Knowing What Not to Do
Analyzing Managers’ Life Stories to Develop New Know-How in Local Management

Christian Bourion
Université de Nancy 2

Sybil GEHIN
ICN, Management School

Abstract:
This article observes and interprets managers’ multiple rationalities on the basis of their life stories. Using Popper’s falsification theory, we establish a method to validate or refute local decision processes, thus creating operational know-how in local management. The research described here can be distilled into a “Risk Chart” of actions, enabling managers in training to acquire new managerial know-how – to know what not to do, to know what is justifiable from what is not, to know what solves a problem from what creates additional ones.

1. Information Analysis

1.1. Model Design
1.1.1 The Sources
1.1.2 The Fields of Action
1.1.3 The Actor’s Statuses
1.1.4 The Actor’s Logics

1.2. Model Implementation
1.2.1 The Model
1.2.2 The Analysis

2. Results

2.1. What is Justifiability?
2.1.1. The Chart of Justifiability
2.1.2. The Right-Right Conflict, in the Context of Rules and Agreements
2.1.3 Professionalism

2.2. Tolerated Actions
2.2.1 Logics of Place
2.2.2 Professional Logic Played Out in the Intimacy Field
2.2.3 Professional Logic Played Out in the Family Field
2.2.4 Professional Logic Played Out in the Professional Field
2.3 **QUESTIONABLE ACTIONS**
2.3.1 Favouritism Relating to Filiation Logic
2.3.2 Favouritism Relating to Intimacy Logic
2.3.3 Religious Logic Played Out in the Professional Field
2.3.4 Religious Logic Played Out in the Family Field

3. **CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS**

Key words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Logic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Life Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favouritism</td>
<td>Refutation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifiability</td>
<td>Plural Status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Christian Bourion  
Université de Nancy 2, France

Sybil GEHIN  
ICN, Management School, France

This article describes research carried out to collect dispersed knowledge of managers and collate it into one body to come up with a knowledge base to “know what not to do.” Based on managers’ life stories and on a method designed to validate the multiple rationalities brought to light, the research first applies, for each life story, the theory of refutation and falsification of beliefs, inasmuch as these beliefs result in norm deviations – misfortune, failure, mistake, resignation and misconduct. A “chart” of refuted beliefs is then established. The newly transferable corpus aims at helping those managers facing decision making to anticipate ex ante – and not acknowledge ex post – the justifiability of the decision and whether it will solve problems or create additional and more complex ones.

The constructivist approaches have focused on criteria that distinguish the scientific from the pseudo-scientific. According to Karl Popper, a scientific statement is characterized by the fact it is falsifiable and refutable. Following that statement, a scientific approach must include “How,” “Where from” and “To what aim.” Its author must describe the method used, which therefore becomes explicit and may subsequently be criticized and refuted, providing the method with a scientific characteristic. Moreover, according to the positivistic approach, if a case study casts doubt on the statement, the statement must then be formally dropped. Simon, Lemoigne, Schön and Argyris suggest two complementary criteria: The result must produce both transferable and actionable knowledge. These two criteria shed light on the existing connection between the production of a statement and its own teaching.

1. INFORMATION ANALYSIS

The managers’ life stories we have collected initially describe deviations in human behaviour, which may subsequently have an impact on financial and accounting aspects. Each behaviour deviation results from a more global belief (or ignorance). The difficulty consists in explicitly formulating this belief, which is nearly always implicit in the life stories collected. In order to do so, the research needs to be anchored with a specific method and mediums. Life stories are viewed, in this context, simply as a background report. The results are recorded. The results were expected or unexpected, looked for or not, positive or negative. In reality, the right-

1 According to Popper, the characteristic of a scientific theory is that it anticipates and predicts future situations or events and that it may be refuted or falsified by means of laboratory experimentations – 1935 “The Logic of Scientific Discovery”
wrong aspect of the action results from personal choices. These choices underlie the existence of a thought plan that sustains both choice and action, even at an unconscious level. It is generally a process made up of ignorance, beliefs and analysis, carried through in a limited amount of time, sometimes under pressure, often with utmost urgency and always with a limited readability. It may, in some cases, be a reaction process as well. Once the life story content is analyzed, we formulate, after the fact and as clearly as possible, the belief that triggered the action. The formulation will then be processed just like a hypothesis whose validity is checked – on the basis of falsification theory, if the action results in failure, it is therefore refuted along with the “belief-hypothesis.”

\[ Y = f(X) \text{ is predicted to remain valid in so far as it is not noticed that } Y_i \neq f(X_i) \] (1)

If the author of the life story intends to produce \( y_i > 0 \) by adopting Behaviour \( x_i \) and the result is \( y'_j < 0 \), the statement must then be considered a questionable belief.

**Exhibit 1** the action stems from a belief called into question by the results

According to Popper, such an approach saves science time; indeed, to establish formally what is wrong is as important as to establish what is right. This approach can therefore be presented as follows:

1. The starting point is the manager’s life story describing a management decision that brought about a chain of bad results
2. The approach consists of identifying the implicit belief underlying the decision
3. The approach then consists in invalidating the belief, inasmuch as the results call the belief into question
4. A new hypothesis is then established and may contribute to forming an actionable knowledge of “knowing what not to do”
The model design we suggest in the following section is based on three concepts.

1.1. MODEL DESIGN

The sources are described in Paragraph 1.1.1. In Paragraphs 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 we introduce three possible concepts to interpret the life stories: (1) the field of action, (2) the actor’s status and (3) the logic of the action. The following example (199 -1996 AAD 2002) - a Muslim engineer refuses to be managed by a woman and is let go – the field of the action is professional, the actor’s status that influences the action is religious, and the logic of the action is confrontation. Herewith is another illustrative example (EADB 2002): ‘He got the job thanks to his childhood friend who wanted to leave his parents and who suggested that he take over managing the family hotel he was in charge of. The mother of the childhood friend, an alcoholic, did not accept her son’s decision and did everything to have his friend fired by the owner, her husband.’ In this case, the field of the action is professional, the actor’s status that influences the action is illness (alcoholism) and the logic of the action is hostility.

![Diagram](image)

Exhibit 2 The three concepts defining each life story

1.1.1 The Sources

The research carried out is based on a number of life stories extracted from a total amount of about 1000 stories collected in 2004 (Bourion 2004). The main selection criterion is the professional context in which decisions brought about norm deviations. Each life story is identified with a code (M14 – 176
– 1996 – MOTFC – 2000). Each life story is individualized. The story is written down but the type of situation is left to the author’s choice. According to his own norms, each author is requested to recount a particular professional event, one that seems very important in the author’s eyes. Consequently, the life stories collected are very disparate and often contain chunks of unmanageable and confusing information. It appears that the life stories are often subject to emotional aspects, inasmuch as these life stories are very close to the author’s day-to-day life. Therefore, all the stories have in common a wealth of information on intimacy, family, cultural, and ethnic diversity, amongst many others - that flavour and interfere in their respective professional fields. The authors have chosen to relate the very situations that had a crucial impact on them and therefore affected their private lives. This is the reason why so many extra-professional aspects are included in the life stories. The shortest but strongest influences are break-ups, redundancies, bereavements, and accidents. Next are discussions, interviews, brief actions. Some of the situations last from a few weeks to a few months and include trainings and unsuccessful projects or assignments. Job habits, methods, and inherent job difficulties are reported structural elements in many of the life stories. It appears that the impact of a job situation on the author does not depend solely on its duration but on its intensity. Writing about major professional events proved a very involved task for the authors and are able to be considered, in most of the cases, as part of an overall heuristic apprenticeship (Thévenet 2000).

1.1.2 The Fields of Action

The life stories collected have provided us with qualitative information that is at times difficult to process. In order to clarify that information, we have designed a model applicable to about any kind of story, whatever its subject and content. The design model identifies the information common to all the life stories analyzed, without exception. Each story describes a particular situation (Bourion 2004). Each situation may be divided into multiple fields of action, such as ethnic, religious, nationality, family, ego fields or professional field, which is our study subject.

| Fields of Situation i = (Field I ; Field II, …, Field i,…, Field n) (2) |

---

2 Each of these references is not used, each time, for each code. When a life story is coded with an alphanumeric reference in the first instance, it means that it has already been used in a previous publication: M14 indicates Book Story Number 14 whose title begins with an M. We have identified Logique émotionnelle with an L, Management sans pouvoir with an M, Abus de pouvoir with an A and Surtout pas de vagues with an S. The second code reference is to be read as follows: first date is the year the event took place, 1997 – followed by the story number, 176 – followed by the author’s initials, PAMT – followed by the year of story creation, 2000. The entry of the stories into a computer database is currently being carried out.
The fields are conventionally represented by a vertical rectangle identified by a Roman numeral, with one turned at a right angle. The field divisions are not fixed and permanent. According to the story subject, the fields may be redefined. Only the relation (2) mentioned above remains unchanged.

Field identification

I= Ethnic field, including European, African, Asian …states.
II= Religious field – Christians, Jews, Muslims...
III= Nationality field – France, foreign states....

![Exhibit 3 The fields of action](image-url)

\(i\)= Professional field including all possible states in relation to the profession of manager
\(j\)= Family field with its limited states – father, mother, son, daughter
\(n\)= Intimacy field– husband, wife, lover
\(n\)= Ego field, including all its varied states according to the story

The fields are identified through the stories themselves, such as, for instance, this story extract (A46 1999 CABB 2000), in which the writer introduces the professional field: ‘As my request had been agreed by the Company, I hired a recent graduate design engineer to work on setting up a rather complicated automatic data processing program.’

\[
\text{Situation field (A46, 1999, CABB, 2000) = (Professional field) (3)}
\]

In another story extract (170 NAGB 2004), the author introduces religious and educational fields: ‘Education, viewed in its most modern sense, has always been the best integration tool for Jews, forever exiles wherever they find themselves.’

\[
\text{Situation field (170, NAGB, 2004) = (Religious field, Educational field) (4)}
\]
In this third example (1989 VALBBC 2004), the author introduces multiple fields – personal, family and professional fields: ‘I was made aware that M. had two sons and that he would have loved to have had a daughter. According to Philippe, M. considered me as a daughter. He knew that from X... with whom he shared the same hobby – ice hockey (...). I had negative feelings about that situation and they proved to be right in many instances; indeed, M...became very possessive. For example, he would not let me participate in informational meetings related to my training and wanted to be my only referee. He once refused to let me attend a Paris exhibition with the commercial managers, though he knew the objective of my training was to become a commercial manager. He could not bear to see me with male colleagues and would express his jealousy by means of strong criticism towards them. I had the feeling I was prisoner of that man, the type of man who always “wants the best for you”.’

| Situation Field (1989 VALBBC 2004) = (Professional field, Family field, Personal field) (5) |

This last example underscores the insufficiencies of the field concept when it comes to give a complete story account. It shows how necessary it is to develop the second concept – the status.

1.1.3 The Actor’s Status

Each life story concerns one actor, the author, faced with one situation. The story’s analysis shows that the actors activate not only their professional status at work, but also many other statuses forming an actionable sum. We choose to name this “sum” the actor’s “plural status.”

| Plural status \( i = \text{status} \ 1 \ ; \ \text{status} \ 2, \ldots, \ \text{status} \ i, \ldots, \ \text{status} \ n-1, \ \text{status} \ n \) (6) or |
| Plural status = (\( \sum \) \text{status} \ ‘i’ \ of the actor) (7) |

For example, an individual “k” may be a “Canadian,” “Catholic,” “Manager,” “Father,” “Husband,” “Sportsman” and “Writer.” In this case, the individual’s plural status is defined by six statuses, as follows:

| Plural status \( k = \text{Canadian, Catholic, Manager, Father, Husband, Sportsman, Writer} \) (8) |

Here is a story extract illustrating how fields and statuses are defined: ‘Valérie was on the verge of a breakdown and the manager informed everyone at the Agency that he was going to dismiss her (...). I then set up a petition I addressed to Regional Management (without any implication from the unions). The petition was signed by 90% of the Agency employees. I handed it to the General Manager who
then tried to find a solution. But Valérie was already by then seriously ill, so she declined the offer and resigned.’

Field = (Professional field, Health field) (9)
Valérie’s plural status = (Resignation, Illness) (10)

Another illustration of plural status (CAIJ 2002) is depicted here: ‘The type of management our Chief had put in place and one which I would qualify as “paternalistic” changed all of a sudden. His usual kindness increasingly became aggressive... According to him (...) the fact I had met a new companion (...) was diverting me from my duty and was making me less available to the Company. He hassled me for about six months and even would call me at home, during my holidays.’

Situation field = (Professional field, Intimacy field) (11)
Author’s plural status = (Commercial, Husband) (12)

In the following story extract (A34 1994 SAB 2000), a foreman obtains his job through blackmail. The news spreads in the company and, consequently, the foreman loses control over his staff and furthermore loses all support from his colleagues: ‘Some years ago, my job was in the hands of a man about 50 years old who had been appointed to the job because he possessed interesting personal information regarding his chief. Once the news spread, everybody rejected him (...) His job, which basically was not an easy one, became a living hell.

Manager’s plural status = (Foreman, Blackmailer) (13)

In the graphic representation below, the circles represent the different statuses. The sum of the statuses are grouped within a horizontal rectangle, which forms the actor’s plural status.

![Diagram showing the actor’s plural status](image)

**Exhibit 4** The actor’s plural status represented by a horizontal rectangle

1.1.4 The Actor’s Logics
The actor is influenced by each of his statuses, all of which drive him to act following a particular logic in a particular field. If he is religious, his beliefs will incline him to act accordingly; if he has a strong sense of nationalism, his actions will be motivated by jingoistic values; if he is a father, his actions will be orientated to protect his own children. A logic is therefore associated with each of the statuses: To accomplish civic duties in order to be a good citizen, to behave morally in order to be a good Catholic, to be efficient and successful in order to be a good manager, to have a loving attitude in order to be a good husband. The logics involved are potentially endless.

Logic \( i \) = \( f \) (Status \( i \)) (14)

(2) in conjunction with (14) \( \Rightarrow \) (16):

Plural status = (Logic 1 ; …, Logic i,…, Logic n-1, Logic n) (16)

This new identity (16) replaces identity (2) and therefore enables us simply to use two concepts exclusively – Fields with Statuses, or Fields with Logics. This makes the graphical representation (see Exhibit 7) correspondingly simpler, in which arrows indicate the individual Logics.

1.2. MODEL IMPLEMENTATION

The following story analysis (1993 1996 AAD 2002) illustrates how the method is implemented in a situation seeming particularly complex and difficult to interpret. An engineer “N” and a manager “N+1” work at the same company, an Italian bank, and are fighting each other in four different fields – religious, hierarchical, family and intimacy fields.

1.2.1 Analysis

A series of wrong decisions taken in unjustifiable fields leads not only to dismissal but also to death. There are four fields and four actors. Two of the actors have minor contributions to the story and the other two have major: the engineer and his “n+1.” Two conflicting logics predominate: the mother’s logic and religious logic.

Situation fields = (Religious, Professional, Family, Intimacy)

n’s plural status = (Muslim, Engineer, Lover)

Engineer’s logic = (Religious logic: a man must not obey a woman)

n+1’s plural status = (Manager, Mother of the daughter in love)

n+1’s logic = (Mother’s logic: to protect a daughter against predators)
The action takes place as follows: the “engineer” (Professional status) has an affair with the manager’s daughter (Family status) (arrow 1). The mother doubts the engineer’s true intentions. Since the mother is the N+1, she transfers the engineer and places him under her direct control.

In the first place, the actor is the “mother” who wishes to control “her daughter’s lover” (Arrow 2). What happens then? The engineer “N” refuses to take orders from his “N+1”: (...) ‘I wanted to remain independent and to work freely’... What actually underlies this reaction is that the engineer is “a man” or “a Muslim” who refuses to obey a woman (Arrow 3): ‘I did not tolerate being dominated by a woman, and especially in my work place (...) Admittedly, I despise women’s authority’. When the conflict becomes critical, it intrudes into Professional Field II. “N” brings the conflict to the “N+2” (Arrow 4): ‘I decided to meet with the Human Resources Manager and inform him about my refusal.’ The conflict is arbitrated by “N+2,” who remains within the framework of the professional field and without consideration for the other fields. The engineer is therefore dismissed due to conflict within the existing power structure (Arrow 5): ‘Further to a number of negotiations, I was dismissed for professional reasons – power structure.’ The two lovers then break up at the “offended engineer’s” instigation (Arrow 6): ‘Actually I got my own back regarding my girlfriend.’ As a consequence of this series of dramatic events, the manager’s daughter commits suicide and her mother has a subsequent severe nervous breakdown.

1.2.2 The Model
Exhibit 5  The mapped situation – four fields and four actors

The story is written by the engineer. The vertical arrows represent the only actions that are justifiable – that is, what would normally occur if only the professional field was exclusively taken into consideration. Deviations are represented by oblique arrows. Arrow 3 is the longest because it represents the powerful belief that the Religious field may interfere with the other rules and settle problems related to intimacy (Field IV).

Let us now present the results of our numerous life stories analyzed and described as above.

2. THE RESULTS

Each life story analyzed is identifiable through two discrete and measurable variables – the field, and the logic. The intersection of these two variables form the subject of the following second section. A result is established at each intersection.
Exhibit 6  \[ \text{Situation}_{ij} = (\text{Logic}_i \cap \text{Field}_j) = \text{Result}_{ij} \]

The state of each variable is discontinuous and depends on the life story analyzed. Numerous stories are represented via the same graph system. Each life story depicts a specific situation and constitutes a specific point \( z_i = (x_i, y_j) \) within a system of axes. Once a satisfactory number of life stories have been analyzed, we notice that a “gestalt” (Perls) is standing out graphically against the “background.” Through this “gestalt” interpretation, we are able to suggest a set of recommendations for Management professionals on “what not to do.” A norm must therefore be established to qualify the degree of justifiability in each action.

2.1. WHAT IS JUSTIFIABILITY?

In the present research, the justifiability (L) is expressed as a relation of order between a number of logics, specifically in one field and in relation with one situation. In other words, the justifiability of a particular logic is influenced by the field in which the logic exerts itself. Let us consider a logic \( l_i \): to implement the logic \( i \) in the field \( i \) (\( l_i/C_i \)) may be justifiable, whereas applying the logic \( I \) in the field \( j \) (\( l_i/C_j \)) may not. Here is a typical illustration taken from one of the analyzed life stories (A15 JAFBC 2000): ‘The manager made it a point of honour to destroy his “victim.” He would assign Valérie numerous tasks and request unrealistic deadlines. Valérie very quickly became depressed...She then met with the HR Manager who offered her no help (...) Disappointed, she turned to the Company doctor for help, but he in turn was pulling strings to have his daughter get a job in the Company and did not make a single move to help her.’ If we look at the situation from the doctor’s point of view, we can admit it is justifiable to develop strategic actions to have one’s daughter hired in the Company (Family field). But these strategic actions are patently professional misconduct because they are carried out in the field of Medicine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \text{If } L(CM) &gt; L(CF) \Rightarrow \text{Diagnosis } = f(\text{Doctor’s logic}) \Rightarrow L(A) )</th>
<th>(17)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>( \text{If } L(CF) &gt; L(CM) \Rightarrow \text{Diagnosis } = f(\text{Father’s logic}) \Rightarrow L(\text{non } A) )</td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with CM = Medical field and CF = Family field and L = Justifiability</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Actually, the justifiability of support (A) that is to be provided to Valérie or not (non A) depends on the relation the doctor establishes between the two fields he himself has to deal with. We can easily acknowledge that a medical diagnosis is justifiable only if it is established on the basis of a medical logic. Thus, based on the two concepts (logic and field) which cannot be simplified one with the other, we may clearly deduce that there exists a meta rule defining “the justifiability of the justifiability”:

**The more a particular logic i is exerted in a field close to field i, the more it is justifiable (the prime field of the logic i)**

We depict that theory on a diagram by crossing each of the two concepts – field and logic. We observe that justifiability is at its highest level on the diagonal.

2.1.1. The Chart of Justifiability

![Chart of Justifiability](chart.png)

**Exhibit 7** The Figures populating the square pattern represent our collected life stories

The Logics I, II, ..., L, ..., N, are most justifiable in the Fields 1,2, ..., i, ..., n and are questionable when they appear in collateral fields:
Optimum justifiability = (Logic 1 ⊆ Field 1, ..., Logic n ⊆ Field n) (19)

Justifiability is not to be considered in absolute terms. Varying degrees of justifiability can be found throughout time and space. Points 221 to 232 of Exhibit 7 refer to the following sections analyzing the corresponding intersections.

2.1.2 The Right-Right Conflict through the Lens of Compliance with Rules and Agreements

The analysis of the life stories underscores that the actors considerably deviate from the optimum justifiability. Badaracco’s analysis (1997) shows that the deviation resulted from “right-right” conflicts. The life stories bring out conflicts of justifiability ending in an unavoidable choice between two priorities. Eg: ‘My mother had heart problems and had to go to hospital. Some time later, my fiancée’s parents announced that they were going to divorce (...) I absolutely had to move to Epinal but as no job was available, I had to leave my job at Nestlé, with my manager’s approval’ (2001 YARB 2004). The plural actor deals with multiple fields simultaneously; it is not a matter of resource sharing. In a “right-right” context, a field must be sacrificed. Two illustrative examples: in “Sophie’s choice” (W. Styron), the mother must sacrifice one of her children to save the life of the other. In the 1950s, when a woman’s life was at stake during delivery, the husband had to choose between saving his wife’s life or his child’s. Both choices are justifiable but one of them has to be left aside, something that necessarily requires prioritizing the fields in question. The choice that will eventually be made may break conventional agreements as well as a number of the rules that are usually observed.

Choice resulting from a ‘right-right’ conflict = (logic ‘j’ > ∑ other logics …) (20)

In this inequality, only the field “j,” identified as the priority field by the right-right conflict, is considered above all other fields.

Due to these conflicts, the relational order is submitted to ad hoc modifications, but the relational order may be subject to a gradual evolution as well. In the private sector, as a matter of course, the continuous risk of losing one’s job requires the employee to remain eternally vigilant.

Rank ‘i’ = g (1/ f (securing of field ‘i’ ))(21)

1. Unsuccessful job achievements lead to dismissal
2. Dismissal produces unemployment
3. End of unemployment benefits means poverty
4. Poverty changes the individual into a homeless person
5. The status of homeless person causes the individual’s physical and moral decline
6. This decline activates a vicious circle – back to 1.

In most of the cases, Point 1 is not put into practice, but the existing risk is enough to create of state of vigilance (Crozier, Friedberg 1977), a kind of “inner policing.”

\[ L(CP) > L(CF) \ (22) \]

If the risk disappears, the order is then inverted, well illustrated by state-employed functionaries, “owners” of their job. They cannot be let go. The institutional and individual entitlements cannot be called into question, with, as a result, a behaviour logic all its own in which the personal constraints of the plural status have priority over professional constraints.

\[ L(CF) > L(CP) \ (23) \]

For example, a job transfer is usually made to the employee’s advantage. Let us imagine that an employee needs to follow her husband who has been appointed to a new position. A refusal of the wife’s transfer for organizational reasons would be viewed as outrageous. In the public sector, personal obligations have priority over work obligations, subject to compliance with the established regulations.

2.1.3 Professionalism

Professionalism is reached when statuses and logics are expressed within only one field. The situation may then be considered perfect – as illustrated by sports competitions and described in management sciences theory – individuals are hired according to skills, they are promoted on the basis of achievements and dismissed because of norm deviations. Mistakes are corrected following the SVP procedure.

Eg. Story extract L136 YAVB 1987: ‘that white-haired man who was to announce my victory gave Vincent X’s name instead of mine (...) An hour before, I was so happy about my success and then found myself sad, disappointed; I could not understand what had happened. It seemed to go on (...)’

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3 Transfers with promotion may be realized in the Company’s own interest in some cases.
4 SVP = ne Sait pas lui apprendre (does not Know how to transfer knowledge), ne Veut pas le convaincre (does not Want to convince), ne Peut pas trouver une affectation adéquate (Cannot proceed to an adequate transfer)
But the parents of my opponent then came to support me and confirmed that I had actually won. Thanks to their loyal attitude, I was finally given the title of 1987 Rhone Judo Champion and received the yellow victory badge to sew on my kimono for the next season. In this story extract, the white-haired man has the status of *judge*, the writer has the status of *competitor* and the logic is *competition*.

Situation X = (Field : judo competition)
Actor’s status = (Judge, Competitor)
Logic of action= (Competition logic).

**Exhibit 8** One field and two actors, with one status per actor

This example illustrates the most basic local management situation – a field clearly identified with appropriate statuses and logics. One score mistake occurs. This does not mean the situation is easily rectified, however; indeed, the field of emotions is nearly simultaneously activated by the announcement of the results: ‘*I remember I had felt completely lost (...) crushed. I think my trainer was the first who protested (...) I nearly broke down (...) I was crying in my mother’s arms; I remember my father participating in the argument, gesticulating all over the place.*’ In view of the emerging emotions, the manager needs strong skills to deal with the situation and above all keep calm, whatever happens.
2.2. Tolerated actions

In the previous sections we have seen that family, religion or even intimacy logics could all apply in the professional field. What is the impact on decision-making? Is it positive or negative? To avoid non-scientific value judgments, the information must be thoroughly parsed before establishing the knowledge of “knowing what not to do.”

2.2.1 Logics of Place

Let us attempt to find out what occurred at Point 221 ((logic IV \( \cap \) field 1) of Chart 7. The logic of place is illustrated by an interview describing a SMF Manager who used to hire above all else young people from his own neighbourhood. In another interview (which has not been related word-for-word at the interviewee’s request), a management consultant relates what he discovered in the company that had enlisted his services. On checking a map where the company employees were living, he discovered that the majority of them were located in the same neighborhood; by means of additional information and some luck, he found out that the HR Manager was also living in that neighborhood and that he systematically hired the local shopkeepers’ grown children. This case clearly shows how, in some instances, a logic of place can supplant a logic of work achievement. These two logics may complement or exclude one another. If they exclude one another, the decision process is thereby altered. In order to verify this, we need to examine the following hypothesis: “Each of the newly hired employees who live in the Resource Manager’s neighborhood has proved to be more efficient than those employees who do not live in the same neighborhood.” This decision process alteration may deeply change the level of achievements. Indeed, in the case above, the applicants’ skills are linked to geography. This external justifiability touches on SMFs archaic ways, but such is not always the case. External justifiability can be noted each time there is a shortage of excellence. For instance, in Paris, ENA students come from almost exclusively three Parisian city districts, and the prestigious Parisian Management school students come from, on the whole, the same few preparatory classes to the Grandes Ecoles – Carnot, Janson de Sailly, Louis le grand, Henri IV, amongst others. In the provinces, logics of place play an important part when committee specialists are recruited. Local applicants are often given the advantage. The following example (which has not been related word-for-word, at the interviewee’s request) makes mention of the selection procedures for young doctors joining the medical profession. To gain justifiability implies complex processes. The following series of examples are illustrative.
In the greater metropolitan area of Marseille, justifiability depends on belonging to that region. In the Vosges, in the cities of Epinal and Lunéville in particular, justifiability is granted according to a particular hierarchy – A doctor who happens to be an unmarried woman will face more problems than a man; a doctor who is a married woman will be more easily selected than an unmarried woman, but less so than a married mother with many children. In the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, justifiability depends on filiation. A foreigner who comes to work in these regions is often first faced with hostility. The following extract (M22 1999 BARC 2000) well illustrates the process: ‘After having spent a turbulent night in a cheap hotel and an unforgettable tax ride, I had just arrived at the agency. There I was, in front of a delightful secretary telling me that no trainee was expected for the summer months, that I had certainly been mistaken, but that I could wait for the boss, who was expected to return any minute, for additional information (...) I spent two hours waiting (...) I made friends with a man who became my guide and who explained to me that Betty (the secretary) was not a trustful person; she would either forget things or make fun of people, especially when those people were Westerners!’ In this story, the newcomer has a double status – she is the new secretary and the intruder, which sparks off Betty’s immediate hostility: ‘During the two days following my arrival, I received anonymous telephone calls, I was given wrong documents and patently wrong information. The situation lasted up until a colleague explained to them that “the white woman” was only a trainee and that she was certainly not going to steal the job.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of situation X = (Ethnic, Professional)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary’s status = (Native, Secretary)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story author’s status = (Intruder, Trainee)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary’s logic = (Hostility logic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainee’s logic = (Integration logic)</td>
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</tbody>
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2.2.2 Professional Logic Interfering in the Intimacy Field

Let us examine what occurs at Point 222 - Professional Logic IV ∩ Intimacy Field 2 – of Exhibit 7. The unjustifiability of such interference is self-evident, but it however often occurs in a number of professional sectors and organizations. Example (EADB 2002): ‘I was so sickened when I made him understand that I was well aware of his wife’s alcohol problems but that he had to realize she could no longer remain in the Company, as she gave a bad image to the clients.” In another life story (CAIBJ 2002), the “n+1” complains about his colleague who, according to him, had become unproductive since getting married; the author (the colleague) considers himself to be harassed: “He completely invaded me with routine intrusions in my private life; he would sometimes call at home (...) he kept making gratuitous comments on my work, my life, my wife. Slowly I lost self-confidence, became stressed out and entertained much self-doubt (...) Did I have to jeopardise my marriage and give up, at the age of 35, on the idea of having children?’

2.2.3 Professional Logic Interfering in the Family Field

Let us examine what occurs at Point 223 of Exhibit 7- Professional Logic IV ∩ Family Field - symmetrical to Point 231 – Family Logic in the Professional Field. Professional logic, especially when it is related to imposing sanctions, is exerted in the professional field. When sanctions are imposed, they must concern the individual’s “employee status” and not his “father status.” The following story extract (A71 1997 RLS 2000) illustrates what happens in the contrary case. In a post office sorting department, the night postal service manager imposes sanctions on an employee who, in his eyes, made unpleasant remarks (Balloon 1). From the author’s point of view, these comments
were not very serious: ‘the night service manager reacted very strongly to those remarks though they did not concern him personally.’ But the night service manager, probably driven by his emotions, takes it personally. He manages to have the internship of the employee’s adult child refused (Balloon 2). Thus, the first sanction concerns the status of employee but the second one concerns the status of father. The employee, however, appears to abide by the sanctions.

**Exhibit 10 The night-stick story (1997 RLS 2000)**

In reality, he waits for the corporate Christmas gift exchange to seek his revenge. During the ceremony, the postal night service manager is given presents: ‘on the last work night, during the gift exchange, the employee gave the manager a present in front of everyone...The manager enthusiastically opened it and did not seem suspicious whatsoever. Maybe the manager had forgotten the constraints he had imposed; maybe he thought it was a reconciliation gift.’ The gift happens to be a night-stick (Balloon 3). The symbolism is emphasized by the employee who, while everyone else is silent, whispers: ‘Now you can hit stronger with less effort!’ Thus, the flouted father gets his revenge. He then decides to relate what the manager did to him to almost all the manager’s relatives – his wife is very shocked, his neighbours do not want to talk to him anymore… (Balloon 4). This harassment impacts many statuses – husband, neighbour, client…. As a result, he asks to be transferred (Balloon 5). What sets this story apart is that the employee never calls the power structure into question; he simply takes advantage of the manager’s misconduct – the manager is the actor who brings the conflict outside the professional field. And outside the professional field, the manager loses his hierarchical status. He therefore becomes vulnerable to the employee’s attacks.

Lim (Efficient professional logic) = (Non professional field) (24)
We have just demonstrated how justifiability was “created” from the outside. The following section will describe how justifiability is created from the inside, that is, from inside the mind.

2.2.4 Professional Logic Interfering in the Professional Field

Let us now discover what occurs at Point 224 – (Professional Logic IV ∩ Professional Field 4) – of Exhibit 7. In theory, this point should be totally justifiable. However, an extremist attitude may call the justifiability of a professional logic into question, even in a professional field... The N+1’s norms can be placed on a continuum. At one end of the continuum, the “N+1” reacts as if there were only one justifiable logic – that is the professional logic – coming into play before any other logic and applicable to each field. When an “N+1” decides to apply this logic, he is usually designated by the staff as a “slayer” (A15 JAFBFC 2000): ‘The manager was like a huge rock placed in the middle of the road and the best thing to do was to avoid him. He was known as “the slayer” in the Company.’ With such a norm, a professional logic is imposed in each field – family, intimacy, religious fields – and to each member of the Company. The story writer relates his having been warned at his arrival in the Company: ‘Joining the Company X is like taking religious vows....’ One author thoroughly describes the problems he experienced in the Company when he got married and explains how he ended up questioning himself about having to choose between his wife and his job: ‘I lost my personality, my own values, my own identity was being defined by the Company’s values – to win, to get promoted... (...) I was becoming the “physical incarnation” of the Company’s values (CAIBJ 2002). This type of situation is encountered very much in countries like China.

2.3. QUESTIONABLE ACTIONS

2.3.1 Favouritism Relating to Filiation Logic

In this section, we find out what occurs at Point 231 of Exhibit 7 – the intersection of the Family Logic III and Professional Field 4. The logic in play is the status of couple – justifiable or not – and the status of father. Let us now analyze the consequences of introducing such a logic to the professional field.
Filiation logic = f (status of couple, status of father) (25)

First, let us recall that the statuses of couple and family statuses are often witnessed in the professional field – to be the father of…, the son of…, the husband of…, the wife of… This does not automatically imply a filiation logic. And if filiation is established, it is not necessarily negative – to be “the wife of” or “the son of” obliges the actor to progress faster and simultaneously be less recognized. Filiation logic becomes questionable only if the actor attempts to take advantage of it. Thus, filiation (25) is not automatically subsumed. To be an employee’s parent or to be married to another employee does not necessarily mean that professional logic will be subsumed by filiation logic. Thus, we evoke a filiation logic only in questionable situations. In the following extract (LAMB 2002), the author is a store manager who was let go because of his assistant. The manager was not aware of the connections his assistant had within the firm: ‘In February 1999, in reaction to repeated coffee-break abuses during working hours, I finally decided to intervene. My assistant (...) happened to be particularly concerned with this matter.’ Further to unsuccessful negotiations, the manager then decided officially to report his assistant’s slack behaviour. But… the assistant happened to be the Human Resource Manager’s daughter, something that the manager was not aware of. He thus erred through ignorance. He was subsequently accused of sexual harassment by his assistant; his case was dealt with by the mother’s assistant – who was of course the assistant to the HR Manager – and the case was passed to the General Manager: ‘I called the President and informed him of the situation. He tried to collect additional information further to which he told me something was wrong and that I had defend myself and to consult a lawyer. When I had a meeting with the HR Manager, I was told I was accused of sexual harassment, of threatening behaviour towards the staff, of slovenly appearance and of an unproductive attitude.’ The General Manager therefore let him go but offered him a high redundancy payment – equivalent to 90% of his salary. Eventually, the HR Manager’s machinations were uncovered. Indeed, the HR Manager, who was riding high on her new-found consolidated power, made a fateful mistake: ‘The HR Manager then attempted, through outright lying, to get rid of a colleague of mine, but her plot failed this time; she was dismissed after having spent 35 years in the Company and had no term notice, nor any redundancy payment.'
Exhibit 11 The logic of achievement supplanted by filiation logic (LAM 2002)

The following example illustrates the same type of difficulty encountered by a young trainee who was “the boss’s son” above all else (AABB 2004): ‘The Company was founded by my father and two of his colleagues in 1971 (...) One of the staff members did everything to have me shunned by my colleagues simply because I was the manager’s son (...) Jealousy, personal revenge, feelings of anger against my own father (...) I was accused of something I had not done.

The conclusion we may draw from this section is that the individual’s plural status brings about problems only if one of the status logics intrudes into a field in which it is unjustifiable or disputable.

2.3.2 Favouritism in Relation to Intimacy

Let us now examine Point 232 of Exhibit 7, placed at the intersection of Intimacy Logic II and Professional Field 4. In our research, the life stories that emphasize equality of opportunity within the workplace are usually written by women. Women appear less able to accept favouritism and injustice, and they also tend to resign more easily than men. Some of the women who relate their professional life detail the sacrifices they were forced to make in order to gain the “Boss’s” respect and they further describe how that respect was put aside when the Boss was faced with a “right-right conflict,” something that forced him to choose between a woman and a “favoured” person. Very often, in these life stories, the conflict seems minor – parking places, holidays, bonuses, etc… - but the true issue at stake is the relational order between the two individuals. The individual favoured through professional logic is trumped by the person favoured through intimacy logic.
Within Professional Field 4 ‘CP’, (Professional logic) > (Intimacy logic)
Thus Michelle > Virginie.
Within Intimacy Field 2 ‘CI,’ (Intimacy logic) > (Professional logic)
Thus Virginie > Michelle.

But, for the ‘Boss,’ CI > CP, thus Virginie > Michelle.

The favoured employee benefits from having a close relationship with the manager. The statuses of this intimacy are, in some cases, thoroughly described when the favoured individual chooses to disclose them: ‘she was vulnerable because she was “his mistress;” she would sometimes burst out crying and then gives us details about her affair with the manager and about his problems with his wife’ (SAVB 2003). In other cases, they are not even mentioned and the investigator ends up discovering the status only during the inquest. In such situations, the point of no return is caused by a symbolically significant event:’ It was a matter of recognition (...) I resigned’ (SAVB 2003). The manager is shocked by his employee’s resignation, which is a major problem in his eyes. He thus attempts to change the employee’s mind, but it is already too late. Favouritism within Company structures largely depends on the culture of secrecy.

2.3.3 Favouritism Relating to Religious Logics

Let us analyze what occurred at Point 233 of Exhibit 7 - the intersection of Religious Logic VI and Professional Field 4. The hypothesis in question is the following: can religious logic be exerted in fields (2 and 4) other than the religious? In the following life story extract (1993-1996 AAD 2002), a Muslim engineer makes a decision based on his religious status, which leads not only to dismissal but eventually also to death: ‘I was dismissed for personal reasons but the official reason was conflict with Management... My previous companion became a drug addict, a prostitute and ended it all by committing suicide. Elisabeth, her mother, sank into despair and had a serious nervous breakdown, something that she has yet to overcome’. Thus, the hypothesis above is invalidated at Intersection Point (VI, 4) (Religious logic, Professional field). In the story extract (RAMB 2004), an educational adviser describes a vocational secondary school governed by religious logic: ‘The supervisors were Muslims. Their roles consisted of looking after the students and making sure that Sharia was followed. The assistant to the principal who had previously divorced a Muslim admitted she herself used to wear the veil ’(RANB 2004). The educational adviser relates the numerous detrimental consequences such a religious logic had on the school (lack of respect towards school material and towards other people): 'Raphaëlle burnt herself out and was depressed. She saw a doctor on
December 5, 2003 and had been granted sick leave for two weeks. In accordance with Popper’s theory, the hypothesis is invalidated once again at Intersection Point (6,4) (Religious logic 6 Professional field 4).

2.3.4 Religious Logic Interfering in the Family Field

Let us now focus on Point 234 of Exhibit 7 – intersection of Religious logic VI and Family field 3. In the following story extract (M14 1996 MOTFC 2000), a young Sicilian student is forced by her father to choose between writing a letter to break up with her boyfriend and giving up her studies. The young girl obeys her father and breaks up with her boyfriend, but relates the subsequent emotional disorders she experienced in the years that followed: ‘How could any father dare ask his daughter to write such a horrid thing? The following day, he sent me to Sicily for the holidays and I came back in September for my studies. Friends of mine told me my boyfriend had been deeply shocked by my letter. I avoided a row with my father, but until today, I have been in a constant row with myself….’

3. Conclusions and Prospects

In the present research, we crosschecked fields and logics in order to establish a method to index each of the life stories on two axes. Such a crosschecking enabled us to extract a meaning from various life stories in relation to the plural status of the actors. On the whole, this endeavour may be used to create a body of actionable knowledge of “knowing what not to do.” The preliminary results of our research are listed as follows:

1. The actors consider the various components of their identity as an indivisible entity.
2. High risk decisions are those that are not taken within the strict limits of the professional field; they have an impact on collateral fields.
3. The degree of influence of each of the different fields is left to each individual’s discretion; however, this approach may lead to an overall unsatisfactory synthetic result.
4. The sphere of influence of archaic fields is a source of inappropriate decision-making, leading to, in most cases, professional failure.
5. Our results confirm the development of archaic logics (Maffesoli 1988).
6. The weakening of professional justifiability is the symbolic equivalent of patricide (Freud 1912 1913), which in turn changes the organization into a leaderless horde (Bourion 2001)
7. Our research results may provide answers to questions relating to the deep changes that accompany internationalization - increasing religious, ethnic and cultural interactions and differences now present in the workplace. We may already draw the conclusion that ethnic
and religious differences are insignificant if work culture and consideration for the organization are values that are shared by all actors across the board. They become significant and conflicting, on the other hand, if the values mentioned above are not shared by all actors concerned.

8. In France, the predominance of the “motherly” field (free services, assistance, social welfare, leisure) over the “fatherly” field (markets, achievements, autonomy, work) may generate increasing deviations by poorly establishing favourable mechanisms to attract and retain the most qualified candidates, regardless of gender.

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