possible interrelations between the two spaces. Of the 1,130 questionnaires, 676 were returned, which equates to a response rate of 60%. The data set is a table matrix with a row for each respondent and 71 columns representing various forms of capital.

Resources among the respondents

Capitals are assets, which can be accumulated and then reinvested for one's own advantage (Bourdieu, 2004). The use of indicators for cultural and social capital is, in this study, intended to capture both the respondents' inheritance from upbringing environments and gains from their investments during their life course. For example, one form of cultural capital is indicated through the vocational education and training of the respondents' parents constitute; occupation is generally a good indicator of social position and can also provide information about the cultural resources that parents bring into family life (Bourdieu, 1987).

Table 1 contains the 24 indicators with a total of 71 categories that are used to construct the space of positions. In the middle column are the indicators of the different varieties of social and cultural capital. Cultural capital is further divided into five subtypes: inherited, school, educational, legitimate professional information, and cultural consumption.

The calculations of an MCA generate a space organized by two or more axes. One needs to know how many axes need to be included to explain the measures and the relative weight of each axis. To account for the relative importance of the first axes and to get a measure on the axes' relative weight, the modified eigenvalues for each axis are to be calculated (Roux & Rouanet, 2005). This calculation shows each axis' contribution to the construction of the space and serves to determine the number of axes to be included in the analysis so that at least 80% of the variance is explained. Thus, axes 1 to 3 explain 54.0, 20.1 and 7.0 percent of the variance, respectively, with a total of 81.1%.

The MCA produces two types of clouds that have to be analysed individually: first the cloud of individuals and then the cloud of categories. Figure 1 shows the first cloud with 682 individuals.

Table 1

Capital Forms, Variables, Indicators, and Active Categories

Capital forms	24 indicators	71 active categories
Inherited capital (4)	Mother's occupation	4
	Father's occupation	6
	Mother's vocational education	5
	Father's vocational education	5
Partner school and education capital (2)	Partner's upper secondary diploma	4
	Partner's vocational education	6
School capital (1)	Upper secondary graduation diploma	4
Legitimate professional information capital (4)	Having a position of trust in the kindergarten	2
	Attending Open University	2
	Reads trade union magazine	2
	Reads professional journals	2
Cultural consumption (11)	Attends amusement parks	3
	Attends cultural centres	2
	Joins the bingo hall	2
	Reads the regional newspaper	2
	Reads one of three nationwide "centre-left" newspapers	2
	Reads one of three nationwide "centre-right" newspapers	2
	Watches the regional TV broadcast	3
	Watches notable TV news programs and feature issues	3
	Watches reality TV and romance dating genre. Pay TV	2
	Watches recent satire comedies. Nationwide TV	2
	Watches comedy- or music-TV	2
Social capital (2)	Manager/assistant/board member/etc. within religious movements/ organizations	2
	Manager/assistant/board member/etc. within a political movement/organization	2

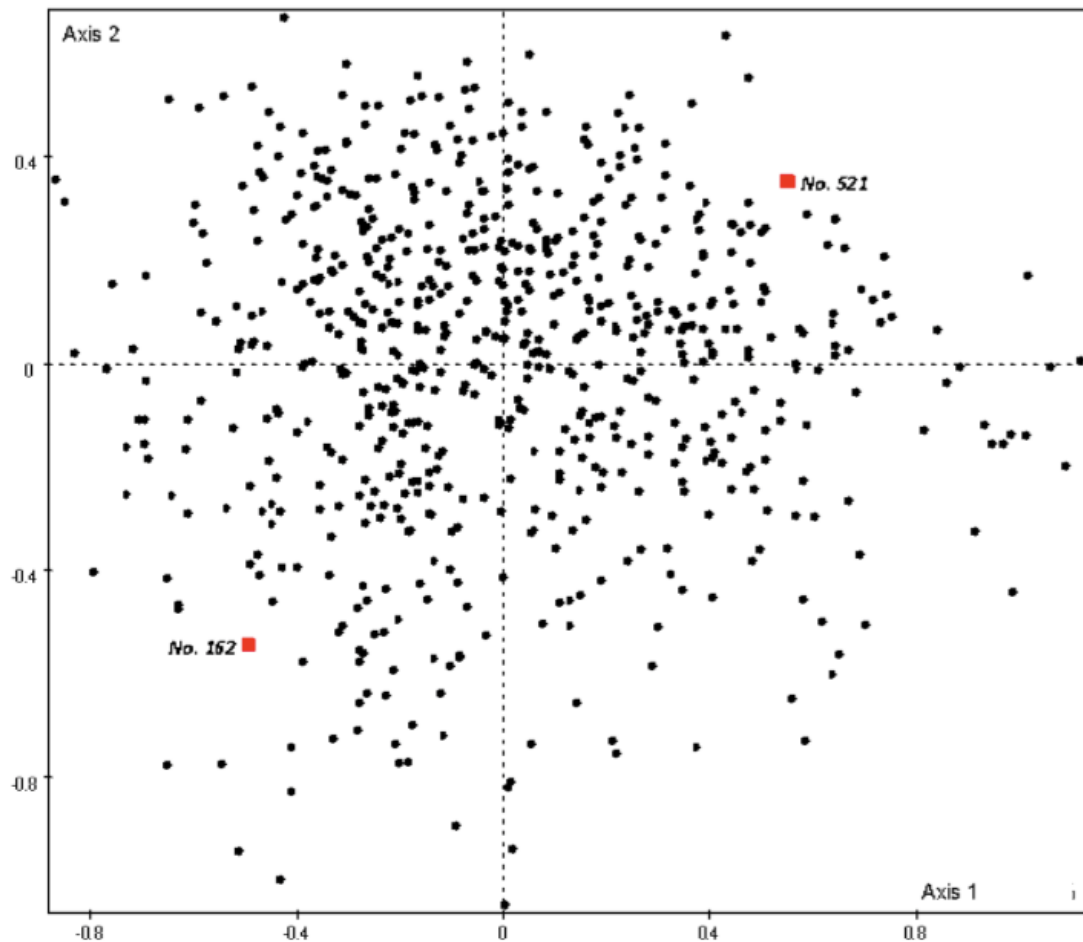


Figure 1. Cloud of individuals: horizontal first axis and vertical second axis with coordinates. Illustration of two random respondents No. 162 and No. 521.

Each dot in the map is a respondent. Two random respondents (Nos. 162 and 521) are selected in the cloud and marked with square and number. What is the structure hidden in the cloud? The following cloud of variables in Figure 2 will reveal the relationships. The graphical projection in this space shows an approximate circled concentration around the centre origo where the axes cross each other.

The following review of the structure of the spaces is based on statistical calculations of contributions to the axes. The absolute contribution is above average and therefore has the greatest impact on the three axes. The absolute contribution is calculated using the following formula (Hjellbrekke, 1999):

$$\left(\frac{f_k}{Q}\right) (y_{kl})^2$$

where f_k is the number of individuals with the value k , Q is the total number of questions, and y_{kl} is the axis coordinates of value k on the axis l . The following map in Figure 2 provides information on the categories that have the greatest impact on the structure of the group.

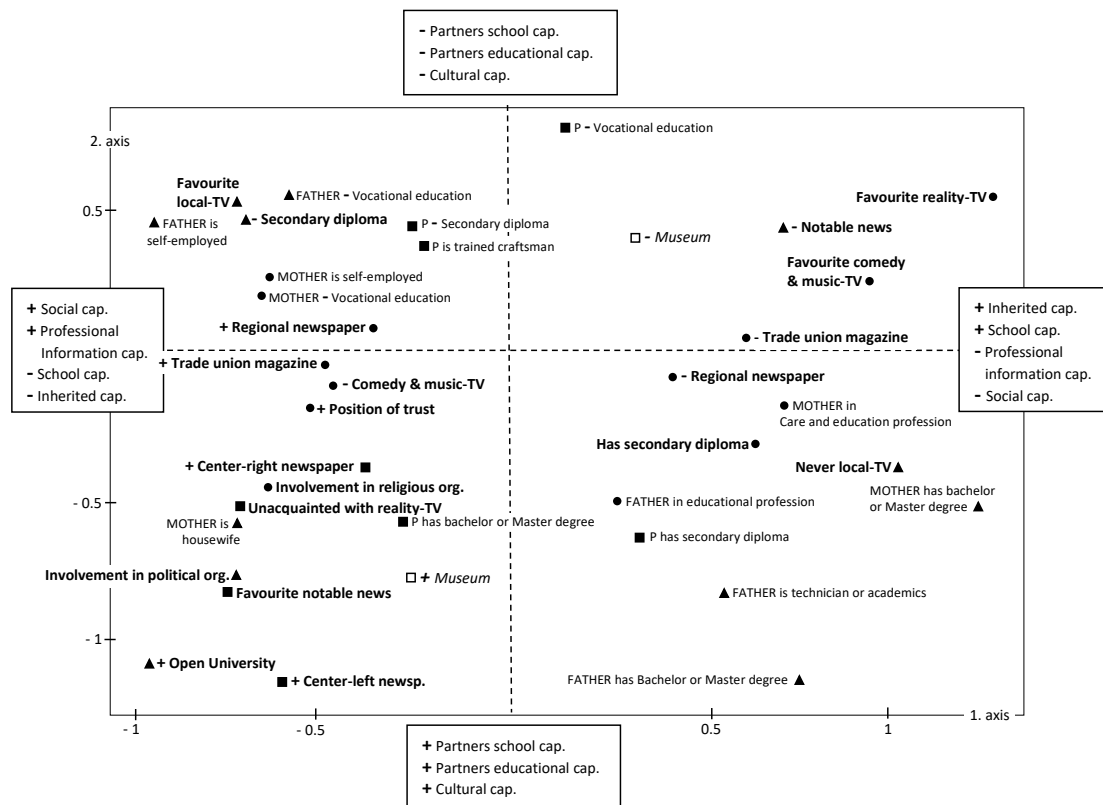


Figure 2. The space of positions based on indicators of inherited capital, school capital, professional information capital, cultural capital, social capital, partner's school, and educational capital. Negative sign (-) in front of a category refers to a position with a relatively small volume of this resource, and the positive sign (+) refers to a position with a relatively high volume; P is partner of the respondent. Categories closest to each other share many of the same individuals, and conversely, increased distance indicates less in common. My interpretation of the space appears in the four text boxes at the edge of the map, and is derived from the categories that have the greatest impact on the space's structure based on statistical calculations of their contribution to the axes. Categories with above average contributions to the horizontal axis are shown with a circle [●], to the second vertical axis with a square [■], and to both axes with a triangle [▲]. Bolded categories refer to the social characteristics of the respondents themselves.

Axis 1 (horizontal)

The categories with strongest impact on the first axis are inherited, school, and professional information capital (which includes reading the trade magazine and having position of trust in the kindergarten); the exact measures for both axes are to be retrieved in the appendix (Tables 3 and 4). Social capital, indicated by involvement in either religious or political organizations, also contributes to the first axis.

Axis 2 (vertical)

The second axis is mainly oriented by varieties of cultural capital in terms of knowledge-oriented cultural consumption, including the use of different media and attendance at Open University courses; the same goes for categories that relate to inherited capital in terms of parents' education and occupation. Not all this might come as a surprise; more remarkable is the strong impact that the range of capital assets of partner has on the axis. The use of partner variables is justified by the respondents' endogamous pairings based on education. 32.8% of respondents who had at least a secondary education diploma coupled with partner who also attained at least this level of education. Conversely, only 27.5% of the respondents without a secondary diploma were with partners who also did not have such an education (Olsen, 2015).

The space of positions reveals some strong divisions regarding social inheritance as well as professional and cultural investments; the *structure* of the space of positions is summarized in Figure 3:

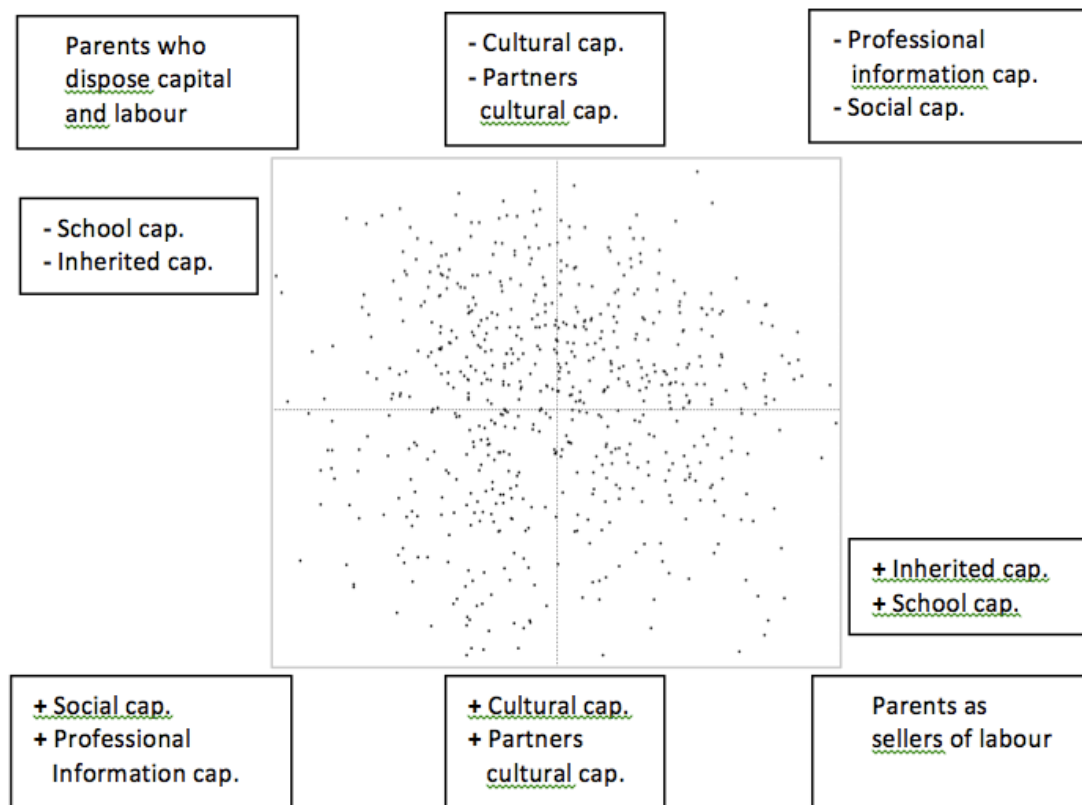
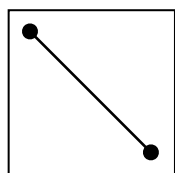


Figure 3. Structure of the space of positions, summarized from Figure 2. In the text boxes at the rim of the map, a negative sign (-) in front of a capital variable refers to a relatively small volume of the specific asset while a positive sign (+) refers to a capital variable of relatively high volume. The distance between the top-left quadrant and the bottom-right compares the social difference of a milieu of growth between self-employed fathers and parents as wage earners.

Regardless of form, the relatively largest amount of legitimate capital is concentrated in the lower half of the space and similarly, the relatively low volume concentrates at the top.

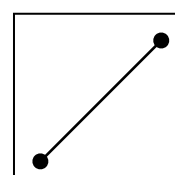
Together with differences in upbringing, environments of growth, as well as capital volume and composition, the kindergarten staff are revealed to have a series of latent inner tensions, shown as distances on the map. This suggests the need for an overall examination of the space of positions as it reveals a somewhat remarkable structure.

A polarized space of positions



The top-left quadrant in Figure 3 differs from the three others as it concentrates a milieu of growth with self-employed fathers representing a commercial enterprise that typically disposes capital and labour, employing personnel in, for instance, handcrafts or at an agricultural farm. Diagonally towards the bottom-right quadrant are parents as sellers of labour (i.e., wage earners). This diagonal represents a polarization of inherited capital, concerning the respondents' parents' position within the division of labour and distribution of occupational education. The top-left quadrant has a local orientation with preferences for reading the regional newspaper and having local television as favourite, but never meets the more challenging satire series. By contrast, positions toward the opposite end hold satire series as a favourite whilst at the same time states their unfamiliarity with local media.

The polarised diagonal also depicts a homology. In the top-left, ownership of capital and labour relate to wage earner positions. In the same way, in the bottom-right, the relatively lower volume of inherited and school capital among the oldest respondents relate to positions with a relatively high volume of the same capital variants of the youngest respondents. The line thus depicts a homology that reflects the era in which the respondents grew up. One can assume that there were relatively more self-employed enterprises in the epoch the oldest respondents grew up in (the 1950s and 1960s), compared that of the youngest of the respondents (being 18 years of age). Since the beginning of the 1960s, successive generations have had even greater access to cultural capital—not least school capital, due to a general cultural change and, above all, the expansion of the whole school and educational system.



The bottom-left to top-right diagonal is polarized as well. Towards the bottom-left of the space, there is a concentration of a relatively high volume of social and legitimate professional information capital, in contrast to the top-right position. The italicised category “Museum” in Figure 2, which includes attendance of art museums or art galleries, is passive, which means that it does not contribute to the construction of the space. However, it illustrates how the polarization includes a wide range of cultural consumption, such as newspaper reading and whether one has a preference for profiled nationwide notable news magazines or not. A person positioned toward the bottom-right corner is not prone to watching reality or comedy television, while the left and down-left positions indicate people who: attend Open University, have positions of trust in the kindergarten, read one of six nationwide newspapers, and by the same token pay no attention to reality television. The polarization also relates to some leisure time investments: while positions down and to the left indicate attendance of cultural centres, positions up and to the right indicate attendance of amusement parks and playing bingo.

The bottom-left position, towards the negative coordinates of both axes, is also of particular interest because it offers information on a special variant of social mobility.

Respondents represented in this position are typically characterized by a childhood environment with a relatively limited volume of inherited capital, but on the other hand, with a relatively high volume of acquired capital in the form of professional information capital, social capital, and capital of cultural consumption.

The line might be drawn even further as to contextualize the tensions of the space of positions as revealed in Figures 2 and 3. One can thus reflect on these tensions from an external perspective and an internal one as well—that is, from the perspective of everyday life in the kindergarten.

The kindergarten's inner life

The structure of the space depicts structural differences in the group of respondents and perhaps even among each kindergarten's professional staff. How such social tensions in a kindergarten are manifested will then depend on the relative strength of power positions within the staff. The distribution of capital assets and capabilities will, one can imagine, tend to affect negotiations, decision-making, and influence all aspects of everyday life. Moral stances (e.g., proper standards for addressing boys and girls respectively) are developed on the premises of the inner structure of the kindergarten and available assets. The same goes for the ability to meet external administrative and educational demands.

The kindergarten's external constraints

How do external constraints relate to the kindergarten and the pedagogical personnel? One could for instance, examine the space of positions through the lens of the trade unions, the positions of teacher training and research, as well as the local and central authorities with their legal power. However mutually conflicted trade unions, and the educational, political, and bureaucratic levels might be, they conceivably can have one thing in common; namely, a unilateral and idealizing focus on the kinds of cultural capital that are typical of the bottom-left corner of the space. It is here that one can find a core member: the teacher trade unions' implicit ideal of the "good and talented preschool teacher". In the same way, the political and bureaucratic fields' possible wish for dedicated and responsive personnel will find their ideal preschool teacher position along this pole as well. This may imply that these external positions of interest misrecognize the three other poles in the space of positions. Thus considered, there appears to be only a minority of preschool teachers recognized for their possession of cultural capital while the majority are being misrecognized due to their lack of investments in legitimate cultural capital. These arguments of a divided cognition and misrecognition that even the kindergarten employees own unions might take an active part in, give rise to further scrutiny in the form of symbolic violence, to which the kindergarten staff could be subjected (Olsen, 2014b). The social division between the recognized and misrecognized gives rise to a divide between the noticed and unnoticed; between dealing with the legitimate official matters of the kindergarten's curriculum, and the large amount of everyday practical social and caregiving matters.

The analysis of the relationships between the positions demonstrates a space with many built-in tensions. The various positions in the occupational group are presumed to convey corresponding habitus. The question that arises is whether the space of positions summarized in Figure 3 corresponds to a space of educational stances, that is,

educational values. If the two spaces—respondents’ social structure on one hand, and their educational values on the other—have matching patterns, it is precisely the habitus that can account for this.

The methodological approach to normative educational acts: “Grid Group Cultural Theory”

How does one examine normative educational acts of appreciations and disapprovals on a large scale by the use of a questionnaire? A questionnaire that, by the same token, awakens the respondent’s habitus with respect to both the pedagogical value themes and the everyday working life situation in the kindergarten? The answer to both questions is, as argued in the introduction, through the design of dilemma questions. The model developed by Douglas in her “Grid Group Cultural Theory” offers a suitable guideline for the development of the dilemma questions for the respondents. A similar design has previously been used in a substudy on gender (Olsen & Smeplass, 2016), though the outline and use of Douglas’ framework differs from this article. The advantage of this design is that it meets the requirements from the initial theoretical construction of the research object: to avoid dualisms between practice and reflection, and between the level of the body and level of representations. The dilemma design does exactly this through an indirect inquiry into the individual’s values. Alternatively, any direct address to values in, for instance, a 7-point scale questionnaire, reintroduce the problem of how to interpret a “Strongly agree” decision as it is an adherence to a representational attitude that does not also address the correlate of educational practice³.

“Grid” refers to constraints to which each individual is subjected (Douglas, 1978). The vertical axis in Figure 4, illustrates a continuum from autonomy to conformity, that is, from strong to weak individual freedom. The axis illustrates that a strong role structure replaces a weak. The horizontal axis “Group” is a continuum of social integration from individual freedom to group affiliation as defined by the rights a group provides its members and the claims it raises against them (Douglas, 1973, 1978). One can say that a stronger group loyalty gradually replaces a weaker. Grid and group can now be combined together in a matrix as in Figure 4 with the four pole corners labelled A, B, C, and D.

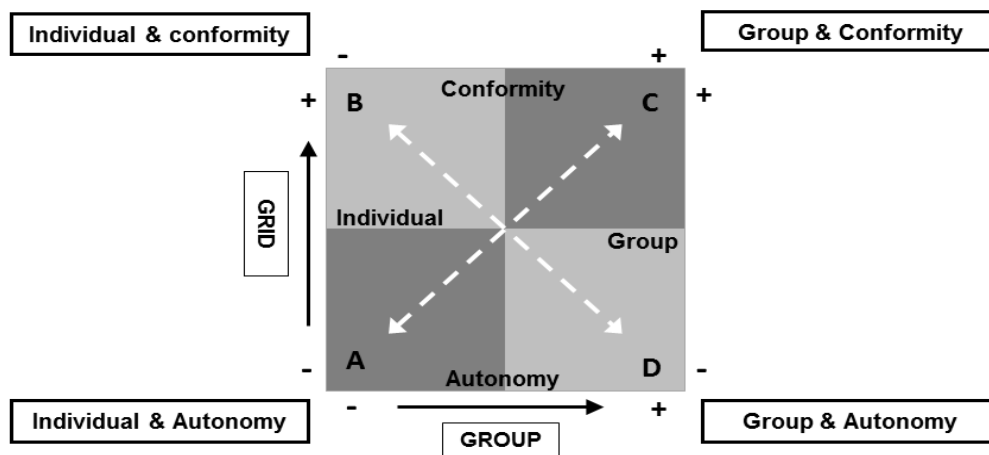


Figure 4. Four poles of Mary Douglas' "Grid Group Cultural Theory": Individual & Autonomy (A), Individual & Conformity (B), Group & Conformity (C), and Group & Autonomy (D).

In the C position—strong grid (+) and strong group (+)—adults are inclined to keep strong intergenerational differences while collective norms and rules enforce them. On the contrary, the child as single individual towards the A position—weak grid (-) and weak group (-)—is not affiliated with a group and is relatively free of moral constraints. Thus, the positions Individual & Autonomy (A), Individual & Conformity (B), Group & Conformity (C), and Group & Autonomy (D) define four mutually opposing educational value profiles. For instance, if an educator grew up in a religious home with strong sense of morality and strict gender rules as in the C position, the teacher could be subjected to a tough challenge when confronted with a colleague raised in an A culture that stands for a child-centred progressive education and emphasis on gender equality. Another example of the C position could be a member of Jehovah's Witnesses brought up in a congregation with very strong internal bonds and moral dogmas. That would be contrary to position A, where people are tempted to believe in a universal individualism such as "creating one's own luck" or celebrating opportunities for the individual's free development. The white arrows inside the square thus illustrate how sympathy for an A-statement corresponds to displeasure for an opposing C-statement; the converse is true, and this relationship similarly holds for the B-to-D diagonal.

The pedagogical value themes

In this second section of the questionnaire, respondents must answer a series of dilemma questions based on the 13 pedagogical themes from the kindergarten's everyday life as listed in Table 2. Subsequently and as an example, I present the responses from theme 7 on "keeping order".

Table 2

The 13 Pedagogical Themes

1	Tolerance and acceptance
2	Competition and achievement
3	Curiosity, creativity and imagination
4	Vigilance with the kindergarten's material belongings such as toys
5	Children's considerate and polite appearance in kindergarten
6	Good manners in one's own private sphere: expressing gratitude for the food served after finishing the meal
7	Keeping order: case study from kindergarten kitchen on conflict and order
8	Actions of sympathy: case on conflict and care with girls in main roles
9	The reprimand: case of reprimanding a boy
10	The morning assembly with the children as an educational investment
11	The preparation of the kindergarten children for future school life
12	The staff in a dominant position: case concerning the relationship to a mother
13	The staff in a dominated position: case concerning the relationship to a father

What occupies the children in the kindergarten's kitchen?

As an example of these dilemma questions and their analysis, the first question of pedagogical theme number 7, “Keeping order”, opens with a case:

In the kindergarten kitchen, two boys have opened a kitchen drawer and found a kitchen spoon and a pan. One of the boys is playing warrior and fencer with his spoon, while the other boy drums merrily on his pan.

The respondent has to decide based on the two statements below which he or she *likes best*:

- It is interesting to observe their way of playing which can be seen as both experimenting and a learning process.
- Although they enjoy their play we must nevertheless put it to an end because all the other kids should also be allowed to come up with the same kind of ideas.

The first statement belongs to value profile Individuality & Autonomy (A) and the second to Group & Conformity (C)⁴.

What then, did the respondents select? By running the MCA, the space in Figure 5 emerges. The blue cloud of individuals encircles the preference towards the first A-statement of Individuality & Autonomy, while the red cloud encircles the C-preference of Group & Conformity.

In relational terms, the findings in Figure 5 reveal a homology as the value preference of Individuality & Autonomy relates to Group & Conformity in the same way as the position with a relatively high volume of professional information, social, and cultural capital of consumption relates to a relatively small volume of those same forms of capital. Thus, respondents with a relatively high volume of these capital assets positioned bottom-left will be inclined to prefer values of Individuality & Autonomy, while respondents with a relatively low volume of the same assets along the opposite pole of space prefer values of Group & Conformity.

The findings

Is this pattern as shown in Figure 5 repeated over the other 12 educational value themes? Partly, as seven of them—themes 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11—also show the same structural offset as for the pedagogical theme 7 in Figure 5.

The conclusion is therefore two-fold. First, due to the homology between the space of positions (Figures 2 and 3) and the space of educational values (e.g., Figure 5), habitus can account for variations in seven out of 13 value themes. When examining the extreme cases of some 100 of the respondents—the outliers—this conclusion still remains the same (Olsen, 2014a). Second, as the value preferences of the remaining six themes are shared among respondents, capital composition and volumes do not therefore seem to have an impact on those preferences.

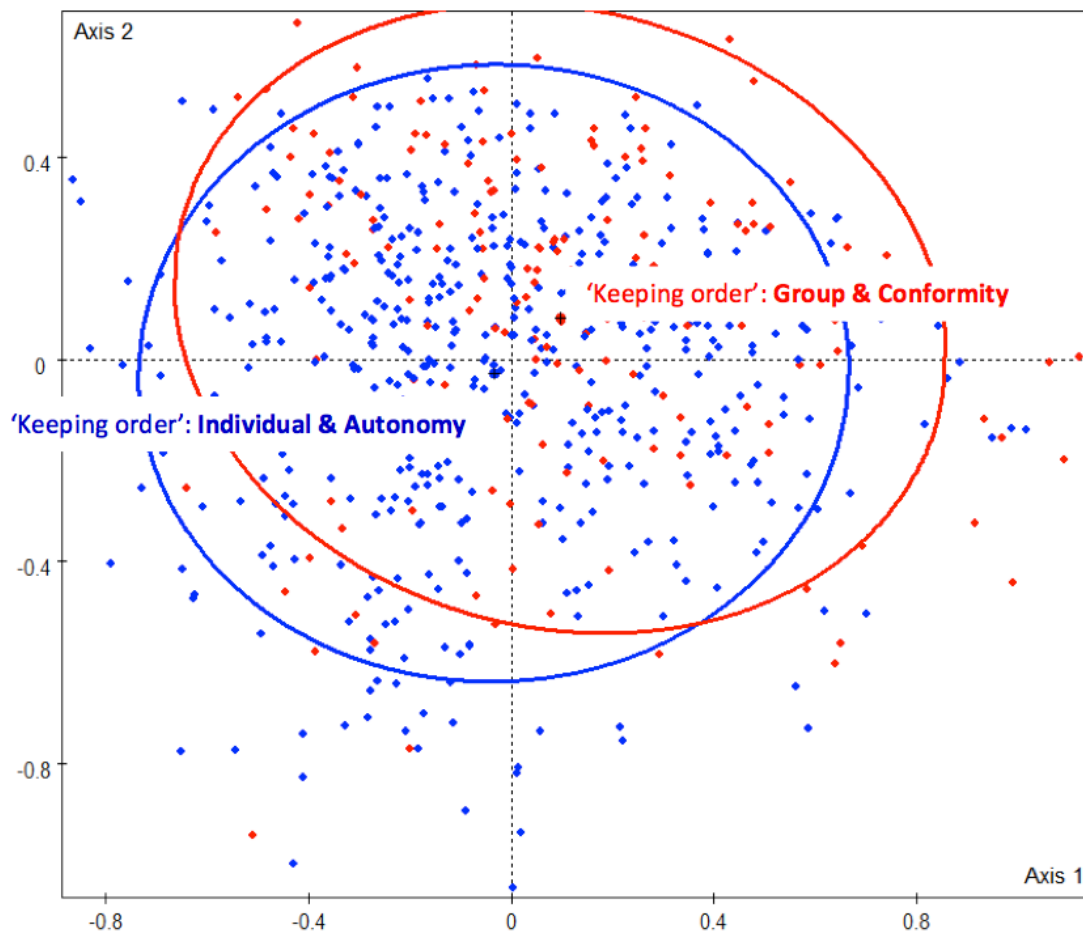


Figure 5. Space of stances for variable “keeping order”, Individual & Autonomy (concentration ellipse blue; $n = 481$, external 12.5%) versus Group & Conformity (concentration ellipse red; $n = 169$, external 15.4%).

If the 26 single dilemmas, reflecting educational values, are considered independent variables then they can be combined with the following 14 dependent variables from the first part of the questionnaire to form a total of 364 cross tables.

1. Age.
2. Years in the kindergarten profession.
3. Placement in the job hierarchy, which also deals with education.
4. Growing up in the countryside, a town, or a city.
- 5/6/7. Mother's/Father's/Partner's occupation.
- 8/9/10. Mother's/Father's/Partner's upper-secondary education.
- 11/12/13. Mother's/Father's/Partner's vocational education.
14. Plans or not for commencement of a university course of study.

The next question is how the variables from this list vary with answers to each of the dilemmas. Here, just 14 of the 365 cross tables achieve significance at $p < .01$ calculated with Pearson's chi-squared test. The test points to very few correlations between the two sets of variables. It is almost exclusively the variables age, years in the profession, and position in the job hierarchy, which affect rather few educational value variables. These three variables—age, years in the profession, and position in the job hierarchy—describe admittedly quite different phenomena, but can be regarded as supporting each other, as age and years in the profession are logically interrelated. Therefore, the conclusion is that neither age, years in the profession, nor position in the job hierarchy offers any real explanation regarding variations in educational values.

These very few correlations between the 14 dependent and 26 independent variables is remarkable, since one could expect a larger variation between the many diverse background variables and the socially sensitive value variables. It is only by the use of the MCA that it became possible to successfully identify structures in the data set.

The social distributions of normative educational acts: Conclusion and remarks

The MCA showed that respondents' preferences for individuality and autonomy corresponds with the possession of a relatively high volume of legitimate professional information and social capital as well as capital of cultural consumption. Similarly, preferences for group and conformity correspond with the possession of a relatively restricted volume of these capital assets. This homology between the space of the positions and the space of stances shows that it is one set of dispositions which tend to generate values of individuality and autonomy and another which generate group conformity. Further, it is a set of acquired rather than inherited dispositions, which accounts for these variations in value choices.

The methodological combination of Bourdieu's theory of practice with MCA and Douglas' Grid Group Cultural Theory were definitely promising from the outset as a point of departure. Altogether, this research design promised insights into some deep fundamental characteristics of the kindergarten profession and its educational orientations. Its concern were fundamental and interrelated approaches to education such as life history, reproduction, cultural values, social class, body, emotions and habitus; according to the findings and conclusions, it kept its promise. The findings of this project, by employing Bourdieu's framework and MCA, can be seen as evidence of a more manifest pattern in the personnel's habitually generated normative actions. In that respect, the findings may reveal only the tip of an iceberg.

Finally, one may eventually ask why the generational difference between the respondents, different number of years in the profession, differences in upbringing, educational aspirations and endogenous coupling does not effect an even larger variation of values. One explanation could be that the homogenizing effect of the kindergarten, as a state-regulated public institution with an obligation to meet all children by the same standards, could have a unifying effect on the diversity of emotional and moral stances at stake among the kindergarten staff. A more developed and promising approach to understanding agency in professional settings than the mere institutional perspective could be adapted from the field theory of Bourdieu (1997). Particularly with respect to the intergenerational differences in the kindergarten profession, Bayer, Brinkkjær, and Li

(2012) have concluded that preschool teachers' professional identity and conceptions of professional knowledge do not vary between three generational cohorts and do not vary with either age or length of preschool occupational service.

The challenge to come is to deepen the understanding of educational value diversities by maintaining that the logic of preschool teachers' practices is worked out relatively independently of their declared value preferences at the level of representations. Several different theoretical frameworks can provide an answer to this including that of Bourdieu. Methodologically, one could without doubt profit from qualitative ethnographic studies of everyday life in the kindergartens to grasp preferences in an extensive lively, bodily, mental, linguistic, and social repertoire that the personnel draw on. This could not least inform the development of quantitative research approaches to come.

¹ Bourdieu prefers the term "agent" instead of "actor" to stress the dimension of action prior to intention or role-play.

² Denmark has three different types of preschool institution preceding the pre-primary class: day nurseries up to the age of 3 years, kindergartens for children from 3 to 6 years of age, and integrated institutions, which cater for children aged from 3 months. Attendance in a preschool institution is not compulsory, yet there has been a stable and a fairly high percentage of children attending preschool institutions ever since 2009; in 2013, 91.1% of children aged 1 to 2 years attended preschool. The figure for children aged 3 to 5 years is 96.9% (The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, 2014). All preschool institutions charge fees. The composition of the educational personnel is approximately 60% having a three-and-a-half year preschool teacher qualification, 30% being assistants with either little or no job-specific education, and 10% being service personnel (Glavind & Pade, 2015).

³ Research on educational values within the professional staff of nurseries, kindergartens, and preschool institutions in general hardly exists. By contrast, research on "parenting" has garnered a fairly high level of attention. However, the primarily social-psychological approaches of, for instance, research following Melvin L. Kohn and the theoretical and statistical approaches that supports it does not fit very well with this project's Bourdieusian and relational approach.

⁴ The project also examined the combination Individuality & Conformity (B) versus Group & Autonomy (D).

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Appendix

Table 3

Categories with Absolute Contributions Above Average to the First Axis

- C	Category	+ C	Category
0.61	Mother has no vocational education 0.007353593 (4.68)	1.30	Mother has a Bachelor or Master degree 0.012299611 (7.82)
0.85	Father is self-employed 0.006100851 (3.68)	0.77	Does not read trade union magazine 0.007602347 (5.82)
0.65	Has no secondary diploma 0.005389843 (3.42)	0.77	Never watches notable TV News programs 0.007018319 (5.01)
0.97	Attend Open University 0.004525425 (3.31)	1.07	Favourite comedy & music-TV 0.007059569 (5.17)
0.43	Never watches comedy & music-TV 0.004021558 (2.95)	0.68	Mother's occupation care and education 0.006227533 (3.88)
0.55	Mother is self-employed 0.003624550 (2.26)	0.73	Father has a Bachelor or Master degree 0.004369696 (2.87)
0.62	Favourite local TV 0.003553495 (2.63)	0.56	Has a secondary diploma 0.004078846 (2.59)
0.35	Reads trade union magazine 0.003424338 (2.62)	0.47	Does not read regional newspaper 0.002921497 (2.24)
0.56	Father has no vocational education 0.003414981 (2.24)	0.55	Fathers occupation technician or academics 0.002090523 (1.26)
0.77	Involvement in religious organization 0.003082682 (2.36)		
0.76	Involvement in political organization 0.003035034 (2.32)		
0.59	Mother is a housewife 0.002231617 (1.34)		
0.50	Has positions of trust in the kindergarten 0.002329634 (1.62)		

Note. Relative contributions in brackets, "C" stands for "coordinate".

Table 4

Categories with Absolute Contributions Above Average to the Second Axis

- C	Category	+ C	Category
1.39	Reads one of three nationwide “centre-left” newspapers 0.011661094 (12.15)	0.43	Partner without secondary diploma 0.004357176 (2.85)
1.02	Father has a Bachelor- or Master degree 0.008492185 (7.59)	0.54	Father has no vocational education 0.003265463 (2.92)
0.10	Partner has a Bachelor or Master degree 0.006935608 (5.77)	0.88	Partner has no vocational education 0.003882216 (3.23)
1.17	Attend Open University 0.006523075 (6.50)	0.52	Watches reality TV once in a while 0.003483150 (3.42)
0.66	Partner has secondary diploma 0.005416346 (3.55)	0.55	Favourite local-TV 0.002804445 (2.82)
0.96	Fathers occupation technician or academics 0.006391026 (5.25)	0.42	Partner is a trained craftsman 0.002596944 (2.16)
0.67	Favourite notable TV news programs 0.003651920 (3.55)	0.44	Has no secondary diploma 0.002472869 (2.13)
0.78	Involvement in political organization 0.003152386 (3.29)	0.38	Never watching notable TV News programs 0.001701903 (1.65)
0.56	Mother has a Bachelor or Master degree 0.002289988 (1.98)	0.44	Father is self-employed 0.001642076 (1.35)
0.57	Mother is a housewife 0.002060627 (1.75)		
0.52	Reads one of three nationwide “centre-right” newspapers 0.002019452 (2.10)		
0.53	Unacquainted with reality TV 0.001742697 (1.71)		

Note. Relative contributions in brackets, “C” stands for “coordinate”.