

Three Generations of Mobility via Education

A Longitudinal Analysis in East and West Germany in Three Post-War Decades

Duration: Nov. 2010 - Oct. 2013. Project leader: Prof. Ingrid Miethe. Funded by: DFG

Historical Perspective:

1st Thesis

Different political systems provide different educational opportunities for people from non-academic family backgrounds. Gaining an academic degree therefore depends not only on a person's social background, but also on political decisions. From a historical point of view, three decades can be distinguished in relation to political reforms in East and West Germany.

We conceptualize the following decades using the theoretical concept of 'political opportunity structures' (POS):

1950s: GDR: good POS; FRG: adverse POS
1970s: GDR: adverse POS; FRG: good POS
1990s: adverse POS after reunification

1950

1970

1990

Sociological Perspective:

2nd Thesis

The relation between social background and education persists in spite of political reforms. Nevertheless, some people from non-academic family backgrounds gain academic degrees.

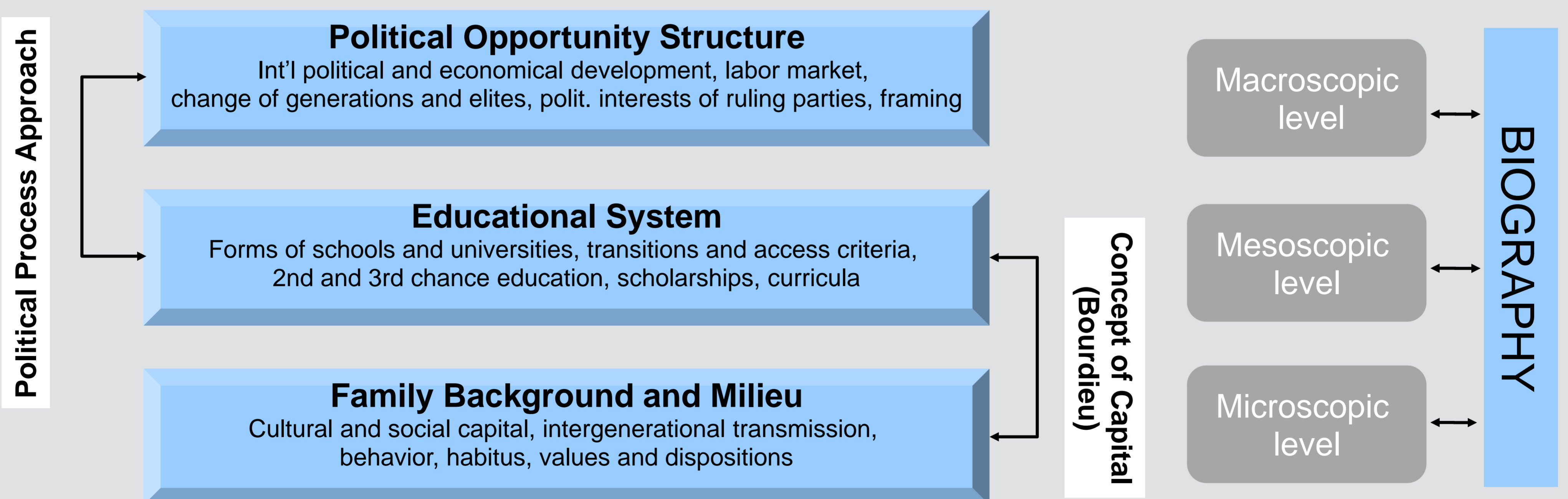
To explain the difficulties of their educational advancement, scientific discourse to date has concentrated on the barriers and the missing resources.

Rather than such a social deficit perspective, we are interested in the criteria for success.

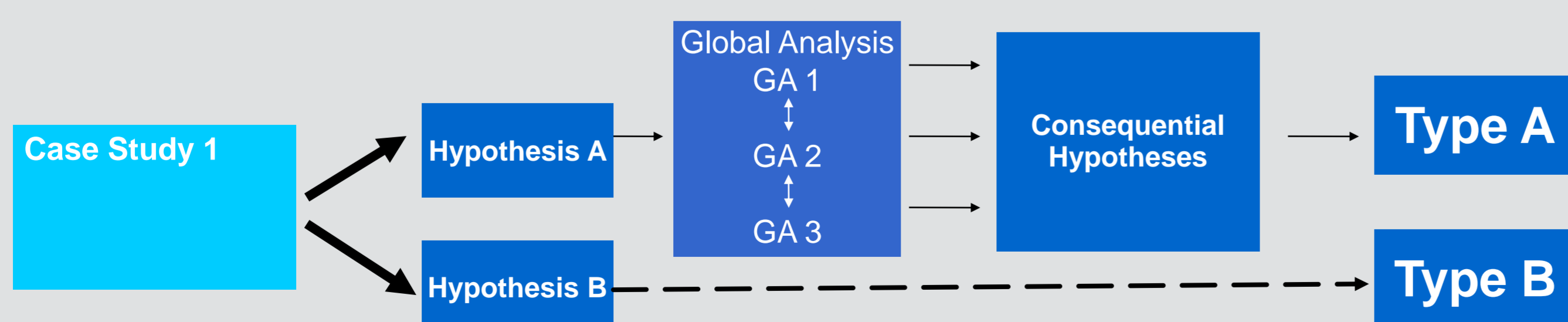
Question:

How do family background, political opportunity structure and educational policy interact in relation to the educational careers of first generation academics?

Theoretical Concept:



Analytical Method: Theory-Oriented Case Studies



Our approach combines the method of **hermeneutical case study** (Rosenthal) with **comparative analysis** (Bohnsack). **Global analyses** are necessary to differentiate the hypotheses generated on the basis of the empirical data and include more cases.