

**Oldenburger Studien zur Europäisierung und zur transnationalen Regulierung
No. 27/2022**

Successful, Delayed, and Unsuccessful School-to-Work Transitions. The Role of Fam- ily-based Social Capital on the School-to- Work-Transition of Adolescents and Young Adults

**Sven Broschinski, Michael Feldhaus, Marie-Luise Assmann
and Martin Heidenreich**

Oldenburg, January 2022

Oldenburger Studien zur Europäisierung und zur transnationalen Regulierung

International Standard Serial Number (ISSN): 1866-8798

Herausgeber: Prof. Dr. T. Blanke, Prof. Dr. M. Heidenreich & Prof. Dr. H.-M. Trautwein

Anschrift: Fakultät I • Carl-von-Ossietzky-Universität Oldenburg • 26111 Oldenburg

Abrufbar im Internet unter: <https://uol.de/cetro/publikationen/oldenburger-studien>

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Abstract: The school-to-work transition (STWT) represents a challenge for many young people in Germany today. The risk of delayed or even unsuccessful transitions is particularly high for young people with a lower level of education or a migration background. Previous studies have focused in particular on the impact of the adolescents' socio-demographic background as well as national institutions and transition regimes. However, qualitative studies have shown that in addition to these factors, the social environment of adolescents and young adults, especially their parental relationships, partnerships and relations to friends, may also contribute to a more or less successful STWT. Despite these findings, such 'soft factors' have so far only played a minor role in quantitative research on young people's STWT trajectories. Our aim is to explain STWTs through the social embeddedness of young people, assuming that the often difficult transitions into the labour market are shaped by the young people's family context. This aim is pursued by analysing the data for the first cohort (birth cohorts 1991-1993) of the German Family Panel (pairfam). On this basis, a sequence and cluster analysis was conducted, from which 7 school-to-work-transition patterns emerged (N= 1,529). These patterns can be classified as successful (46.4%), delayed (28.4%) and failed transitions (25.2%). Multinomial logistic regressions reveal that besides parental financial and human capital, the social capital of the family of origin (parental support, parent-child relationship, attachment) is decisive for a successful, delayed or unsuccessful transition.

Keywords: labour markets, outsider, youth, school-to-work-transition, social context.

JEL classification: E240, J310, J640

1. Introduction

The school-to-work transition (STWT) is a key developmental task for adolescents and young adults (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009b) and has far-reaching consequences for their later employment biographies (Blossfeld, 2003; Müller & Gangl, 2003). However, significant differences between young persons and their initial career steps can already be found during this early and decisive stage of their professional biography: While some experience a successful and smooth transition into working life, others are more likely to undergo delayed or even failed transitions. As a result, more than seven percent of the 15- to 25-year-old Germans in 2020 did not hold a vocational training qualification and were not enrolled in school or vocational training. Moreover, each year about half a million young persons in Germany enter into the so-called ‘transition system’ which is intended to promote vocational training maturity after leaving the general school. However, it is neither recognised as formal vocational training nor does it lead to an apprenticeship very often (Kohlrausch, 2009; Dohmen et al., 2021). Entering into the labour market is thus an essential, difficult and risky phase in the life course of young adults – even in a country like Germany with the second lowest youth unemployment in the EU.

Besides successfully completing their educational paths and the current labour market situation, young people’s transition into early adulthood and employment is also influenced by developments, challenges and problems in other life domains (Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016). Young adults may encounter additional problems and challenges in their family of origin, in their partnership or in their peer networks. Therefore, the transition into working-life depends on many, in general mutually dependent factors in other life domains. However, the importance of the family and especially the parent-child relationship for individual career development has hardly been studied at all in the STWT literature to date. In cases where it has, it is mainly in the form of human capital or financial capital of the household.

The following article therefore endeavours to analyse not only the socio-economic determinants of educational and professional trajectories on the individual or family level but also to complement the existing literature by studying the impact of the relationship between young adults and their parents as part of the family-based social capital (Coleman, 1990). We thus focus on two research questions: What types of school-to-work transitions can be observed among young people in Germany and to what extent can they be categorised as successful, delayed or unsuccessful (RQ1)? To what extent does the family of origin, and in particular the relationships of the young people with their parents, influence the transition path from school to work (RQ2)? The article draws on data from the most recent waves of the German Family Panel (pairfam) which provides a unique combination of information on both educational and occupational trajectories as well as the family dynamics of young adults over their life course.

2. The social embeddedness of STWTs

In recent decades, a broad body of research on STWTs has emerged that addresses a variety of demographic, economic, institutional as well as individual-level factors that affect young people’s transitions from school to work. Firstly, the school-to-work transition has been analysed in the context of *national institutions*. Comparative studies have identified several important institutional determinants of STWTs on the macro level (Breen, 2005; Müller, 2005),

namely school and vocational training systems and institutions regulating the labour market (including trade unions, labour market policies and employment protection). Moreover, the interdependency of these institutions has been taken into account by considering different youth-specific *transition regimes* (Chevalier, 2016; Wallace & Bendit, 2009; Schoon & Bynner, 2019). In essence, such transition regimes are characterised by the complementarity and mutual reinforcement of different institutional spheres. Accordingly, in conjunction with national education, training and employment systems, social protection and activation policies are also particularly relevant for adolescents and young adults (Hora et al., 2019). In addition, it has been shown that young adults' risk of being neither in employment, education or training (NEETs) is highly dependent on welfare state and family policies (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021).

Secondly, research reveals that *individual characteristics* influence the more or less successful transition to working life. The role of young people's educational background, their health condition, personal and social resources, personality, immigrant status and transitions in their other life domains have been highlighted as crucial determinants of school-to-work transitions and the risk of young people becoming unemployed or inactive (Dvouletý et al., 2020; Caroleo et al., 2020). Furthermore, support from focal persons and socialisation experiences in the family or among friends and in other social contexts are increasingly seen as crucial for successfully mastering the passage into adulthood (Kracke & Noack, 2005). These micro-level factors may gain even more importance as the de-standardisation of transitions to work and the broad variety of educational pathways and occupations are increasingly making demands on the decision-making skills and self-motivation of young people who find themselves challenged by actively shaping their transition to work and orientating themselves (Pohl & Walther, 2007).

In this context, one important factor identified in research on emerging adulthood and STWTs is the *family of origin* of the youths (Oliveira et al., 2020; Shanahan, 2000). In most cases, family background in quantitative research is measured in the form of the financial and human capital of the family, such as highest level of parental education, parental unemployment, family income and wealth (Kind, 2015; Schioppa & Lupi, 2002; Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Dvouletý et al., 2020; Alfieri et al., 2015; Neugebauer et al., 2013). For the school context, many studies have confirmed that the social capital of the family plays a major role in the educational success of young people, such as parents' interest in children's school success, parental support as well as parental school involvement. Furthermore, the results of in-depth-qualitative analyses on STWTs demonstrate that the emotional quality of the parent-child relationship as well as family problems (which may be linked to the socio economic status of the family), such as family breakdown, the death or illness of a parent and 'soft factors' like parental attachment styles, may also have an impact on young people's transition to work (Großkurth et al., 2015; Pemberton, 2008; Kracke & Noack, 2005; Whiston & Keller, 2004; Neugebauer et al., 2013; Boudon, 1974). The quality of the parent-child relationship and parenting styles may have an important influence on the explorative behaviour of adolescents with respect to their career (Kracke & Noack, 2005). However, these softer factors have rarely been examined in quantitative STWT studies.

Previous research on STWT has mainly focused on particular transitions or states in the lives of young people. Many studies reveal that a *longitudinal perspective* and, in particular, consideration of the trajectories of young people are necessary to better understand their STWTs (Shanahan, 2000). With regard to STWT, so-called YOYO transitions have been observed in which phases of education, work and unemployment or economic inactivity repeatedly alter-

nate (Dietrich, 2018; Du Bois-Reymond and Blasco, 2003). This shows that occupational successes and failures are not isolated events, but the outcome of longer-lasting, cumulative and complex processes over a person's life course that clearly differ across different birth cohorts and genders (Brzinsky-Fay and Solga, 2016). Focusing on school-leaving qualifications or the person's first job therefore neither captures the temporal dimension of transitions nor the reasons for a failed entry into working life.

STWT studies are thus increasingly focusing on young people's transitions by drawing on panel data analyses. Sequence analyses in combination with cluster analyses and sometimes also qualitative methods are increasingly being used (Achatz et al., 2020; Baas & Philipps, 2017; Brzinsky-Fay & Solga, 2016; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016; Dorsett & Lucchino, 2014). In general, socio-demographic variables such as educational attainment, gender and migration background are included, and the influence of institutional variables such as the respective training system, pre-vocational measures and even family policies are examined. When examining the family background, the social origin of young people is usually operationalised by the educational attainment of the parents, household income and family structures (Dorsett & Lucchino, 2014). However, to the best of our knowledge, longitudinal studies on STWT processes that also consider indicators such as the social capital of the family, parental support or the quality of the parent-child relationship are not yet available.

3. Family-based social capital and STWT

Previous research has shown that the family of origin has a substantive influence on their offspring's educational and professional development (Whiston & Keller, 2004; Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009a). The influence of the family of origin on children's educational attainment has been modelled with different theoretical approaches, for example models of genetic inheritance, expectancy-value theory, human capital theories, rational choice models and the capital-based approaches of Pierre Bourdieu (1983) and James Coleman (1988, 1990), sometimes extended by class- or status-based arguments (Boudon, 1974; Erikson & Jonsson, 1996; Brake & Bremer, 2010; Stocké, 2013; Simpkins et al., 2012; Becker, 2008).

When looking at the impact of family relationships on children's educational success, Coleman's work on family social capital is of particular relevance. In accordance with many previously mentioned theories, Coleman assumes that the *financial and human capital* of the family has a significant impact on children's educational success. It has also been convincingly demonstrated empirically that *economic capital* (such as a higher disposable income or financial support) and higher *human capital* (like parental educational attainment) are associated with higher educational attainment of the offspring (OECD, 2018; Schleicher, 2019).

Coleman additionally introduces the *social capital* of the parents as another crucial factor which influences the educational success of the children. He emphasises that "unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is logged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production." (Coleman, 1990). Thus, social capital consists in relationships between persons which facilitate certain patterns of actions (Coleman, 1990). The social capital of families thus is inherent in the respective relationship structures. Parents therefore invest in their offspring's development by engaging in interactions with them. Strong affectional bonds are the basis for the transmission of obligations, expectations, information, norms and behavioural patterns across

generations, shaping the opportunities and life chances of adolescents. Moreover, the intensity of the parent-child relationship can “aid children’s social and intellectual development” (Coleman, 1990). On the basis of Coleman’s concept of social capital, Wright et al. (2001) identify three mechanisms through which family social capital is transmitted: *time and effort* invested by parents, clearly communicated *guidelines* and *affective ties* between parents and their offspring.

Time and effort describe the quality and quantity of the parent-child relationship with regard to investments in their offspring. According to Coleman (1990), the time spent with children – such as support doing homework, learning together or talking with them – is a crucial factor that affects the investment of effort and resources. Coleman (1990) notes that the family’s investment of time and effort has positive effects on children’s commitment in school and educational attainments. Findings from developmental psychology support the view that child development is supported by continuing interactions with persons to whom the child has developed a strong and enduring emotional attachment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Merçon-Vargas et al., 2020). Thus, we *assume that higher parental support increases the likelihood of a successful school-to-work transition* (H1).

Since the time and effort invested in the children demands both the physical presence of the parents as well as their attention and involvement, single-parent families might be a *structural disadvantage* for the social capital of the family compared to the presence of both parents in the household (Coleman, 1990). Thus, single parents usually have less time for activities or for supporting their offspring, resulting in a weaker transmission of norms, values and behavioural patterns. Some studies provide empirical evidence that parental separation or growing up in a non-traditional family structure decreases the educational attainment of children (Jonsson & Gähler, 1997; Ginther & Pollak, 2004; Steele et al., 2009; Francesconi et al., 2010; McLanahan et al., 2013; Bernardi & Boertien, 2017). It has been shown that various negative effects accompany the process of parental separation which increase the likelihood that less attention is paid to educational processes, for example parental conflicts, psychological adjustments, financial problems, a reduction of parental time and child-related investment, negative effects on psychological well-being, moving, organising contact with the non-resident parent, etc. Thus, *it can be hypothesised that parental separation has a negative impact on the young person’s academic and professional development after they leave the general school system* (H2).

Parental guidance, understood as the capability of family social capital to transmit norms and values, can be also seen as an important factor that influences young adolescents’ educational attainment and career orientation. Not only moral values and clear rules but also work ethics and a positive attitude towards achievement and performance, ideas about career development, commitment to achieve specific goals and the related behavioural patterns are communicated across generations (Coleman, 1990). This primarily happens through “information channels” (Coleman, 1988), which can be understood as routes through which information is shared between parents and their offspring. Successful parental guidance is facilitated by parental attention and a minimum level of intimacy in the parent-child relation. Therefore, the quality as well as the stability of the parent-child relationship plays an important role in the realisation of social capital in the family (Sandefur et al., 1999). *We therefore assume that less stable relationships with parents, a high variability of intimacy and conflicts occurring over time reduce the supporting and guiding role of parents, which in turn reduces the likelihood of successfully entering the labour market* (H3).

Affective ties can be understood as the enduring emotional attachment between parents and their offspring through which norms, obligations, expectations, information and behavioural patterns are transmitted from the family to the child. Strong affective bonds guarantee emotional security and stability, creating individuals who are “socially competent, psychologically adjusted and behaviourally appropriate” (Wright et al., 2001). Previous studies (Kracke & Nock, 2005; Whiston & Keller, 2004; Berríos-Allison, 2005) have emphasised that a secure bond between parents and children encourages occupational exploration and commitment and therefore has a positive influence on the transition to work. In cases of successful individuation, young people are able to find out which profession fits their interests and capabilities. They can make their own decisions about their professional career and are able to consistently pursue their professional goals. On the basis of attachment theory, it has been argued that a secure bond and individuation of young adults are not opposites but instead go hand in hand (Allen, 2008). Therefore, a positive relationship and a secure parent-child bond as part of the family social capital is more likely to be associated with a successful process of individuation and occupational exploration (Berríos-Allison, 2005; Blustein et al., 1995). Thus, *we expect that emotional security in the relationship between parents and children and successful individuation facilitates a successful transition from school to work* (H4).

4. Data, variables, and methods

Data

To test our hypotheses, we used data from 11 waves (2008/09 to 2018/2019) of the German Family Panel, pairfam (Huinink et al., 2011). As well as providing detailed information on the educational and employment career of the respondents, pairfam also collects dynamic information from adjacent areas of life such as the relationship with parents, peers and partners (Brüderl et al., 2020). Pairfam data offer a unique opportunity to study the school-to-work transitions of young people in Germany, focusing on cohorts (birth year 1991-1993) who are just at the age when the transition to working life should typically be completed. In addition, we can trace the transitions of young people over a period of at least ten years because data collection began in 2008. Another advantage of the pairfam data is that many "soft" factors relating to the young people's social background were also explored in the survey. On this basis, it is possible to analyse the social embeddedness of the young people in their families. For missing information regarding the months between reaching the age of 15 and the first observation, we draw on retrospective *bioact* data to achieve a common starting point for all observed individuals.

Our final sample includes respondents from the first cohort of 1991-1993, who were 15-17 years old in 2008 when the first wave was conducted. We limited the observation period to 60 months after completing secondary education. As a result of this delimitation, the observation periods are identical for all persons. Furthermore, the period is long enough to see how well the STWT was able to be realised and it allows comparisons with other studies (Brzinsky-Fay, 2007; Scherer, 2005). After some data modifications, the final sample contains 1,529 individuals each with 60 months of observation.

Variables and methods

The main variable of interest is the STWT of young people, operationalised as a 60-month long sequence of activity statuses directly after leaving the general school system. We used monthly status information to generate detailed transition sequences for the 1,529 individuals and distinguish between 8 different activity statuses: Prevocational measures, vocational education and training (VET), university, regular employment, atypical employment, unemployment, other education, and other activities (for the recoding of the 19 statuses from the original activity variable into these 8 statuses, see Table A1 in the Appendix). Due to the nature of the monthly status variable in *pairfam (bioact)*, we had to deal with three problems that emerged when creating the activity sequences: nesting, overlapping and duplications of episodes. To untangle this highly complex structure of individual transition patterns, we had to decide which of the eight statuses was of greater interest for answering our research questions. Thus, we applied the following rule of dominance: university > VET > regular employment > unemployment > prevocational measures > atypical employment > other education > other activities. Thus, in cases where there were two statuses for the same month, the one with the higher priority was chosen. This prioritisation emphasises vocational education before entering regular employment because vocational attainment is a full-time activity and the main step for a successful and long-lasting entry into the German labour market. Moreover, regular employment then indicates a successful transition. Finally, we assign higher priority to the self-reported status of unemployment than prevocational measures, atypical employment, further educational activities and finally other activities. Since we take into account the whole 60-month period after leaving general school, some gaps exist within the young people's professional biographies due to missing status information for those particular months.

In order to reduce the complexity of the individual transition patterns, we generate different types of transition patterns using a combination of sequence analysis and cluster analysis – a common analytical strategy for examining STWT in a life course perspective (Brzinsky-Fay, 2007, 2014; Brzinsky-Fay & Solga, 2016). We use the optimal matching algorithm proposed by Brzinsky-Fay et al. (2006) which compares the individual STWT sequences with each other, generating a similarity measure which is used by the Ward algorithm to create clusters in such a way that the within-group difference is minimised while the between-group difference is maximised. In order to properly perform optimal matching, the indel cost, substitution cost structure and standardisation rule first have to be defined. It is often discussed in the literature how transformation costs should be specified (Brzinsky-Fay, 2014; Gauthier et al., 2009). We decided to fix the cost of insertion and deletion at the value 1, and the substitution costs at the value 2 (Brzinsky-Fay, 2007). As a result, we obtained seven clusters of STWT that will be used as a dependent variable for the following analyses.

Regarding the research question of the impact of family social capital on the STWT, our independent variables are parental support, parental separation, parent-child relationship quality, individuation and emotional (in)security. In order to examine the functional solidarity between children and parents, we use two different dimensions of *parental support*: “Frequency receiving financial support from mother/father in the past 12 months” and “Frequency receiving help from mother/father for doing school homework in the past 12 months”. The values for each of the three items range between 1: “Never” and 5 “Very often”. We use these items from wave 2 when the adolescents were between 16 and 18 years old to capture the degree of parental support within a crucial time frame of the adolescents' STWT. *Parental separation* is measured by the question whether parents were ever separated, which was collected in

wave 6. This means that a possible separation of the parents already occurred before the age of 20 to 22, i.e. in a very decisive phase of the adolescents' STWT.

To measure the *parent-child relationship quality*, we employ the intimacy and conflict scales of the Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI) (Buhrmester & Furman, 2008). The intimacy scale captures the strength of affection, while the conflict scale measures the frequency of disagreements, quarrels and negative feelings in the parent-child relationship. As we explained above, it is more important to use the information about the stability or variability of the relationship quality over time rather than a simple snapshot from a single point in time. Therefore, to capture changes in relationship quality, we use these items from wave 2 to 11 and calculate the standard deviation for each individual across all observation points. Thus, a higher value indicates a higher level of variability and dynamic of intimacy and conflicts within the parent-child relationship.

To measure the *individuation and emotional (in)security* of the adolescent towards their mother/father, we use the two subscales "successful individuation" and "fear of love withdrawal" from the Munich Individuation Test of Adolescence (MITA) (Walper et al., 1996) which were collected in wave 2. Successful individuation describes the reorganisation of the relationship of the adolescents with their parents and the extent of a successful synthesis between connectedness and autonomy. Fear of love withdrawal enquires about the (feared) reactions of the parents to the adolescent's misbehaviour or failure as well as the existence of bonding needs towards the parents which are not fulfilled by them.

To control for the influence of the human and financial capital of the family, we use the educational attainment of both the mother and father as well as the subjective financial situation of the household from the child's perspective as proxy information. Furthermore, we include variables for the adolescent's gender, migration status and highest educational level to control for socio-demographic differences at the individual level (for a detailed description of all included variables, scales and items see Table A2 in the Appendix). In order to estimate the probability of belonging to one of the seven STWT clusters, we employ multinomial logistic regressions with types of transition patterns as the dependent variable.

5. Empirical results

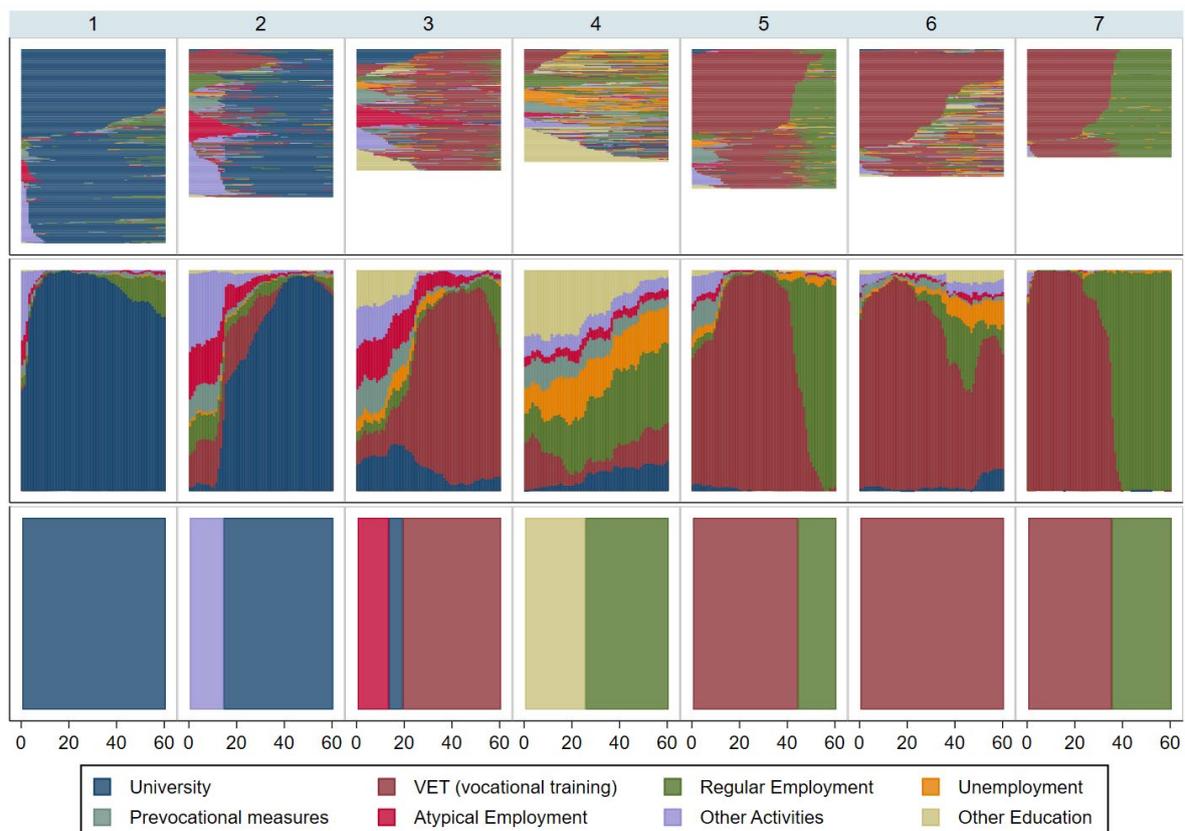
Patterns of STWT in Germany

Based on the previously described sequence and cluster analyses, a seven-cluster solution of different trajectories from general school to further education and work emerged. Figure 1 shows the seven types of STWT patterns. The first row displays sequence index plots which illustrate the status sequences of all individuals; the second row consists of status proportion plots showing the relative frequencies of each status within each month; and in the last row, modal plots indicate the most frequent status per month.

The seven transition patterns can be described by their *directness*, *volatility* and their *integrative potential* on the labour market. The first aspect contains information about the directness of young adults in their pathways to vocational qualification after leaving school. Do they enter directly into the labour market or into vocational education or is the school-to-work transition

delayed by other activities, such as unemployment, atypical employment, military service, voluntary social year or prevocational measures? In 2011, compulsory military service was suspended in Germany, which meant that some of the young people included here still had to complete their military service or equivalent civil service. Thus, to a certain extent the STWT delay is the result of former legal obligations. The second and the third indicator were proposed by Brzinsky-Fay (2007). *Volatility* is defined as the proportion of employment, education and apprenticeship episodes in relation to total episodes and ranges from 0 to 100. The higher the value of this indicator, the more favourable the sequences with respect to flexibility in the labour market. The *integrative potential* of a transition is a measure of how quickly young people enter employment. This property can be assessed by adding up the number of employment episodes, which are weighted by their position within the sequence. The assumption is that the higher the share of regular employment episodes and the later these episodes appear in the sequence, the higher the process of integration. This indicator also ranges from 0 to 100, with a high value indicating a better integrative character. In general, the seven clusters very clearly illustrate the pathways of young people in higher education (C1 “DIRECTLY UNI”, C2 “DELAYED UNI”) and in the dual system of vocational training (C3 “DELAYED VET”, C5 “PROLONGED VET and WORK”; C6 “DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY”; C7 “DIRECTLY VET and WORK”) as well as in non-standard trajectories (C4 “ERRATIC”, C6 “DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY”). However, regarding the question of successful, delayed or unsuccessful transitions, these seven types can be further summarised into three subgroups of STWT pathways:

Figure 1: Types of STWT patterns



Source: Pairfam waves 1-11, own calculations.

Note: C1 “DIRECTLY UNI”, C2 “DELAYED UNI”, C3 “DELAYED VET”, C4 “ERRATIC”, C5 “PROLONGED VET and WORK”; C6 “DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY”; C7 “DIRECTLY VET and WORK”

1) We speak of a *successful transition* when vocational training or higher education is completed directly after school followed by a direct transition into the labour market. A successful transition therefore shows a straight vocational orientation as well as high continuity and quick integration into the labour market. This is particular the case for cluster C5 “PROLONGED VET and WORK” (14.6 %), C7 “DIRECTLY VET and WORK” (11.4 %), and it is beginning to appear for C1 “DIRECTLY UNI” where a number of young adults find directly a job after university (20.4 %). C7 “DIRECTLY VET and WORK” is very goal-oriented. They go through vocational training very quickly (on average within 32.8 months) and have already been in regular employment for a longer period of time. Of all the clusters, they have spent the most time in employment. There are hardly any gaps in their vocational biography. Accordingly, the volatility indicator is 98 and the integration indicator 67 – the highest values in the cluster comparison. C5 “PROLONGED VET and WORK” has an over average time of VET (39.5 %), with a high amount of time spent in regular employment (14.7 month on average). The volatility is again very high at 91 points, and due to the transition into regular employment, the integrative capability is 40 points, the second highest value among all clusters. C1 “DIRECTLY UNI” is characterised by a direct transition from school to university, with only a few short episodes before the start of the university and the highest average accumulated length of the university period of 54 months. The volatility status is also very high at 94 points, while the integrative capability is still low, as in many cases university has not yet been finished, but the transition is within reach.

2) We speak of a *delayed transition* when entry into vocational training is delayed or prolonged and the transition into the labour market has not yet been fully realised but the young people’s prospects for a successful transition into the labour market are supposed to be very good. This is in particular the case for C2 “DELAYED UNI” (15.6 %) and C3 “DELAYED VET” (12.8 %). C2 “DELAYED UNI” shows a somewhat longer preceding phase of other activities (probably of military/community service, internships or first job experiences) of 5.4 months on average before entering the university. It has the highest amount of monthly other activities of all clusters and thus represents a delayed form of the higher educational route, which can still be regarded as a standard route in the German education system and as a bridging phase between school and regular employment. The volatility is high at 78 points, while the integrative capability is low for this cluster because of the lack of regular employment in the transition patterns. C3 “DELAYED VET”, on the other hand, is characterised by no direct entry into vocational training but by different preceding periods, e.g. prevocational measures and marginal employment. The volatility indicator shows an average value of 69, but integrative capability is low due to delayed entry into the vocational system. Both clusters can be described as *delayed pathways*. However, the transition into the labour market seems to be within reach, and the data shows that for some individuals it has already begun.

3) We define those clusters as *unsuccessful transitions* where there is no completed vocational training and in particular where entry into the labour market has not yet been realised. This is the case for C4 “ERRATIC” (11.8 %) and C6 “DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY” (13.4 %). C4 “ERRATIC” can be considered as the most problematic transition pattern. There is no clear occupational progression; it seems erratic. The number of episode changes is highest in this cluster. Many activities are tried out, but few are sustained over a longer period of time. The volatility indicator has the lowest value, whereas the integration indicator is at a comparatively high level at 31 points because there are also often episodes of regular employment in this pattern. In any case, there is no evidence of a successful or delayed transition. At first glance, the transition pattern for C6 “DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY” looks more promising, but this cluster is

also characterised by major problems. The cluster exhibits the longest duration in a VET program (43.7 month on average), suggesting that these young people started multiple apprenticeships. This is also supported by the high number of episodes compared to the other clusters. In addition, the number of successful transitions to the labour market after vocational training is low. As a result, the volatility in this cluster is very high (84 points), while the integration capability is very low (11 points). Therefore, this cluster likewise cannot be described as a successful transition.

Table 1: Description of STWT cluster

	TOTAL	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
AVERAGE NUMBER OF EPISODES	3.65	2.33	3.48	3.88	4.65	3.17	3.55	2.48
AVERAGE NUMBER OF STATUSES	2.95	2.03	3.00	3.18	3.34	2.79	2.73	2.29
AVERAGE DURATION IN...								
PREVOCATIONAL MEASURES	1.96	0.83	2.15	3.42	4.62	4.52	1.34	0.08
VET (VOCATIONAL TRAINING)	20.23	0.14	6.45	32.04	7.11	39.55	43.78	32.83
UNIVERSITY	17.62	54.09	37.57	6.55	4.35	0.54	1.72	0.05
REGULAR EMPLOYMENT	8.30	2.69	3.25	3.28	16.06	14.73	5.02	26.33
ATYPICAL EMPLOYMENT	2.81	0.70	4.33	5.71	2.40	0.63	0.84	0.05
UNEMPLOYMENT	2.10	0.11	0.40	1.97	10.01	1.29	2.95	0.37
OTHER EDUCATION	2.22	0.04	0.45	3.45	11.30	0.41	1.86	0.05
OTHER ACTIVITIES	2.57	1.35	5.36	3.51	4.06	1.29	1.96	0.19
VOLATILITY INDICATOR	76	94	78	69	45	91	84	98
INTEGRATION INDICATOR	19	6	3	6	31	40	11	67
% OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE	100	20.4	15.6	12.8	11.8	14.7	13.4	11.4

Source: Pairfam waves 1-11, own calculations (N = 1,529). Note: C1 "DIRECTLY UNI", C2 "DELAYED UNI", C3 "DELAYED VET", C4 "ERRATIC", C5 "PROLONGED VET and WORK"; C6 "DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY; C7 "DIRECTLY VET and WORK"

Table 2: Description of variables by STWT cluster

	TOTAL	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
INTIMACY MOTHER	1.07	0.95	0.95	1.13	1.32	1.10	1.11	1.08
INTIMACY FATHER	1.05	0.97	0.98	1.09	1.27	1.07	1.09	1.03
CONFLICT MOTHER	1.04	0.97	1.00	1.06	1.18	1.07	1.08	1.00
CONFLICT FATHER	1.08	0.95	1.08	1.16	1.28	1.07	1.07	1.03
SCHOOL SUPPORT MOTHER	2.46	2.34	2.36	2.54	2.50	2.50	2.52	2.59
SCHOOL SUPPORT FATHER	2.21	2.16	2.23	2.28	2.17	2.26	2.14	2.26
FINANCIAL SUPPORT MOTHER	3.43	3.76	3.66	3.46	3.37	3.11	3.32	3.01
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FATHER	3.24	3.65	3.44	3.27	3.09	2.90	3.09	2.85
PARENTAL SEPARATION	0.28	0.20	0.21	0.34	0.44	0.26	0.30	0.28
INDIVIDUATION MOTHER	4.30	4.36	4.34	4.26	4.09	4.31	4.26	4.36
INDIVIDUATION FATHER	4.09	4.19	4.17	4.06	3.96	4.12	3.95	4.06
LOVE WITHDRAWAL MOTHER	1.98	1.87	1.85	2.06	2.17	1.97	2.03	2.08
LOVE WITHDRAWAL FATHER	1.88	1.77	1.80	2.04	2.00	1.89	1.92	1.90
EDUCATION HIGH MOTHER	0.30	0.55	0.52	0.23	0.13	0.17	0.18	0.12
EDUCATION HIGH FATHER	0.34	0.60	0.54	0.25	0.15	0.19	0.22	0.15
EDUCATION HIGH RESPONDENT	0.59	0.96	0.97	0.58	0.41	0.24	0.32	0.31
SUBJECTIVE FINANCIAL SITUATION	3.86	4.20	4.12	3.84	3.38	3.56	3.74	3.80
FEMALE	0.51	0.57	0.55	0.46	0.45	0.33	0.50	0.56
MIGRANT STATUS	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.09	0.04	0.05	0.04
% OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE	100	20.4	15.6	12.8	11.8	14.7	13.4	11.4

Source: Pairfam waves 1-11, own calculations (N = 1,529). Note: C1 "DIRECTLY UNI", C2 "DELAYED UNI", C3 "DELAYED VET", C4 "ERRATIC", C5 "PROLONGED VET and WORK"; C6 "DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY"; C7 "DIRECTLY VET and WORK"

The influence of family social capital on STWT

In the next step, we examine the influence of family social capital on STWTs on the basis of multinomial logistic regressions. Given that a significant proportion of the young adults were also raised in single parent families (a fifth of all German families with minor children is a single-parent family), we compute separate models for fathers and mothers. For each parent we compute two models: Model 1 includes only variables for the social capital of the family, while additional control variables are included in model 2. Figure 2 and 3 show the results of the multinomial logit regression models reporting log odds. As C4 is the most problematic STWT cluster, we decided to contrast all other clusters with this group. We therefore use C4 as a reference category.

Regarding the dimension of *time and effort*, we first look at the impact of parental support. In general, maternal as well as paternal support seem to influence the pathway chosen in a fairly similar way. Table 2 shows that the lowest rates of maternal school support are found for C1 "DIRECTLY UNI" and C2 "DELAYED UNI". At the same time, the highest values for maternal

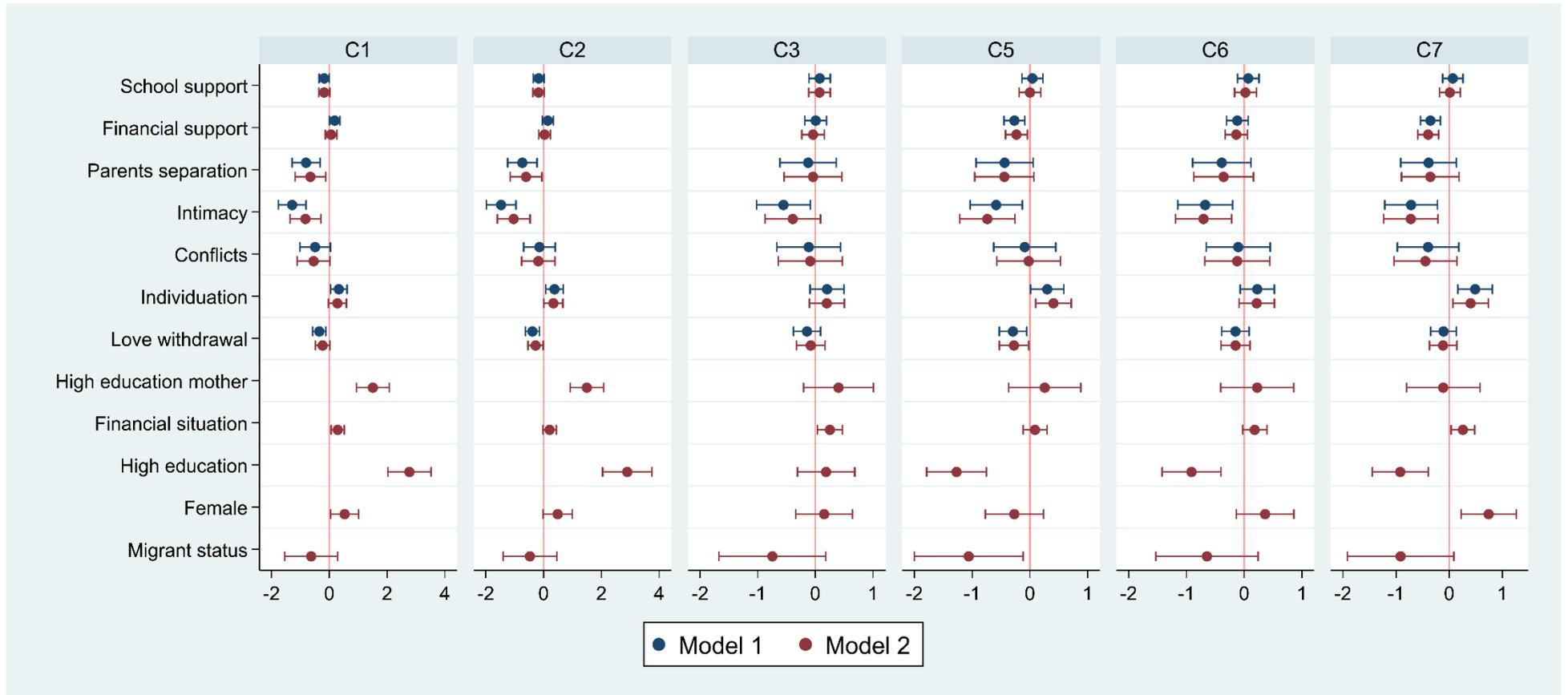
financial support are found for these same clusters. The highest values for maternal school support as well as the lowest for financial support are found for persons in C7 "DIRECTLY VET and WORK". For fathers, the results are quite similar.

When including school and financial support in the multinomial logit models, we see that lower paternal school support increases the chance of belonging to C1 "DIRECTLY UNI" or C2 "DELAYED UNI" instead of C4 "ERRATIC", while there is no significant influence for all other clusters (results for mothers are similar but only significant at the 10%-level). With regard to financial support, the picture is the other way around: Higher maternal and paternal financial support increases the chance of belonging to C1 "DIRECTLY UNI" and decreases the chance of belonging to C5 "PROLONGED VET and WORK", C6 "DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY" or C7 "DIRECTLY VET and WORK" compared to C4 "ERRATIC". The assumption that higher school and financial support increases the probability of a successful transition from school to work (H1) thus cannot be confirmed in all cases. In clusters with a successful transition (C1, C5, and C7), our results can be rather interpreted as a needs-oriented parental investment strategy: While children belonging to C1 needed less school support than those in the other clusters, they need more financial support when they continue their education at university. However, more financial support is not required if the respondents already earn their own money during vocational training. At the same time, selection effects may also come into play here, as a precarious family financial situation and lack of financial support from the parental home may influence the young person's decision in favour of vocational training and against taking up higher education.

We have further assumed that parental separation or growing up in a non-traditional family structure has a more negative impact on a successful transition (H2). Overall, the mean value of parental separation is 28 %. The results in Table 2 show that parental separation is less likely for clusters with a successful transition and within families with a high parental educational background. C4 "ERRATIC" is the cluster with the highest number of parental separations (44 %). Therefore, the multivariate results indicate a lower rate of separation of all other clusters compared to C4. This difference is significant in particular for C1 "DIRECTLY UNI" and C2 "DELAYED UNI". Thus, there is some evidence that parental separation can damage the professional orientation of adolescents, while a stable family structure is conducive to an academic career – even when controlled for other household characteristics.

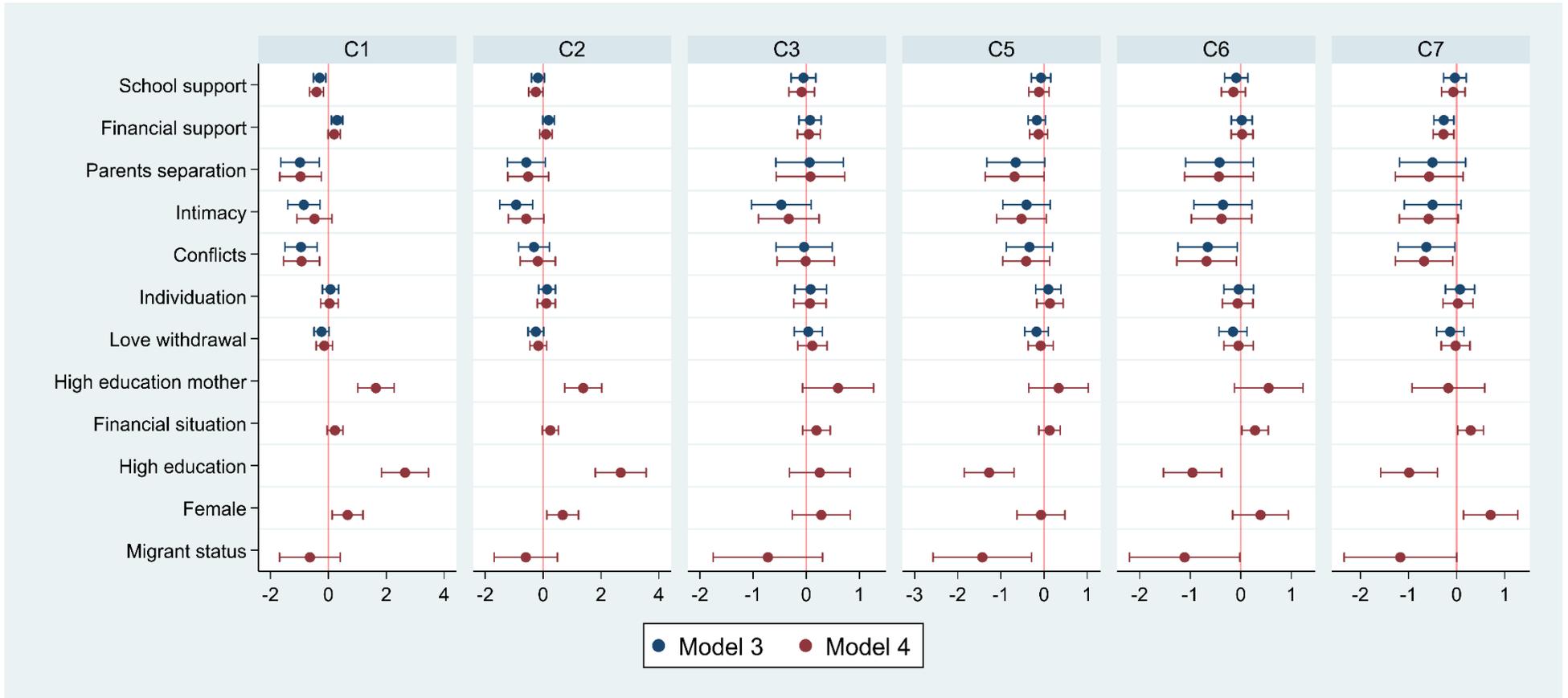
Furthermore, we assumed that less stable relationships with parents – measured by a high variability of intimacy and conflicts over time – reduce the supporting and guiding role of parents, which in turn reduces the likelihood of successfully entering the labour market (H3). Our descriptive results (Table 1) and the multivariate analyses (Figures 2 and 3) confirm this hypothesis. Clusters with a successful transition (C1, C5, and C7) show the lowest variance in intimacy and conflict for mothers and fathers. On the other hand, failed pathways (C4 "ERRATIC" and C6 "DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY") reveal the highest values, while the values for the delayed clusters (C2 "DELAYED UNI", C3 "DELAYED VET") are somewhat in between. The variability of intimacy towards the mother is in particular significant for each cluster compared to C4. For fathers, this is the case for C1 and C2. In sum, a highly volatile relationship with the parents is thus linked with a higher risk of a failed STWT, while a more stable and reliable relationship increases the likelihood of pursuing a direct and linear transition from school to work.

Figure 2: Multinomial logit regressions on cluster membership (Ref.: C4), mother



Source: Pairfam waves 1-11, own calculations. Note: C1 "DIRECTLY UNI", C2 "DELAYED UNI", C3 "DELAYED VET", C4 "ERRATIC", C5 "PROLONGED VET and WORK"; C6 "DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY; C7 "DIRECTLY VET and WORK".

Figure 3: Multinomial logit regressions on cluster membership (Ref.: C4), father



Source: Pairfam waves 1-11, own calculations. Note: C1 "DIRECTLY UNI", C2 "DELAYED UNI", C3 "DELAYED VET", C4 "ERRATIC", C5 "PROLONGED VET and WORK"; C6 "DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY; C7 "DIRECTLY VET and WORK".

Finally, we hypothesised that a parent-child relationship that is associated with higher individuation leads to a more successful transition from school to work (H4). Our results show that successful individuation is more likely in clusters with a successful or delayed transition, while we find the lowest rates in C4 "ERRATIC" and C6 "DIRECTLY VET and INSTABILITY". The multivariate analyses confirm this finding for mothers, but not for fathers. Similarly, the fear of love withdrawal shows the highest values for an unsuccessful transition, in particular for C4. We conclude that with regard to individuation, there are some indications in line with the expected trends, even if the results are not as clear as we had assumed. The results suggest that individuation in relation to the mother is important in the transition between school and work, while individuation in relation to the father seems to be less central to this transition.

Looking at the control variables for human and financial capital, it can be shown that young people's higher educational attainment and parental educational attainment are positively associated with belonging to one of the higher education clusters, in particular for C1 "DIRECTLY UNI" and C2 "DELAYED UNI". However, when looking at other successful transition clusters such as C5 "PROLONGED VET and WORK" and C7 "DIRECTLY VET and WORK", it becomes clear that a successful transition to the labour market is not only dependent on a high level of parental education. With regard to financial capital, results from the multinomial logistic regressions show that compared to C4 "ERRATIC", all other clusters are better off. There is no clear impact of migration status on our cluster solution, but it must be emphasised that the number of persons with a migrant background is very low in this sample. The highest number can be found in C4 "ERRATIC". Worth noting is also the overrepresentation of women in the clusters showing a fairly successful transition, in particular C1 "DIRECTLY UNI", C2 "DELAYED UNI" and C7 "DIRECTLY VET and WORK".

6. Discussion and conclusion

In this article, we discussed two questions: Firstly, we asked what proportions of successful, delayed or unsuccessful school-to-work transitions can be observed among young persons in Germany within five years of leaving general school. Secondly, we asked whether these transition patterns can be explained by the social capital of the family in terms of parental support, relationship quality and individuation.

Focusing on career orientation, volatility and the integrative potential of STWT transitions, we used sequence and cluster analyses to distinguish seven patterns of transitions from school to work. These seven clusters are characterised by very heterogeneous pathways, as already shown by previous studies (Brzinsky-Fay & Solga, 2016). We reclassified these seven clusters as successful transitions, delayed successful transitions and unsuccessful or failed transitions. The first two groups, the successful and the delayed transitions, encompass about 75 % of all individuals. Five years after leaving school, a huge majority of young adults thus successfully managed to make the transition into the labour market or – due to their vocational attainment (VET or University) – have a high potential of managing it in the near future. The vast majority of young people thus exhibit a clear occupational orientation and a high potential for labour market entry five years after leaving school. These results are in line with findings of Baas & Philipps (2017).

For the remaining quarter of all young people, however, we observed an unsuccessful transition. In particular, the cluster C4, which we characterised as "erratic", is a very problematic

trajectory with no clear direction and many different episodes and changes. This cluster is characterised by the highest proportion of unemployment spells, prevocational measures and other types of educational activities – even five years after leaving general school. This allows only gloomy forecasts for the future employment of these young people; their potential for a successful transition into regular employment might be seriously limited. This result also corresponds with the findings of Baas & Philipps (2017), who analysed the German NEPS data and found a cluster called “exclusion”, which is indicated by high unemployment rates even ten years after leaving school. Furthermore, many persons in this cluster are enrolled on prevocational training programmes. Despite a shortage of skilled employees, it can be expected that the share of prevocational training will be high in future, which is also partly due to the coronavirus pandemic (Dohmen et al., 2021). A second problematic cluster is C6, which is marked by prolonged vocational educational training followed by unstable employment. Although persons in this cluster have spent a lot of time in vocational education, this might not indicate profound professional expertise but rather frequent changes in their vocational training. This is a risk-prone STWT pattern, as a transition into regular employment has not yet taken place. While other trajectories with long episodes of vocational trainings lead to direct entry into the labour market, this is not the case for C6. This shows that transitions are very diverse in the context of vocational and prevocational training – as Achatz et al. (2020), inter alia, have shown before. In sum, five years after finishing general school, we observe heterogeneous but ultimately successful school-to-work transitions in three out of four cases. Nevertheless, the remaining quarter of adolescents are confronted with significant labour market risks. For these young people, it is currently not clear whether they will successfully enter the labour market. These problematic clusters of young labour market entrants have already been identified by Baas & Philipps (2017), Schoon & Lyons-Amos (2016) and Achatz et al. (2020). These authors report an increasing prevalence of problematic transition patterns in younger cohorts. Further research should concentrate on this group in order to determine at which points they failed to take successful steps and which factors influenced their decisions. In order to find out which factors facilitated these successful transitions, it would also be helpful to compare the results with those of young people who have similar educational qualifications but have successfully made the transition to work. This could provide insights into how best to support and encourage young people who are at risk of failing in the transition to work.

In addition to the well-known influence of parental human and financial capital, which we were also able to confirm on the basis of our data, our second research question focused on the question of whether the observed transition patterns can also be explained by family social capital. A high level of parental education is positively associated with their offspring’s higher education pathways, in particular if we look at clusters C1 and C2, which include persons who accede university and find a job afterwards either directly or after other activities (military or community service, internships, first job experiences, travel etc.). However, a lower parental human capital does not prevent a successful transition, as shown by the clusters C5 and C7, which are characterised by vocational educational training and subsequent employment. Furthermore, we found a strong association between the available financial capital and STWT transitions. Young adults who report the best financial situations of their families of origin are located in the higher education clusters C1 and C2. All other clusters are below average. In particular, C4 is characterised by erratic transitions and by a worse financial household situation.

Besides these results, our findings also indicate that parental educational investments are associated with *parental separation*. Parental separation may reduce parental support and dam-

age the professional orientation of the adolescents, while a stable family structure is conducive to an academic career. This corresponds to similar findings by Baas & Philipps (2017). We also observed a *needs-oriented parental investment strategy*: While children belonging to the higher education clusters (C1 "DIRECTLY UNI" and C2 "DELAYED UNI") needed less school support than children from other clusters, the amount of financial support is the highest, particularly compared to the unsuccessful clusters (C4 "ERRATIC" and C6 "Prolonged VET and INSTABILITY"). More financial support is not necessary in cases where the young adults are already able to generate their own income through vocational training or regular employment. At the same time, available financial resources in the family may influence adolescents' decisions for or against costly educational pathways. It is therefore possible that government support programmes such as BAföG (government-funded educational grants in Germany provided under the Federal Training Assistance Act) are not yet having an impact that offsets these effects. Accordingly, educational equity still seems to be an unachieved ideal.

Furthermore, it could be shown that a highly *dynamic and volatile parental relationship* is accompanied by an increased risk of a failed school-to-work transition, while a more stable and reliable relationship increases the likelihood of pursuing successful trajectories. This is particularly the case with variability of intimacy between mothers and their children. These results confirm previous findings, indicating that parental social capital has an impact on their children's educational attainment (Whiston & Keller, 2004; Kracke & Noack, 2005). However, we also find that the strength of the effect decreases when control variables such as parental educational attainment are included. This suggests that interaction effects or in particular mediation effects could play a role in this case. Finally, we assumed that a parent-child relationship which supports a higher level of individuation leads to a more successful transition from school to work. Our results clearly confirm this assumption: A higher degree of individuation is accompanied by more successful pathways. Our findings confirm previous research on the association between attachment and individuation and the level of vocational qualification (Kracke & Noack, 2005; Whiston & Keller, 2004; Berríos-Allison, 2005; Blustein et al., 1995). Thus, young people who have undergone successful individuation may exhibit an advantageous type of exploratory behaviour with regard to their career choice that leads to more successful and sustainable transitions into work.

In sum, our results show that family social capital does indeed matter for the school-to-work transition of young adults, even when controlling for the human or financial capital of the family. In particular the variability of intimacy towards the mother and the variability of conflicts towards the father as well as the separation of parents seem to play a significant role. However, the results for financial support and schoolwork support from parents – functioning as transmission channels for financial and human capital – are not as clear as expected. This might be explained by the overwhelming impact of parental human capital on their offspring's school-to-work transition. Therefore, further analysis of the interaction between the human capital of the parents and family social capital could be fruitful. Overall, however, with a view to promoting successful transitions to work, in addition to education as a starting point, measures should also be taken to strengthen social cohesion in families. Families in difficult situations, such as separation or divorce, should be supported so that the parents can be there for their children even under such circumstances.

Finally, this study has some limitations. First of all, the observation period is limited. It would be interesting to extend this period to see how the transitions develop over time. Moreover, the chosen clusters do not contain any further information about the quality of the respective status. How satisfied are young adults with their career situation? What other qualities can be associated with the respective episode (e.g. satisfaction with income, fixed-term contracts,

etc.). Furthermore, a cluster analysis is always accompanied by a loss of information, as the individual episodes are grouped together. In subsequent analyses, other statistical methods could be used that focus more specifically on individual trajectories. Finally, our analysis is based on correlations and not on causal analyses. These limitations may be overcome by further analyses on the basis of other longitudinal data sets and also by in-depth qualitative analyses of selected, individual school-to-work transitions.

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Appendix

Table A1: Recoding of activity status

New activity status variable	Old activity status variable
Prevocational measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prevocational training ▪ Internships, traineeship, including unpaid work
Vocational training (VET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vocational training (apprenticeship, business school etc.) ▪ Vocational retraining / further education ▪ University of cooperative education (also 'Berufsakademie') ▪ Technical/professional school
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ University of applied science, college, university
Regular employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full-time employment ▪ Self-employment ▪ Part-time employment (also multiple part-time jobs) ▪ Maternity or paternity leave or other leave of absence for childcare
Atypical employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marginal part-time employment, minijobs, one-euro-jobs ▪ Occasional or irregular employment ▪ Other type of employment
Unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unemployment, seeking employment
Other Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other education
Other activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Military service, alternative civilian service, voluntary social service year ▪ Housewife/Househusband ▪ Early retirement, retirement, occupational disability ▪ Other type of non-employment

Table A2: Description of measures, scales, and items

<i>Measure (Cronbach's Alpha mother/father)</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Label</i>
Financial support	During the past 12 months, how often did you receive from mother/father financial help?	1: Never 2: Seldom
School support	During the past 12 months, how often did you receive help from mother/father for doing school homework?	3: Sometimes 4: Often 5: Very often
Parental separation	Parents ever separated?	1: Yes 0: No
Intimacy ($\alpha = .83/.83$)	How often do you tell your mother/father what you are thinking?	1: Never 2: Seldom 3: Sometimes 4: Often 5: Always
	How often do you share with your mother/father your secrets and private feelings?	
Conflict ($\alpha = .78/.81$)	How often are you and your mother/father annoyed or angry with each other?	1: Never 2: Seldom 3: Sometimes 4: Often 5: Always
	How often do you and your mother/father disagree and quarrel?	
Successful individuation ($\alpha = .63/.72$)	I like it when my mother/ father talks to me	1: Disagree completely 5: Agree completely
	Even if I argue with my mother/ father, we still like each other	
	My mother/ father will always be important to me even if I pursue my own interests	
Fear of love withdrawal ($\alpha = .72/.78$)	When I disappoint my mother/father I am afraid that she will love me less	1: Disagree completely 5: Agree completely
	I often am afraid of doing something wrong and disappointing my mother/father	
	When I made a mistake, I wonder if my mother/father still likes me.	
High education mother	Highest level of school education mother/father: High	1: Yes 0: No
Financial situation	Parents have enough money for everything they need	1: Disagree completely 5: Agree completely
High Education	Highest level of education attained: High	1: Yes 0: No
Female	Gender: Female	1: Yes 0: No
Migrant status	Country of birth: Not Germany	1: Yes 0: No