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## **Professionally and Materially Ambitious People: On the Biographical Origins of Professional and Material Goals**

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### Conclusion

Western culture currently assigns a central role to proactivity, active decision-making and the pursuit of individual objectives. Since the 1950s social modernisation processes have expanded the radius of opportunity and the spectrum of possible goals, including the achievement of professional and material success. But what biographical circumstances lead people to strive for and realise such goals?

This dissertation focuses on the influences that affect the origination and modification of material and professional life goals and the conscious and latent meanings ambitious people attach to these goals. The complex of social requirements and individual actions, on which the actors' choice and modification of goals is based, is considered, as are the restrictions and capabilities relating to these objectives.

Schütz's theory of action and Berger and Luckmann's social constructionist sociology of knowledge serve as the theoretical base, while Bourdieu supplies the tools for describing milieu-specific acquired attitudes and the impact of social disadvantage, starting position and resources.

Fourteen biographical-narrative interviews with professionally and materially ambitious people from different generations socialised in West or East Germany were conducted. Five interviews interpreted according to the method of biographical case reconstruction (Rosenthal) are presented in this thesis.

A typology is developed based on the biographical functions of material goals (compensation, safety type and lifestyle type) and the influence of familial traditions and hierarchies on attitudes to advancement and achievement is described. The influence of a traditional orientation on achievement on use of training opportunities following career dissatisfaction is clarified. The effects of starting a family on the attainment of professional goals differ according to gender. It is found that the younger generation enjoys better parental resources than their parents, but face disadvantage in terms of declined employment prospects. Insecurity of employment and growing professional demands make it necessary to revise career goals frequently.